**The importance of administration**  20/2/22 dkm

Read: Acts 6, 2Corinthians 8:16-9:5

Text: 2Corinthians 8:16-9:5

Psalms: 122old, 145:8-16, 15, 14a

While teaching in a Bible school in Africa, I visited a village church. I was teaching church government, which included a segment on church finances. In this village church I joined the deacons in the counting of the collection. As I recall, there were four men counting the coins and recording the sums. Normally of course, the pastor would not be present. In too many churches the pastor is also the treasurer, the man who counts the collection, and spends the collection. While we expect the pastor to be an honest person, this is not proper practice. It is important to have a church treasurer who is not the pastor, and even then the treasurer, although an honest person, must be accountable to a committee or court of the church.

You are presented with audited annual accounts for this church. We ensure that all collections are counted by two people. We do this because it is important that everything be done honourably in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of mem (8:21). The apostle Paul was accused of pocketing the specific collection he organised, but we see from this passage that he was not the one handling the money that was collected. Moreover, more than one person was involved in the collection.

As Paul left Jerusalem to take the gospel to the Gentiles, he gave a commitment to the leaders of the Jerusalem church, a commitment to remember the poor (Gal 2:10). Paul was pleased to make this commitment, and was committed to fulfilling his commitment. He started a church-wide collection for the church in Jerusalem (1Cor 16). The church in Corinth came on board early in the piece, but with all the infighting, immorality and animosity towards Paul, they lost focus on this collection- among others things of course! But Paul did not lose focus on this collection. After they felt ‘godly sorrow’ for the things they had done, and not done with regard to church discipline, Paul reminded them of this collection (9:5).

Paul always gives reasons for what he teaches, including support from Scripture, which is why these two chapters contain detailed teaching on Christian giving to brethren who have fallen on hard times. In the passage before us today his focus is on the administration of this collection. Our subheadings are: ‘Choosing of representatives’, ‘Careful administration’ and ‘Confidence in the Corinthians completing the collection’.

**1. Choosing representatives**

By the grace of God, Titus, whom Paul sent to Corinth with his harsh letter, had returned with news of reconciliation between this church and the apostle Paul. Titus was a close colleague of Paul, a fellow servant of the Lord. The Lord put into his heart the same concern for the believers in Corinth as He had put into Paul’s heart (8:16). So it was not really necessary for Paul to send Titus; he was eager to go to Corinth again (8:17). Paul was sending Titus ahead to bring to completion this collection within the church at Corinth (8:11).

Titus was a totally trustworthy man, well known to Paul and to the church at Corinth. But still it was important that someone go with him on this sensitive mission- money matters are always sensitive, even in the church. Paul and his colleagues sent a well-known and highly respected brother with Titus, a man who was, in fact, chosen by the churches, presumably the churches of Macedonia (8:19). While Paul started the collection and encouraged all the churches to give towards it, he was careful not to be handling the money, or at least not to be doing so alone. He was careful not to be choosing the men who would do so either. How many churches have the pastor’s son or daughter as church treasurer! Paul had the churches choose such men. Paul was not present when the apostles appointed seven deacons in the Jerusalem church, but he followed the same procedure of having the church choose their representatives and the apostle’s ‘laying hands on them’ (Acts 6:1-6).

Who was the brother the churches chose to go with Titus to Corinth? We are not told. Many think it was Luke because from the Book of Acts we deduce that Luke resided in Philippi. Other names have been suggested but we simply do not know. Reading on, we find that another brother, a man ‘whom we have often proved diligent in many things’ was also being sent with Titus (8:22). We know even less about this brother than the first, although he had great confidence in the Corinthians so may have been known to them.

Paul takes the opportunity in this letter, which Titus probably carried to Corinth, to introduce or recommend these two brothers. Titus was well known by the Corinthians but Paul recommends him also. ‘Titus my partner and fellow worker concerning you’ (8:23). Even during the crisis, Paul maintained confidence in the Corinthians, but that confidence was strengthened now that they had repented of their sins. Paul’s confidence extended to the brothers chosen to accompany Titus. They are messengers, literally apostles, of the churches, and as such are to the glory or honour of Christ (8:23). Paul asks the Corinthians to respect these men and show them love, so that Paul’s boasting about the Corinthians is proved true in all the churches. These men would in time report back to their respective churches and Paul wanted this to be a good report.

