

The Necessity of the Delegation

2 Corinthians 8:16-24

Part One

Certainly Japan, as I shared with you week, in the wake of the recent earthquake and tsunami and subsequent nuclear crisis has captured the attention of the world and certainly it has captured our attention, not only because of the humanitarian issues associated with these events, but even more importantly because of our long-standing partnership with Hamadera Bible Church in seeking to reach the Japanese people with the gospel of Christ.

Because of this partnership the recent events in Japan with its accompanying humanitarian crisis has presented our church, as well as Hamadera church, with a wonderful opportunity to advance the cause of Christ among the Japanese people.

Last week, based on the example of Paul and his encouragement to the churches of Achaia and Macedonia as their spiritual overseer to give to a collection for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem based on our study of **2 Corinthians 8**, the elders, as your spiritual overseers, encouraged you to prayerfully consider giving an offering to Japan.

And you responded very generously. This very generous offering will in two weeks be delivered to Japan. But will this offering be safe, and will those who will be entrusted with this offering administrate it well and to the glory of Christ? This is an important question.

And this question brings us back to our study of **2 Corinthians**. And to another passage of Scripture once again addressing matters related to the collection that Paul was trying to pull together for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. And it all begins in **2 Corinthians 8:16** with the conjunction “**but.**”

The transitional “**but**” in **2 Corinthians 8:16** introduced a new thought, a thought that will not be fully developed until we reach **2 Corinthians 9:5**.

So, what was this new thought? Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5 spelled out for the Corinthians why the delegation that he had sent to them, that

preceded his visit to them, was necessary. So why did Paul believe this? Why did Paul believe that this particular delegation was necessary?

First of all, Paul believed that this delegation that he had sent was necessary because it would protect him from the accusation that he or one of his associates was planning to use the collection to line their own pockets (2 Corinthians 8:16-24).

Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 8:16-24** and see if this is not so. **“But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. (17) For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. (18) We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; (19) 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, (20) taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; (21) for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. (22) 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. (23) 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. (24) Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.”**

So did Paul, based on these verses, believe that this delegation would protect him from the accusation that he was planning to use the collection to line his own pockets? Absolutely! This I believe was made very clear to us in **2 Corinthians 8:20-21** when Paul, commenting about the inclusion of one particular individual, said, **“Taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; (21) for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”**

So did Paul believe that this delegation of men, which were known for their high moral character as he outlined it for us in these verses, would protect

his reputation as well as those of his associates? Absolutely! And we need to appreciate how important this emphasis.

Those representing themselves as ministers of the gospel of Christ, such as Paul and his companions, must be very careful to protect themselves from any accusation that their ministry is motivated by a desire to advance themselves financially. And this is exactly, based on what we have just seen in **2 Corinthians 8:20-21**, what Paul was seeking to do when he assembled the delegation of men of such high moral character as described for us in **2 Corinthians 8:16-24**.

It is shocking to me that so many so-called ministers of the gospel so blatantly open themselves up to the very accusation that Paul worked so hard to protect himself against.

Heading the list of those whom I believe are most guilty are those preaching a “health, wealth, and prosperity gospel,” which in truth is not the gospel at all. And not far behind them are ministers who are willing to approach the boards of their churches or perhaps even their congregations with appeals that are intended to get them more money or more benefits for themselves.

When individuals commit themselves to the ministry of the gospel they must be willing to take what is given to them and to receive whatever has been given with a spirit of gratitude. Why would they do this? They would do this so that their reputation might be protected and the ministry of the gospel of Christ would not be diminished.

So now having said this let us now consider the individual members of this delegation that Paul had assembled. And consider how the particular make-up of this delegation served to protect his reputation and the reputation of his associates as well.

The first person that Paul identified as a member of the delegation that he was sending to Corinth was Titus (2 Corinthians 8:16-17). So let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 8:16-17** and see if this is not so. **“But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. (17) For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.”**

So was Titus the first person that Paul identified as a member of the delegation he was sending to Corinth? Yes, he was the first person. And did the Corinthians know him? Yes they did. And did they have a high degree of respect for him? Yes, they did based on **2 Corinthians 7:15**, which states very clearly that they had earlier received him **“with fear and trembling.”** So certainly it would appear that he would be a perfect person to be a part of this delegation that Paul felt was necessary in order to protect him from any potential accusation concerning his intent to use this collection for his own financial gain.

So, what did Paul say about Titus in **2 Corinthians 8:16**? Let me now read this verse for you. . **“But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.”** So, what in essence was Paul saying here in this verse?

Paul thanked God that he had placed the same earnestness to complete the collection that was in his heart in the heart of Titus (2 Corinthians 8:16). This is what Paul in essence was saying in **2 Corinthians 8:16**. Or in other words, Paul, in **2 Corinthians 8:16**, thanked God that he and Titus were now on the same page in terms of the Corinthians and what needed to be done among them.

So now let me ask you this question. Had Paul and Titus always been on the same page when it came to the Corinthians? No, they had not.

In fact, it would appear, based on **2 Corinthians 7:13-14**, that after Paul’s sorrowful visit to Corinth and after he had written his so-called severe letter that when Titus was requested by Paul to deliver that letter, Titus did not want to do so, most likely believing that the Corinthians were a lost cause. But all this had now changed hadn’t it. And they were on the same page.

