Ministerial Integrity

2 Corinthians 8:16-24
9/25/2011

Introduction:

- ***Be challenged by the character of Titus and his unnamed associates as they demonstrate ministerial integrity***

What are some key elements of ministerial integrity?

I. Ministerial integrity involves a <u>God-induced Concern</u> for His people (v.16)

II. Ministerial integrity involves a <u>self-motivation</u> to willingly serve (v.17)

III. Ministerial integrity involves <u>financial accountability</u> with church money (v.18-21)

Those who handle church finances should:

A. Have a heart for the <u>Gospel</u> ministry (v.18)

B. Be <u>recommended</u> and <u>selected</u> by the Local Church (v.19)

C. Be concerned about maintaining a Christ-honoring <u>testimony</u> (v.20)

D. Be <u>conscientious</u> about the management of material things in the eyes of God and men (v.21)

IV. Ministerial integrity involves <u>proven diligence</u> in past service (v.22)

V. Ministerial integrity involves <u>team labor</u> in local church ministry (v.23)

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"Perhaps you've heard about the old miser who called his doctor, lawyer, and minister to his deathbed. 'They say that you can't take it with you,' said the dying man, 'But I'm going to. I have three envelopes with $100,000 in cash in each one. I want each of you to take an envelope, and just before they close the casket, I want each of you to slip your envelope into my casket.' They all promised to do so. And at the end of the funeral they did it! On the way home, the conscience-stricken doctor confided, 'I'm building a clinic, so I took $50,000 and put the rest in the coffin.' Then the lawyer confessed, 'I kept $75,000 for a legal defense fund and put $25,000 in.' At this, the preacher said, "Gentlemen, I'm ashamed of you. I put in a check for the full amount!' Ah, yes, ministerial integrity." (Hughes, p. 164)

A Pastor's son (Carey) "and his high school friends were talking about how much their dads made, and Carey said, 'My dad beats yours. All he does is get up and say a few words and offer a prayer, and it takes eight people to carry the money away!'" (Hughes, p. 164)

"Integrity" - *Integrity comes from the Greek words 'integritas' and 'integra' meaning whole. It enters into any aspect of one's life. It's belief system without faltering no matter how dangerous, how unpopular the person makes themselves to others. It includes: sincerity, keeping one's word and agreements, honesty, truthfulness, ethics, fairness and justice, punctuality and never faltering for what one believes in. A quote regarding integrity is 'It is better to have an enemy who keeps his word, than a friend who does not.'*

Integrity is having values, being consistent with one's values or belief system, not wavering due to outside influences, standing strong in how one should live and believe.
http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_definition_of_integrity

Realness, truthfulness or genuineness are two key concepts tied to the word "integrity"
Integrity in the ministry is ministry you can trust.

- ***Be challenged by the character of Titus and his unnamed associates as they demonstrate ministerial integrity***

What are some key elements of ministerial integrity?

I. Ministerial integrity involves a <u>God-induced Concern</u> for His people (v.16)

"Thanks be to God" - God should be thanked for any positive ministry that takes place.

Any ministry that can be considered "good ministry" always has its source in God and His grace.

"Earnest care" - *spoude* – related to *speudo* (from which we get our word "speed") means to do something for someone with speed; to hasten diligently to meet a need; to be zealous to care for one of God's children.

"Into the heart" - the lesson here is this: When God puts a burden in someone's heart, the result will be swift action on someone's behalf.

"God. . . put. . . into the heart" – God is active in influencing the thoughts and desires of His children.

God is <u>not passively</u> observing His people from Heaven with no involvement, but rather is motivating them to accomplish His purposes.

God is not as the "deist" assumes, a being who winds up the clock of creation and then lets it unwind without any active involvement in that creation; rather He is at work today!

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of waters, he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Unless God gives us a burden/concern for others, it will not be a real concern anyway. Because we are self-centered by sin nature, any real compassion and intrest we have in the spiritual success of others will be short-lived; it will nto last.

Real ministry (ministry with integrity) is ministry that God is involved in. Let's pray that we will see His hand in more of our work for Him!

II. Ministerial integrity involves a <u>self-motivation</u> to willingly serve (v.17)

By self-motivation I do not want to imply that the motivation originates with self (in fact, all Godly motivation originates in God, as evidenced in verse 16).

What I mean is that others do not need to continually "push" one to do his/her duty. Rather, the person of his/her own volition or choice (while influenced by God's inner working by His Spirit) goes to work "<u>of his own accord</u>" (v. 17).

Paul made an appeal to Titus to go to Corinth and complete some work in their lives, but he really didn't need to, because Titus was already minded to go and minister to the Corinthians.

"Of his own accord he went" - What a blessing it is when people do something good without having to be told, manipulated, or forced to do it.

Isn't it a blessing when you children show initiative? So it is to God when His children show initiative! It must please Him when we have a "want to" attitude rather than a "have to" compulsion.

This motivation is without a doubt the virtue of "agape love."

My associates here at FBC can give testimony that I am not one who will push them to perform their ministries. If God does not motivate them, provide incentive for them, spark ministerial interest in them, then there is little that I want to do. I am not one who will lead someone by the hand into every little step and detail of their performance of what they should be doing.

