

The Question:

In *2 Corinthians 8:18*, the Apostle Paul refers to an unnamed brother:

“And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.”

Why doesn't Paul mention his name, especially when in many other letters he explicitly names his co-workers?

To understand this, let's examine the broader context and theological implications.

The Jerusalem Collection

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church about a financial offering being collected for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem (see *2 Corinthians 8-9*). This was a significant act of Christian unity between Gentile and Jewish believers and a demonstration of love and solidarity within the early Church (cf. *Romans 15:25-27*).

To ensure transparency and integrity in handling this gift, Paul sends a delegation. He mentions three people:

1. **Titus** - explicitly named (verses 16-17).
2. **"The brother praised by all the churches"** (verse 18).
3. **"Our brother,"** known for his zeal and reliability (verse 22).

Who Is This Praised Brother?

2 Corinthians 8:18-19

"And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering..."

Over the centuries, scholars have speculated about the identity of this man. Suggestions include:

- **Luke** - often seen as a faithful companion of Paul and author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts.
- **Barnabas** - known for his early partnership with Paul and generosity (cf. Acts 4:36-37).
- **Apollos, Mark, Aristarchus** - all notable gospel workers who sometimes traveled with Paul.

However, none of these suggestions can be confirmed from Scripture. Paul's deliberate choice to leave the name out may point us to a deeper truth.

Reputation Over Recognition

Paul emphasizes **the brother's reputation**, not his identity:

“...praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.” (v.18)

This suggests that the man was already well-known to the churches for his dedication and preaching. His character and fruit in ministry were his credentials. Paul didn't need to name him—his **reputation preceded him**.

This fits a recurring New Testament theme: **God values a servant's faithfulness over their fame** (cf. *Matthew 6:1-4, Philipians 2:29-30*). In the body of Christ, names are secondary to service. The early Church often recognized leaders based on their conduct and impact, not titles or public image.

Similarly, the third unnamed brother (verse 22) is described as:

“...our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters...”

Again, no name—only a commendation of his proven character.

Practical Reflection for Today

Many ministers today focus on **promoting their names, titles, or images**, yet their actual ministry impact is unclear. But biblical ministry is **never about self-promotion**. Even **Jesus** often avoided public recognition (see *Mark 1:43–45*), letting His **works** testify of Him (cf. *John 10:25*).

The unnamed brothers in 2 Corinthians 8 teach us this:

In the Kingdom of God, it is better to be known for your faithfulness than to be famous for your name.

Our lives should reflect *Matthew 5:16*:

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Conclusion

Paul’s omission of the names in 2 Corinthians 8 is not a mystery to solve, but a lesson to learn. The gospel doesn’t advance through personal branding—it advances through humble, committed service. These unnamed brothers show us what true Christian leadership looks like: **recognized not by name, but by godly character** and gospel-centered service.

Shalom.

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