

Sermon 77: The Collection of the Saints: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Text: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me..."

Introduction: The final portion of **1 Corinthians** will address three basic issues.

- **A financial collection for the suffering saints in Jerusalem: 16:1-4**
- **Paul's upcoming ministry and travel plans: 16:5-12**
- **Some final exhortations: 16:13-24**

Summary: One of Paul's final concerns centered on the church's need to provide monetary relief for the suffering Jerusalem church.

Proposition: God wants to use us to minister to the needs of others.

Interrogative: How are we to do this?

Truth 1: Understand the nature of local church worship:

- **We need to understand the kind of financial gift Paul is describing and where that kind of gift fits into local church worship.**
- **Background: The first century church would have functioned with many similarities to the first century synagogue:**
 - **Example: James 2:2-4** "If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment...Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?"
 - The word used to describe the gathering was **συναγωγή**.
 - A very high percentage of first century Christians were Jewish or Jewish proselytes before their conversion.
 - This would have shaped their view of worship.
- **In the synagogue:**
 - **Scripture reading: Matthew 23:2** "Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat..."
 - **Exhortation from the scriptures by a Rabbi: Luke 4:17-22** "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the

book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth..."

- **Psalms singing:** Some were designed for festive occasions and others for regular weekly worship.
- **Public Prayer:**
- **Financial collection:** This would be made prior to the beginning of the Sabbath, so not in the worship gathering.
- **In the local church: Acts 2:41-42** "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers..."
 - **Public Scripture reading: 1 Timothy 4:13** "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine..."
 - **Preaching and Teaching:**
 - **2 Timothy 4:2** "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine..."
 - **Acts 20:7** "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight..."
 - **Congregational singing: Colossians 3:16** "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord..."
 - **Public prayer:** 1 Corinthians 11
 - **Collection: 1 Corinthians 16:2** "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him..."
 - **Observing the Ordinances:**
 - **Baptisms were likely held in public places: Acts 2:40-41** "With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and

the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls..."

- **The Lord's Table was likely observed wherever the church gathered for worship: 1 Corinthians 11**
- **Each element of the gathering was an integral part of the worship:**
 - **Public Scripture reading:**
 - Some people were illiterate.
 - Very few had any written portions of Scripture
 - This allowed them to internalize God's word and submit to its authority.
 - **Preaching and Teaching:**
 - It deepened the congregation's understanding of the scripture.
 - It was directed to the conscience in a practical way.
 - It called them to take practical worshipful action on the Scriptures brought to their attention.
 - **Congregational singing:**
 - This verbalized the internalized Scripture.
 - This developed a healthy sense of community in the church.
 - **Public Prayer:**
 - This was led by men who were leaders in the congregation.
 - This also developed a healthy sense of community in the church.
 - **Collection:**
 - This provided funds for at least three basic needs.
 - Care for those who labored in the word and doctrine.
 - Care for those who were destitute widows.
 - Support for those who were partnered with their local church in ministry.
 - Financial assistance for other Christians facing unprecedented hardships.
 - These gifts were to be given in proportion to God's blessings.
 - **Observing the Ordinances:**
 - **The Lord's Table:** a time for the body to proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.
 - **Baptisms:** a time to give new believers an opportunity to publicly confess their faith in Christ and see a visible picture of the gospel.

Truth 2: Understand the similarities and differences between Old Testament and New Testament giving:

- **A basic structure for Old Testament giving:**
 - **Three Levels of Tithe:**
 - **Levitical Tithe:** This supported those who served in the tabernacle and educated the people from scripture.
 - **Leviticus 27:30-33** "Whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD..."
 - **Numbers 18:21** "I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service...of the tabernacle of the congregation..."
 - **Festival Tithe:** This provided the food and drink needed to enjoy the Old Testament feasts as a community.
 - **Deuteronomy 14:22-23** "Tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there...that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always..."
 - **Relief Tithe:** This was taken up every 3 years for the poor in Israel:
 - **Deuteronomy 26:12-13** "Tithe all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled..."
 - **Addition offerings:**
 - **First firsts:**
 - A firstborn child was viewed as God's, and was to be redeemed through the payment of a price.
 - A first born amongst clean animal would be sacrificed to God.
 - The first-fruits of the harvest were to be given back to God by taking the produce to the temple.
 - **Free will Offerings:**
 - Free-will offerings could be offered individually as a thank you to God and an expression of heartfelt worship.
 - Free-will offerings could be offered and enjoyed communally as a collective expression of heartfelt worship.
 - **Sin Offerings:**
 - The kind of offering was specific.
 - The offering symbolized the transfer of guilt, shedding of blood, and substitutionary judgment.

