

1CO 16:1-4 "Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me."

As we approach the latter part of this letter Paul is going to move dramatically from the focus of instruction and theology concerning the resurrection to some very practical matters which were to be planned for and carried out before he came to the Corinthian church.

John MacArthur puts it well when he says, "[Paul] brings us rather abruptly from the future life back to the present."

And of course, as important as the future life is, we still live in the present and have responsibilities to God today, while at the same time hoping for the future. In fact, the blessed hope we have is designed by God to motivate us to live in such a way as to show the world how our future gives us joy in the here and now. Both Peter and John address this.

2PE 3:14 "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

1JO 3:2-3 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."

And so, none of us can say that we'll simply wait on the sidelines or do our own thing until Jesus comes, as if we are waiting at the bus station with nothing to do. Our future must also look to the present as we desire to live for our Lord today to His honor and glory.

But again, it's not as though the Lord kicks us out of the nest and expects us to fend for ourselves until He comes back. In this very

letter to the Corinthians Paul makes it clear that the Lord will be with us every moment in this life as He strengthens us for the work He has in store for us.

1CO 1:8-9 "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

His faithfulness and love for us was dramatically seen in His crucifixion and resurrection. It was this work for us which allows us to know with certainty that He will never leave us or forsake us. And since this is the case it must affect our daily life, which is why Paul closes the fifteenth chapter the way he does.

1CO 15:58 "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

With that said Paul now moves on to things which appear to be more mundane. And there might be the temptation to quickly read through this section so we can get on with more important things, more exciting things. That would be a big mistake. Remember, this is God's word, inspired by the Holy Spirit. And every word is for our instruction and edification.

1CO 16:1-2 "Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

There are a number of things here which are very instructive and very encouraging. First, notice that Paul is not so "heavenly minded that he's no earthly good", as some people in this world have accused Christians of being.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with meeting the physical needs of people. But along with that we should never neglect their spiritual needs. We need to deal with the whole man. And so, Paul's desire to meet the needs of the poor, for example, was something he was eager to do.

GAL 2:9-10 "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that

we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."

And now, Paul wants these believers in Corinth to eagerly do the same in taking up a collection of money. And notice that this collection was not simply put on the Corinthians. Paul was encouraging all the churches to do the same. That's what he implies when he says, "Do what I told the Galatian churches to do."

Galatia was a large region with a number of churches which included believers in Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Colossae. But we know that Paul didn't limit this collection to just those churches since he mentions to the Romans how other believers in different regions participated.

ROM 15:26 "For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem."

Macedonia is present day Yugoslavia and Romania, while Achaia is present day Greece, which would have included Corinth.

Evidently, this particular collection was known worldwide among the churches and was a big effort to help the believers in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Keep in mind that shortly after the church was started in Jerusalem there arose a persecution which saw its catalyst with the stoning of Stephen.

ACT 6:8-10 "Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) -Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke."

As Stephen continued his speech to the Jews he ended up accusing them of being murderers, which you and I may not consider to be the best evangelistic tactic, but it was what the Holy Spirit wanted these people to hear.

ACT 7:52-59 "Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of *the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him* - 53 you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." 54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full

of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

This of course was the beginning of the persecution with a Pharisee by the name of Saul heading it up.

ACT 8:1 "And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."

This persecution led to many Jewish believers having to leave their businesses, their places of employment, and their families. Many of them didn't have a way to bring in any income. Add to that the problem with the famine which had hit the area a few years later.

ACT 11:28-30 "One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul."

Imagine what it was like with food being scarce and very expensive, and many Christians not even having a job to buy it. It's hard for you and me to imagine what it was like and yet the Christians in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria were still expected to do the work for the Lord there.

There's the tendency today in this country to complain about serving God when the weather changes. "It's raining out, how can we go to church?" Or, "my boss yelled at me and I'm psychologically challenged and unable to function and be an effective witness for Christ."

We laugh at stuff like this and yet I've heard stories through the years of people not being functioning members of the body of Christ for a lot sillier reasons. The work was still going forward under the direction of the apostles in Jerusalem, despite the extreme poverty and the persecution there among them.