And why were they on the same page? God had worked in the heart of Titus based on **2 Corinthians 8:16**, and how had God worked on his heart? He worked on his heart through the Corinthians’ repentance and reception of him as described in **2 Corinthians 7:15** when they received him with **“fear and trembling”** after having read the so-called severe letter that he had delivered to them from Paul.

And how had this changed heart manifested itself this time around when Paul asked him to be a part of this delegation that he was now sending to Corinth?

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 8:17**. **“For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.”** Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8:17, made it clear to the Corinthians that in light of God’s work in Titus, that Titus was eagerly and of his own accord carrying out the work that Paul himself would be carrying out if he were with them. In telling the Corinthians this, the Corinthians would have been assured that Paul and Titus were, as we have said, on the same page and would therefore be even that much more inclined to respond to Titus as he directed them to do.

So who else was a part of this delegation that Paul had assembled and sent to the Corinthians church?

The next person that Paul identified as a member of the delegation he was sending to Corinth was an unnamed person that he only identified as “the brother” (2 Corinthians 8:18-19). Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 8:18-19** and see if this is not so. **“We have sent along with him [or in other words Titus, whom?] the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; (19) 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.”**

So who was this unnamed brother that Paul identified as another member of this delegation? The “brother” could have been Luke, Barnabas, Aristarchus, Apollos or perhaps even someone else. We just do not know who this person was.

But even though Paul, for whatever reason, was not led to provide us a name of this particular brother, we do know several things about him that highlighted his high moral character. So what exactly were those things?

“The brother” that joined Titus as the second person of this delegation was very well known in the things of the gospel among all the churches (2 Corinthians 8:18). This is made clear to us in **2 Corinthians 8:18** so now let

me read this verse for you and see if this is not so. **We have sent along with him** [or in other words Titus] **the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches.**”

So was this man that Paul referred to as “the brother” and whom he had sent as a part of this delegation to Corinth well known **“in the things of the gospel”** among all the churches? Absolutely! He is very well known. In fact, he was so very well known and so very respected by all the churches that asked him to do something. And this brings us to a second that they we learn about this man from Paul. So, what was that?

“The Brother” that was so well-known, as well as respected among all the churches, had been appointed by the churches to accompany Paul with the offering to Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:19).

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 8:19** and see if this is not so. **And not only this** [or in other words, not only is he a part of this delegation, because I believe that he deserves to be a part of this delegation, but as we now see in 2 Corinthians 8:19, that this was something that all the churches would have agreed with since, as Paul tells us in verse 19], **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.**”

Obviously the churches wanted this man to be around the money, and Paul wanted him to be around the money as well.

So, what was driving force that moved both Paul and the churches to want this man to be around the money? Paul and the all churches wanted him to be around the money because both Paul and the all the churches agreed that including “the brother” in the delegation would not only protect the money, but also Paul and his associates from any potential accusation against them (2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

So was the first man that Paul listed as a member of this delegation highly respected? Yes! Was the second man that Paul listed highly respected? Yes! So who was the third man?

The third and last person that Paul identified as a member of the delegation was another unnamed person identified simply as “our brother” (2

Corinthians 8:22). Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 8:22** and see if this is not so. **“We have sent with them [in other words the other two members of the delegation that we have just talked about] 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.”**

So who is this third man that Paul referred to as “our brother?” Once again there is no way we can know this. But very much like Titus and the unnamed man that Paul just mentioned the Corinthians I am quite sure I knew this man and very much respected him as well.

And how did Paul describe him in **verse 22**? He described him as one **“whom we have often tested,”** but even though he often tested him Paul went on to say that he found him **“diligent”** and not just in a few things but **“in many things.”** And what did Paul attribute his great diligence in so many things? Paul went on to say **“because of his great confidence in you** (or in other words in the Corinthians). This man either because he heard of their repentance or had seen their repentance was very eager to get involved in this effort to wrap up the loose ends, surrounding the completion of the collection. Then what did Paul say to the Corinthians after his brief description of the three individual members of the delegation he had sent to them?

Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:23-24, after reviewing the individual members of the delegation that he had sent to them, then commended their noble, unimpeachable character. Let me now read these verses for you and see if this is not so. **“As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren [referring to the other two members of the delegation], they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. (24) Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.”**

As we look at these verses we discover that Titus was not only Paul’s partner in ministry, but also his fellow-worker among the Corinthians. And as for the two unnamed brethren, they were **“messengers,”** or in other words literally **“apostles”** of the churches. They were not apostles of Christ, as were the Twelve or as Paul spelled out for us in **Mark 3:13-19** and **Acts 9:15** or through those whom He had previously commissioned as spelled out for us in **Acts 1:21-22**. These two faithful brothers were sent by the churches

to help with the collection. Showing the high caliber of men to which the early church entrusted money, Paul called the three “**a glory to Christ.**” For these men who lived to bring “**glory to Christ,**” there could not have been a higher commendation.

Last week you gave to this church a large offering that by the grace of God will continue to grow. This offering we will be sending to Hamadera Bible Church to be distributed among those people who by coming alongside of them in this time of need will most greatly advance the cause of Christ in Japan.

But in light of the message this morning, I believe it is important for us to communicate the following: Desiring to protect our offering and the reputations of Christ’s ministers in Japan, we will be entrusting our offering to two men that we have come to highly esteem within Hamadera Church. The two men are Shuji Kondo and Daisuke Okada.

May God use our offering that will be administered by Shuji Kondo and Daisuke Okada to advance His work in Japan to the praise of His glory.