- The offering was not to be eaten by the one presenting the sacrifice.
- **Gleaning:**
 - The practice of leaving portions of the field unharvested, so the destitute could collect the unharvested portions.
 - This provided a means for survival without removing some level of labor and responsibility.
- **The theological and practical implications:**
 - It reminded God's people that everything they had both belonged to Him and was from Him.
 - It provided materially for the Levites who had no physical inheritance like the rest of the tribes.
 - It provided food and drink for the festive times on the Jewish calendar.
 - It provided a way to care for the needy and the strangers in the land who were defenseless.
 - It expressed of concern for the poor, worship to God, and humble dependence upon Him.
- **A basic structure for New Testament giving:**
 - **Faithful stewardship:**
 - **1 Peter 4:10** "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God..."
 - **1 Corinthians 4:1-2** "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful..."
 - **Shaped by Biblical principles:**
 - **Priority: Matthew 6:33** "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..."
 - **Sincerity:**
 - **2 Corinthians 8:2-4** "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
 - **2 Corinthians 9:7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

- **Consistency: 1 Corinthians 16:2** "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come..."
- **Proportionately: 1 Corinthians 16:2** "As God hath prospered him..."
- **Generosity: 1 Timothy 6:17-19** "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life..."
- **Sacrificially: 2 Corinthians 8:2-3** "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing..."
- **Financial duties of the local church:**
 - **Duty 1: Support those who minister in the word and doctrine:**
 - **1 Timothy 5:17-18** "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward..."
 - **Galatians 6:6** "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things..."
 - **Duty 2: Take care of the truly destitute in the church: 1 Timothy 5:3-16** "Honor widows that are widows indeed...If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed..."
 - **Duty 3: Partner financially with faithful church planters:**
 - **Local: Philippians 4:15-18** "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were

sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God..."

- **Cross Cultural: Romans 15:16-28** "I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation...But now having no more place in these parts...Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you...and to be brought on my way thitherward by you...But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem...For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain..."
- **Duty 4: Encourage suffering fellow believers:**
 - **Romans 12:13** "Distribute to the necessity of saints..."
 - **2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15** "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints...this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you..."
 - **1 Corinthians 16:1-4** "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem..."

Truth 3: Understand Paul's wise instruction:

- **Paul's instruction was dealing with a relief situation:**
 - **During the Reign of Claudius: Acts 11:29-30** "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they

did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul..."

- **About Ten Years Later: Romans 15:25-28** "I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain..."
- **2 Corinthians 8-9 (9:7)** "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver..."
- **There was a basic order:**
 - **It was to be collected at the weekly worship gathering:** "On the first day of the week..."
 - **The giving was to be proportionate to one's ability:** "As God has prospered..."
 - Proportionate has the idea of a percentage.
 - The wealthiest members of the church carried the highest load though it was proportionate to their ability.
 - **The collection was to be collected and transferred through trustworthy leaders in the church:** "Whomsoever ye shall approve..."

Application: Putting this collection into perspective:

- **Christians, especially American Christians should be generous.**
- **Individual Christians should purposefully determine the proportionality of their giving.**
- **A regular pattern of giving to the local church should be a consistent part of our local church worship.**
- **The tithe principle is a great place to start, though NT giving is different than OT giving.**
- **The church must prioritize how it uses funds:**
 - Financially support those who labor in the word and doctrine.
 - Provide a healthy form of assistance to those who are financially struggling to meet the necessities.
 - Financially support those who are "widows indeed."
 - Partner with local and cross-cultural church planters.
 - Express care for fellow believers who are experiencing exceptional hardship.
- **The church must establish practices that safeguard the collection and distribution of funds.**