And yet, this gave other Christians worldwide the opportunity to help the church in Jerusalem and Judea in their ministries by meeting their most basic needs of food, clothing and shelter.

In fact, not to have helped would have shown anything but true Christian love as James points out in his letter.

JAM 2:14-17 "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Paul understood this which is why he was one of those people who was heading up this campaign to gather money for the needy and he expected the church in Corinth to participate. In fact, it seems to be one of the issues the Corinthians raised in their letter to Paul, and so they were probably interested in how Paul was going to collect it and when. So, it appears they were willing to help.

Paul's answer to the logistics of how this money was to be collected and distributed is pointed out in the next verse of our text.

1CO 16:2 "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

Paul is suggesting that he wants a systematic way of collecting this money on an individual basis. He starts by saying that on the first day of the week. What does he mean by this?

Well, it's clear from other portions of God's word that the first day of the week was a time in which the early church gathered together to worship the risen Christ. Now, among Jews, especially in Jerusalem, there would still have been the tendency to worship in the Synagogues on the Sabbath.

But that wouldn't last long after the resurrection of Christ since those unbelieving Jews in these Synagogues would have kicked the Christians out for spreading heresy.

It's interesting that "the first post-resurrection service was held on Easter evening, when the risen Lord appeared to His frightened and disheartened disciples." (John MacArthur)

JOH 20:19-20 "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."

The next time Jesus appeared to the disciples is when they were gathered together a week later, possibly the next Sunday, or the first day of the week.

JOH 20:26-28 "***A week later his disciples were in the house again***, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus Himself was setting the precedent for worshipping Him on the first day of the week. The apostles immediately began following this practice and even Paul honored this practice as the norm for the church.

ACT 20:7 "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."

The breaking of bread was the equivalent of partaking of the Lord's Supper together as the body of Christ. In fact, by the end of the first century, the first day of the week, where believers came together to worship the Lord, came to be known as the "Lord's Day."

And so, we have the apostle John recording for us in REV 1:10 "***On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit***, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,..."

This is why the church traditionally worships on the first day of the week, which we call the Lord's Day. This is not to be confused with the Sabbath which is the last days of the week, or parts of Friday and Saturday, which is when the Jews traditionally come together.

This is not to suggest that if Christians were to worship on Saturday that they would be condemned. But those who worship on Saturday cannot in turn condemn those Christians who are only following the example of Jesus and His apostles by worshipping on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day.

But the point Paul is making is that on the first day of the week, when you come together with the rest of the body of Christ to worship the Lord, you need to include taking an offering with the express purpose of helping the poor believers in Jerusalem.

What this clearly shows us is that giving, in any form on the Lord's Day, when coming together with the body of Christ, is a form of worship. There's a tendency for Christians to think that their only obligation in giving is to simply pay their dues.

That's not what giving unto the Lord is meant to be. Before you ever come to church you ought to have it in your heart what you're going to give, and to give it with the express purpose of bringing it before the Lord as you give cheerfully. To do anything less borders on legalism.

This is why you don't hear me speak about bringing your tithes to the Lord. The tithe in Israel was required by God's law. In fact, the tithe in Israel, which over the course of a year was really closer to 23% instead of the 10% that we usually associate with a tithe, was actually collected as a tax to help support the Levites and the poor and the widows.

As John MacArthur points out, the [tithe] in Israel "never involved freewill, spontaneous giving to the Lord. The condemnation of Malachi 3:8-10 is for failure to pay the required taxes to support the priests who ran the nation."

This doesn't mean that the Israelites weren't permitted or even encouraged to give a free will offering as unto the Lord as a way to worship God.

PRO 3:9-10 "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

"The idea was to give to the Lord generously and to give to the Lord first." (MacArthur)

We see this principle with Israel while they're still in the desert as the Lord instructed them to bring an offering to build the Tabernacle, or sanctuary.

EXO 25:1 "The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give."

