



Lake Wales
Church of Christ
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.
Lake Wales, FL 33898
www.lakewalescoc.com
(863) 676-4114

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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”
—Proverbs 18:10**

Have Regard For What is Honorable

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul’s writes about the collection among Macedonian and Achaian churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

It’s a beautiful passage, and also a very practical passage, providing us all kinds of principles for giving our offering and handling a church treasury. It contains several famous statements, like, “he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully,” and “God loves a cheerful giver.”

In contrast, 8:16–23 seems like a pointless bit of housekeeping. But don’t skip it! For here we find an important inspired principle:

Thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord

Himself, and to show our readiness, taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

What's going on here? Paul needs to gather up the money that has been contributed in Macedonia and Achaia, and take the money to the needy saints in Jerusalem. In a society without checking accounts and wire transfers, this must be done in person, with real money.

Now, because all the parties involved were faithful Christians, Paul could have sent his right hand man Titus to visit each church and bring the money to Jerusalem. Titus was certainly trustworthy.

There's a story about Abe Lincoln who, when young and poor, ran a post office in rural Illinois by himself. A notice came to shut down the office. Many months passed before an official showed up at Lincoln's doorstep to collect the receipts. Lincoln, with no hesitation, strode to a wooden chest by his bedside and brought out a large bundle of cash. All the money was there and accounted for. Although Lincoln was living in crushing poverty, he had honorably resisted the temptation to touch even a penny of the money that belonged to the US government. Now, that's a trustworthy fellow! I'm sure Titus was equally trustworthy to collect and transfer the funds without skimming off a single drachma.

And yet, this was not sufficient! Paul seeks to "take precaution" to build in some layers of protection so that "no one will discredit us in our administration" of this money. Paul does not send Titus alone. He sends three men, two chosen by him, and one appointed by the churches themselves (*cf* 1 Cor. 16:3). And each of these men were known for their diligence; first Titus, then a preacher of reputation in whom all the churches had confidence, and also another tested and proven brother.

Again, these precautions were not strictly necessary. But Paul was concerned for what is honorable, “not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” People might think it suspicious to entrust one man with so much money. People might wonder what was really going on. People might voice accusations (as they did in 12:14–18).

It is important that churches today take every precaution to do all things diligently and transparently. Preachers should never collect, count, deposit, or have any contact with the offering. The treasurer should be assisted in his counting by another responsible person. No one should have exclusive access to the treasury, but the account should require more than one signature to write a check. The church’s deposits and expenditures should be a matter of public record. I am pleased to say that we take all those precautions here, even though we do not doubt any of our leaders’ or deacons’ integrity.

But there’s a bigger principle, one that applies far beyond church treasuries. If we take care of how things look, we take care of how things really are. If you avoid situations that *look* suspicious (being in a place you shouldn’t be in, or being alone with people you shouldn’t be alone with) then you ensure you aren’t behaving improperly. We’ve all seen someone who is accused of misdeeds, and who has had no recourse but to pound his fist and say, “God knows what really went on in that room! God knows what’s really in my heart!” And that may be true, and the accusations may never be proven. But the suspicion clings.

Lipscomb says, “No one can afford to put himself above appearances, still less to despise them. The inspired man ... was not ashamed to practice common sense and put emphasis on caution. Blameless in the sight of God, he would be blameless in the eyes of men.” Jesus said, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Christians cannot afford to be naïve in matters of money or sexual sin. Christians cannot afford to cheapen their influence by insisting on studding their bodies with things that are largely held in dishonor by society. Walk in love and reason. Enemies are waiting to pounce!

—John Guzzetta

We Should Look for Results

Christ said, “Go ye therefore and make disciples...” We haven’t faithfully fulfilled the great commission until we have done so—to teach to the extent and in such a way that those taught will be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament church did exactly that. After the Lord departed to heaven, there remained 120 disciples (Acts 1:15). Soon, Acts 2:41 says there were added to them about three thousand souls. But this didn’t stop. Acts 2:47 says the Lord added to the church daily. Acts 4:4 says that there were five thousand men, not counting women and children. Acts 4:32 and 5:14 tell us that soon they were not numbering the converts by the thousands but by the multitudes. Acts 6:1 says the number of the disciples multiplied. Acts 6:7 says the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith.

And this was not only a burst of enthusiasm at the beginning—it was a continuous ongoing process in the New Testament church. In Acts 11:21 we read that a great number believed and turned to the Lord. In Acts 14:1 a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed. Same in Acts 17:4. Many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

Please note the Holy Spirit described this as results. All of these reports in Acts are so very different from the reports we hear today. We report on the messages we bring and the methods we use, but we do not report on the disciples made by thousands or multitudes.

Why the great difference between the results of the New Testament church and the results of the church today? There are many factors, but one major reason is that we have a different concept of the purpose of the church. To them, the concern was to seek and save the lost. Many of today’s churches and Christians minimize seeking the lost and emphasize Christian living, worship, foreign missions, charity, classrooms, and church buildings. In services, we pray about everything except opportunities to save the lost. —*Otis Gatewood (pp. 37–44)*