THE SCROLLS

Openhanded: Releasing Our Grip On What Grips Us | 1 Cor. 16:1-4

Life Lesson

True financial security in the Christian life comes not from hoarding wealth but from intentionally releasing it to fuel God's kingdom. When we make giving our first priority, setting aside our resources on the first day of the week as an act of worship, we deliberately shift our trust from our bank accounts to our God. Paul's instructions challenge us to move beyond viewing giving as a forced obligation or a legalistic minimum; instead, it must be a joyful, proportionate response to how God has prospered us. By adopting this disciplined rhythm of sacrificial generosity, we actively carry out the church's "give and go" mission, discovering that trusting God with our finances breaks the grip of materialism and transforms us into reliable stewards of His grace.

Examine Scripture

Read 1 Cor. 16:1-4

As you read Scripture, slow down and ask these three questions to move from information to transformation:

1. What does this passage reveal about who God is?

2. How is God calling you to grow or change?

3. What is God leading you to do or who is He calling you to be in your everyday life?

Surrender: Trusting God More

The early church was born in a crucible of radical generosity, instinctively taking responsibility for caring for its own from the start. When the Apostle Paul penned the final chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, he had just led his readers to the theological summit of the bodily resurrection. Yet as Chapter 16 opens, Paul abruptly brings the church back down to earth, pivoting from the glories of eternity to the immediate, practical realities of the offering plate. Though Paul spent much of this letter correcting the Corinthians' severe dysfunctions, his closing remarks overflow with pastoral compassion and a clear, commanding vision for the church.

Here, Paul offers a masterclass in the theology and practice of Christian stewardship. The central theme is inescapable: true giving is the visible overflow of trusting God more than our own resources. Much like a basketball coach drawing up a simple yet highly effective "give-and-go" play, Paul casts a vision in which the church's giving directly fuels the church's going. He specifically addresses a collection for the Lord's people in Jerusalem, who faced extreme hardship because of a severe famine. For Paul, this offering was never merely a financial transaction; it was a profound opportunity to cement the spiritual unity between Jewish and Gentile believers.

As the Puritan theologian John Owen wrote, "We have nothing but what we have received, and therefore we can boast of nothing, and should hoard nothing." As we examine 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, we find a practical, biblically sound blueprint that challenges us to see our finances not as our own kingdom's treasury, but as a direct instrument of worship to the King.

"Now about the collection for the saints: Do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches." (v. 1)

Personal Notes

Paul begins this section with the phrase “Now about,” which translates the Greek “de peri” (δέ περί). This phrase recurs throughout 1 Corinthians to signal that Paul is addressing the items in their letter to him, one by one, and answering their specific questions (7:1, 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). The Corinthians had written to him to inquire about a special offering being collected by predominantly Gentile churches for the predominantly Jewish church in Jerusalem, and they wanted to know how they could participate. For all the things the Corinthians got wrong, they got this one thing right. They genuinely wanted to be part of what God is doing throughout the world and to help the Jerusalem Church.

The Greek word used for “collection” here is “logeia” (λογεία), which is the technical term for the actual activity of taking up the contributions. In other words, Paul is not referring to the collection as the gift or the amount; he is referring to the very act of intentionally giving and sending the offering. Often, we see giving as “the collection” or “the offering” as a noun rather than a verb. The act of giving, and the heart behind it (verb), matters more than the offering itself (noun).

The collection (love offering) was intended for the “Lord's people,” the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The “mother-church” in Jerusalem faced dire circumstances and severe hardship because of a devastating famine. Paul was deeply burdened by this need. He saw hurting brothers and sisters in the faith, and he recognized that meeting the Jerusalem saints’ physical needs was the most tangible way to cement relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Remember, there were great tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. The Jewish believers demanded an outward, physical sign of commitment (circumcision), yet Paul saw this offering as a greater outward sign of commitment and love.

This collection reminds us that ministry requires money, and local churches are not funded by corporate sponsors. The church's local ministry must be supported by those by its faith family, as they have a vested interest in what happens. As Charles Spurgeon once noted, "With the Christian, the giving of his substance is not a matter of choice, but of duty and delight." The Corinthians were eager to give because they understood they were part of a larger body. Giving is a way to invest in something bigger than yourself: the kingdom of God. Though we are invited to be part of something bigger than ourselves, giving is not optional for believers; it is a mandate and a sign of maturity for true disciples.