The point here is to honor the Lord with a giving from the heart, not under compulsion. In fact, the people gave so much out of thanks to their God that Moses actually had to tell them to stop giving.

EXO 36:6-7 "Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, 7 because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work."

Wouldn't that be a nice problem to have in the church today.

"Required giving was taxation; freewill giving was to be from the heart, with the amount left up to the worshiper. David had the key idea when he said that he would not give God that which cost him nothing. 2Sam. 24:24" (MacArthur)

In a similar way Christians are required to pay taxes to support the government under which they live, not unlike how Israel paid taxes to support the government under which they lived, which was directed by God Himself.

Didn't Jesus say, after asking for a coin in response to a question, if it was right to pay taxes to Rome, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's?"

To have the church require that you pay 10% of your labor is nothing short of a tax. It is giving under compulsion. To have the church regulate the amount you give is also encouraging compulsion. This is not the way we are to give unto the Lord. Paul points this out in the second letter he wrote to the Corinthians.

2CO 9:7 "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

And so, to suggest that a tithe is the standard for all God's people to give is to do harm to giving from the heart. Because invariably people will only do what is required of them, not what the Lord may be speaking to their heart. And so, if someone can give more than 10% they may not feel compelled to give any more.

If someone, for whatever reason cannot give 10%, they will feel as though they've sinned against the Lord when in fact that may not be the case. Now, I also need to add that simply because we have



freedom to give to the Lord from the heart does not mean we have freedom not to give.

It is the Lord who desires for us to worship him with our increase so that His work might flourish and go forward as we give with a cheerful heart. But that's different from me brow-beating people with a requirement to give 10% by misrepresenting the Lord and His word as I use it to intimidate you to give a certain amount. That's legalism.

We have been set free in the Lord to worship Him in spirit and in truth and we ought to pursue our Lord in our worship as we consider that He didn't give 10% of Himself to us, He gave it all. And everything we possess comes from God. He desires that we be faithful stewards with it and use it in advancing His kingdom to his glory.

But He doesn't want us worshipping Him with an attitude, or under compulsion, because that is not true worship. It's between you and God what you give to Him, but it should be done prayerfully and from your heart and cheerfully, knowing that it pleases Him as we do it for Him.

Just like that woman with the two small copper coins in Scripture we are to give out of thanks and do it with the attitude that the things of this world are not what will last forever. What we do for the Lord will.

If you'd like to learn more about the tithe you can get my study from the Hebrews Commentary Series at our web site entitled, "To tithe or not to tithe."

Again, Paul is trying to encourage these believers in Corinth to worship the Lord as they help fellow believers. This collection for the poor and oppressed saints in Jerusalem was to be done on the first day of the week when the believers regularly met to worship God.

They were to "set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

This sum of money was not designated to be any particular amount, but that which was in keeping with their incomes. In other words, as the Lord has blessed you, you in turn bless the Lord as you bless others.

And so, we are to bless others with our incomes. We are to bless the work He has placed us in. We are to bless each other if the need arises. We are to bless the works we support as we send money to distant missionaries in India, for example.

Paul wanted them to have advance notice of this need so that they could plan on what they could give and to prayerfully consider what they could do in helping the needy. This is one of the reasons he says to do this in advance so that he wouldn't have to take a collection when he came. In other words, let's have the money ready to go when I get there.

1CO 16:3 "Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me."

As harsh as Paul has been in rebuking these believers he has always made it clear that he loved them and desired for them to do the work of the Lord as he addresses them as brothers and sisters. And here he shows that he trusts that they will choose the right people for the job of delivering the money.

In fact, he's willing to write letters of introduction for those men which the believers in Corinth approve. Paul is not going to choose them, he leaves that up to the Corinthians. And he's willing to travel to Jerusalem with them if that's what they decide.

Just as Paul entrusts these people to serve the Lord with their money, the Lord is actually the One who is encouraging us to do the same. We are to be stewards of all things the Lord provides for us to be used for His glory; be they the gifts of the Spirit or the income He permits us to pursue.

1CO 10:31 "So .... whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."