III. Ministerial integrity involves financial accountability with church money (v.18-21)

v. 18
"We have sent with him the brother" – This brother is left unnamed because who he is does not matter as much as what he is (in terms of his spiritual character); he along with another unnamed brother (v. 22) would travel with Titus and would handle the offering given by the Corinthians for the needy church at Jerusalem.

Such "group" management of the church funds provides needed accountability.

Why accountability?

--To provide a strong determent to secret sin

--to provide mutual encouragement; prayer support & help from trouble/robbers

--To reinforce positive behavior and faithfulness to commitments

Obviously , the LORD is the One who keeps the believer faithful; however, one of the ways He works to keep us faithful is through the mutual support and encouragement of other believers. Just as God transmits the Gospel through believers, so He confronts, reminds , lovingly rebukes, teaches, and encourages through believers.

Paul in a context of giving to meet the need of the Jerusalem church had previously stated to the Corinthians:

I Cor. 16:3-4 - "whomsoever ye shall approve...them will I send"

"Whomsoever ye shall approve" - Not just anyone can be trusted with a church's finances.

Only faithful men can act as treasurers or deacons. Men whose life and character has been tested and proven to be gold (Note: the deacons chosen in Acts 6).

In Paul's day, money could not be "wired" via Western Union. A certified check could not be sent overnight via Fed-Ex or Express mail. The heavy coins had to be hand-delivered by faithful people.

Paul here is not talking about how the money would leave Corinth, but how it would be transported safely and efficiently to Jerusalem.

How would the money be brought to Jerusalem and would all of it (right down to the last shekel) arrive?

Here in II Cor. 8:16-24 Paul gives more information on the "finance committee" which assisted him. The good news is that the offering did eventually make it (***Acts 24:17*** Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings).

The New Testament teaches ecclesiastical giving. The Corinthians' giving was through the <u>local church</u> (when they assembled on the first day of the week) and was via <u>officially designated</u> church representatives (money handlers had to have spiritual credentials).

Before a Christian gives to any charity, they ought to agree with that charity's or church's:

--doctrine and practice
--financial management practices
--do they supply the giver with a receipt if requested?
--do they have a budget and spend wisely?
--do they report on their income and expense?
--how much of their income goes to actually meet the need they are requesting help for, and how much goes for "overhead" (salaries, promotion, etc.)?

In other words, is there financial integrity and accountability?

Beware, there are many rip-off artists who deceptively come dressed in Christian garments.

Those who handle church finances should:

A. Have a heart for the <u>Gospel</u> ministry (v.18)

"Whose praise is in the gospel" - Whoever this brother was (some say Luke; others Trophimus), he had a praiseworthy (well-known) testimony of ministering the Gospel. He loved the Gospel; he no doubt taught the Gospel; he promoted the Gospel. For him, ministry was not about the three Big B's (bodies, bucks, and buildings), but was about the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Christ and salvation by grace through faith.

By God's grace, our church will never choose a deacon (trustee or treasurer) who does not give evidence of a love for the gospel.

"Throughout all the churches" - Apparently this brother had ministered in many churches; he perhaps had a large ministry; yet he was willing to take part in the seemingly mundane task of handling this offering. There really is no distinction between the mundane and the spiritual in God's eyes. All ministry is spiritual service!

Those who handle church finances should:

B. Be <u>recommended</u> and <u>selected</u> by the Local Church (v.19)

It was not some elite board, synod, or council that sent this man out for accountable ministry; it was through local churches like Faith Baptist Church.

"To the glory of the same Lord" - Our giving (as with all forms of ministry) is for the glory of God Himself. God is glorified by ministries with financial accountability.

Those who handle church finances should:

C. Be concerned about maintaining a Christ-honoring <u>testimony</u> (v.20)

"Avoiding this" = taking precaution against blame for mishandling church funds.

Paul would see to it that the lavishly large gift would be collecvted, carried, and distributed without loss.

Those who handle church finances should:

D. Be <u>conscientious</u> about the management of material things in the eyes of God and men (v.21)

"Providing for honest things" – Having regard for that which is good. Paul wanted a good testimony of honest money management in God's eyes and in man's eyes. You see, some might argue, Titus is honest; we can trust him to get the money safely delivered; but it does not matter how honest a person may be, you don't want to provide occasion for temptation nor for false accusation.

IV. Ministerial integrity involves <u>proven diligence</u> in past service (v.22)

"Oftentimes proved diligent" – This third brother who would accompany Titus and another brother was selected as a man of integrity due to his past and present faithfulness. He was given many various tasks and at many various times proved faithful. Therefore, he now can be trusted to carry out this ministry.

It is God's plan that a man be found faithful before being entrusted with important ministry. As a deacon must "first be proved" (1 Tim. 3:10) before holding the office of a deacon.

V. Ministerial integrity involves <u>team labor</u> in local church ministry (v.23)

Titus is described as:

1) "My partner" – one who shares in my ministry; one who fellowships in Paul's work.

2) "Fellow helper" – co-laborer; joint workers. Titus worked together with Paul on behalf of the Corinthians.

"Messengers" – *apostoloi* – sent ones by the churches

Conclusion: v.24

Paul calls on the Corinthians here to publically demonstrate love for these ministers of integrity and at the same time to have integrity so that the good words Paul said about them would not be a disappointment.