**2. Careful administration**

Some years ago a finance officer in the Salvation Army was caught stealing from this respected Christian charity. The same thing happened in another secular charity just recently. Realising the size of this sector of the economy, our government has brought in regulations requiring detailed reporting by charities. Not all charities are Christian of course, but many are, and misuse of funds brings shame rather than glory to the name of Christ.

Too often a Christian organisation says that their finance officer is a Christian and demand no accountability. The apostle Paul was not so foolish. He and the churches chose not just a faithful man but faithful men to administer the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. He made sure that everything was done transparently as we say, not only in the eyes of God but in the eyes of men (8:21). Speaking of foolishness, I remember when I had my group of students elect a representative to whom I would give money for their meal when the student cafeteria was closed. But the students complained that this representative was pocketing some of their meal money so I had to re-assess my ideas. I should have made at least two students responsible for the meal money!

The apostle Paul was extra careful about the administration of the collection because he had already been accused of cheating by his detractors in Corinth. He pointed out that he would hardly be stealing from this fund when he refused legitimate support for preaching the gospel (11:7). The collection had been going on for some years so had become a ‘lavish gift which is administered by us’ (8:20). Paul told them to put aside something each week so he would not have to go about collecting money when he came (1Cor 16:2). He was sending Titus and these two brothers to see that this was done, and that the collection was indeed collected in the church and ready to be taken to Jerusalem.

Paul and other brothers, approved by their respective churches, would take the collection to Jerusalem (1Cor 16:3, 4). Paul wanted to see that this gift reached Jerusalem and was used for the purpose for which it had been collected. In Acts 21:18 we read of Paul going to see James and the elders of the Jerusalem church, possibly handing over this collection for their church.

**3. Confidence in the Corinthians completing the collection**

Paul begins chapter 9 telling the Corinthians that ‘it is superfluous’ for him to write to them about the collection or about ‘ministering to the saints’ (9:1) - but he continues writing another chapter anyway! He had urged them to complete this collection (8:11), and feels confident that they will, but encourages them in various ways anyway. In the previous chapter he challenged them to be liberal in their giving, just like the Macedonian churches, and indeed, to remember the grace of giving displayed by our Lord Jesus Christ when he gave his very life for us.

The apostle goes on to remind them of their willingness and zeal to give to this collection a year ago, before all the infighting, immorality and corruption crippled their church (9:2). Such was their zeal that Paul boasted about them to the Macedonians; the southern part of Greece was the Roman province of Achaia and the city of Corinth was in this province. Now that he was sending brothers from Macedonia to Corinth, Paul did not want to be embarrassed by them finding the Corinthians not ready at all. He did not want his boasting of the Corinthian brethren to be ill-founded or in vain (9:3).

Paul’s hope and prayer was that Titus and the two brothers would facilitate the completion of this collection, so that when Paul came with more envoys they would find everything in order, with the collection completed and ready to be taken to Jerusalem. If it was not complete, everyone would end up embarrassed, the Corinthians, Paul himself, and the envoys from other churches to whom Paul had boasted. It was to avoid such embarrassment that Paul was sending Titus and two brothers ahead of time. The set time for the feast in Jerusalem, and the vagaries of sea travel, were dictating the carrying of this collection to Jerusalem.

Paul again reminds the Corinthians of their promise to give towards this collection, and their generosity in doing so when they began (9:5). They were willing givers at that time, and he wanted them to continue in this manner and not become grudging givers. He goes on to say that God loves cheerful givers not grudging givers (9:7). When God’s people give cheerfully and generously, blessings flow to them, and of course, to the recipients of their gifts. And do not forget the thanksgiving and praise that goes up to God (9:11).

We have recently been privileged to give to brothers and sisters who fell upon hard times because of a volcanic eruption and resulting tsunami. I hope we gave cheerfully and generously to the collection our church made for helping these brethren. Others churches asked to help and have given generously to the fund being administered by our deacon’s court.

When we give cheerfully and generously we will know God’s blessing upon our lives. Besides, we may one day need help from those we help today (8:14). I am sure the afflicted brethren will give praise to God when our help arrives, and so our fellowship across the miles and around the globe will be strengthened to the glory of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.