Personal Notes

"On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come." (v. 2)

For those of us who are pragmatic, Paul lays out a practical, structured blueprint for giving that serves as a pattern for believers today. First, giving is to be regular and tied to worship. Paul instructs them to give "on the first day of every week." This is our earliest evidence of the Early Church's consecration of Sunday. In biblical times, people were typically paid on the first day of the week for their previous week's labor, so Paul encourages them to give to God first as an act of worship. You cannot truly worship God by bringing leftovers; He deserves your first-fruits. Disciplined giving is part of the church's regular worship.

Second, giving is inclusive. Paul specifies that "each one of you" is to give. No follower of Christ is exempt from this responsibility and act of worship. It is assumed that everyone, regardless of wealth, will give something, though giving is not meant to be compulsory or oppressive. Relative income should never prevent planned, systematic giving.

Third, giving is to be proportionate. Paul commands them to save and give "in keeping with how he is prospering." Notice carefully what Paul does not do; he does not prescribe a flat percentage. We often get caught up in whether we have to tithe exactly 10% and whether it is from net or gross income. The Old Testament tithe functioned much like an income tax system for the national entity of Israel, with multiple tithes and offerings that totaled roughly 23 1/3% of a person's income over a three-year period. This system was attached to the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, we are to give proportionately as we prosper. The amount is set by the giver in proportion to their weekly gains. For some, a tenth is far too little, while for others, it is all they have. When we give proportionally, we acknowledge that every dollar we earn is a gift from a sovereign God and trust Him enough to return a portion for His kingdom.

Fourth, giving is to be intentional and unmanipulated. Paul tells them to "set something aside" and "save." He issues this strict command so that "no collections will need to be made" when he arrives. Paul did not want them to give out of guilt or emotional manipulation while he stood before them. People do not give because of manipulative appeals; they give because of vision. Giving

Personal Reflection

1. When I evaluate my financial habits, do I give to God my first-fruits at the beginning of the week, or merely offer Him the leftover scraps of my budget?

2. Am I limiting my generosity to a legalistic minimum percentage, or am I truly giving proportionally and sacrificially as God has prospered me?

3. Does my current giving pattern reflect a joyful act of worship and a deep, abiding trust in God's provision?

4. How does my personal financial stewardship directly fuel the church's "give and go" mission in my local community and to the ends of the earth?

5. What practical steps must I take to ensure my giving is disciplined, planned, and intentional rather than driven by guilt, manipulation, or spur-of-the-moment impulses?

Commentaries

ESV Expository Commentary: Romans-Galatians (Volume 10) by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament Edited by Kenneth Barker

1 Corinthians by John MacArthur

Mt. Zion's Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to ***MAKE***, ***MATURE***, *and* ***MULTIPLY*** *disciples of Jesus Christ.*

must be a deliberate, willing act of trust between the believer and the Lord.

"When I arrive, I will send with letters those you recommend to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it is suitable for me to go as well, they will travel with me." (Vs. 3-4)

After establishing the heart of the collection, Paul addresses its accountability. The church's offerings must always be handled with absolute integrity. Paul intends to provide letters of introduction, common in business dealings, to the men the church approved to deliver the funds.

Paul understood the danger of mishandling funds. He wanted representatives from the donating churches to deliver the gift personally. Paul was even hoping to go with them. The Corinthian Church had at least three advantages in sending a delegation with the collection. First, it was for safety. Carrying a considerable sum of coin required safety in numbers. Second, it ensured accountability by making sure the Jerusalem Church received the entire offering. Lastly, and more importantly, Gentile believers personally delivering a gift to Jewish believers was vital to demonstrating the Church's unity. It provided genuine fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers.

This level of transparency is vital for the local church today. The money people give to God to further the Gospel must be faithfully protected and never misused. When a church manages its finances with strict accountability, requiring multiple leaders to count, sign off, and manage deposits, it honors the sacrifice of its people and maintains a blameless testimony before the watching world. Giving is not just an act of individual worship; it is also an act of genuine fellowship among believers, as we give funds to support ministry and missions together.

True biblical stewardship always requires a profound step of faith. J.C. Ryle once observed, "A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing." Paul's instructions to the Corinthians compel us to examine the tangible cost of our devotion. When we faithfully set aside our resources on the first day of the week, we visibly declare that our ultimate security rests in the Provider rather than in the provision. As we carry out this spiritual "give and go" within our church family, we must recognize that our sacrificial giving fuels the Gospel's spread from our local neighborhoods to the ends of the earth.