

INSTRUCTION ON FINANCIAL COLLECTIONS 1 CORINTHIANS 16:01–04

Introduction

This passage spells out some wise instructions on church offerings and collections. The instructions have too often been ignored; and the result has been scandal, rumour and destruction of the cause of Christ. (See Acts 20:4-6; 2 Cor. 8:16-24.)

- I. First, the instructions are for every church (v. 1).
- II. Second, the instructions (vv. 2-4).

I. 1 Corinthians 16:01 Stewardship

First, the instructions on giving are for every church. Note that Paul had given the very same instructions to the churches of Galatia which numbered several churches. What Paul taught here, he apparently taught everywhere. This seems to be the set order in which church offerings and collections are to be handled.

Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. (v. 1)

The collection referred to was a special offering being taken for the poor believers in Jerusalem (cp. Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1, 3; 2 Cor. 8:1f; 9:1f; Acts 24:17). For some reason the Jerusalem believers were suffering extreme poverty. Some commentators have speculated that the suffering was due...

- to severe persecutions by the Jews (cp. 1 Th. 2:14-16).
- to the failure of common ownership which the early church practiced, expecting the Lord's immediate return (cp. Acts 4:32-37).

It had been some thirty years since the early church had begun to practice common ownership of goods. The opinion of some is that the system had failed and caused widespread poverty among the Jerusalem believers.

Whatever the immediate cause of the poverty, the Jerusalem believers were in desperate need. Their need was so desperate that a worldwide offering from all Christian churches was needed to meet the crisis.

Thought 1. The lesson is clear. The church must meet the desperate needs of men: the needs of the poor, the hungry, the diseased, the homeless, the lost and the multitudes of others who have little if anything in this world including health and hope. Believers must give, and give sacrificially. Believers must do all they can. The instructions of this Scripture are for all the churches of the world.

Mat 5:42 "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

Luke 3:11 John answered, “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.”

Luke 12:33 “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

Rom 12:13 Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

II. **1 Corinthians 16:02–04 Stewardship — Offerings**

Second, the instructions. Note six significant points.

1. When is the offering to be received? “On the first day of every week,” which is Sunday. According to the Jewish calendar, the first day of the week was Sunday. The Jews, of course, worshipped on the Sabbath, but the early Christian believers began to worship on the first day of the week. Their primary reason for switching the day of worship was to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord. In fact, they even began to call the first day of the week *The Lord’s Day* (cp. Jn. 20:19; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).

Note: the believers were not to make only occasional offerings, they were to give regularly, every Lord’s day: “On the first day of every week.”

1 Cor 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.

2. Who is to give? “Each one of you.” The instruction is clearly stated. But why would God expect the poor to give as well as the middle class and the rich? Paul deals with this same offering in another passage and gives two strong reasons why everyone is to be involved in meeting the needs of the world (2 Cor. 9:12-14).
 - a. Giving stirs people to praise God. Praising God...
 - excites and motivates people
 - pleases God
 - b. Giving builds a strong fellowship among believers (2 Cor. 9:14).

2 Cor 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

2 Cor 9:12-14 *This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.*

Heb 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (cp. Prov. 11:25; 22:9; Isa. 58:10; Lk. 6:38)*

3. How is the offering to be given? By setting aside a sum of money. This could not mean that a person is to keep his offering "stored up" or set aside for long periods of time before giving it. Paul explicitly says that it is to be given to the church every week *so that there will be no need for a special offering* when he comes to the church. Therefore, to "set aside" must mean...
- to put the offering in the *storehouse*, that is, the treasury of the church.
 - to lay the money aside at home during the week so that the person will not spend the offering.

Thought 1. The importance of this point can never be over-stressed. How often believers spend the Lord's money simply because they failed to set it aside.

Prov 3:9 *Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops.*

Mal 3:10 *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."*

4. Why are believers to give? Because God has prospered them. God looks after His people; He blesses them. The Lord Jesus clearly taught that all the necessities of life would be given to His people. Therefore, God expects believers to give as He has prospered them. Closely note the principle: a believer is to give on the basis of his prosperity. This definitely means that the rich are to give generously, very generously. (See Mt. 19:16-22; 19:23-26; 19:27-30.)

Acts 11:29 *The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.*

2 Cor 8:12 *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.*

2 Cor 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.*

1 Tim 6:17-19 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God,*

who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Deu 16:17 *Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.*

5. Where are believers to give the offerings? At the regular services of their church. Paul is clear: there is not to be the need for a special offering when he returns to the church. The offering is to be taken weekly as they meet for worship.

1 Cor 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.*

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6. In receiving the offering there was one administrative function that had to be carefully handled. The men who were to handle the offering were to be hand-picked. Note that they were to be men of character:

=> men whom the church could “approve” and trust to handle the money.

=> men whom Paul could commend through letters of commendation. He would have to write letters on their behalf to the Jerusalem church.

Note also that Paul himself would not touch the money. He would thereby be above reproach at all times. Verse four really stresses the point: if his schedule allows him to make the journey to Jerusalem, then the men will still personally deliver the money to the Jerusalem believers.

Thought 1. This is a lesson that needs to be heeded by all preachers, whether pastor, evangelist or teacher. ■