

## 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

### "The Collection & The Conclusion"

Paul the apostle was an incredibly pragmatic kind of man. Every now & then you'll hear the phrase something to the effect of, "Some people are so heavenly minded that they're no earthly good." Meaning that they're so engrossed in searching out the high heavenly doctrines that they're not really involved in practical areas of need. They like to speak in deep spiritual ways, but they won't engage in the everyday practicalities of ministry. That was *not* the apostle Paul. He's just taken us into the heights of resurrection only to bring us back to earth by instructing us in how to be about the collection.

He goes right from speaking about our eternal victory, to discussing our right now responsibility w/money. But in truth, the one isn't really too far removed from the other. Doctrine & duty go together; worship & works go hand in hand. Faith *in* Christ will evidence itself in works *for* (or on behalf of) Christ. So let's just jump right in...

#### Vs 1-2

Allow me to prepare you in advance so that you're not worried about it later. We're going to spend the lion share of our time right here in these 1<sup>st</sup> 2 verses of Ch 16.

When Paul says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints," what that means is that he's replying to question that was brought to him on behalf of the Christians in Corinth (no differently than in Ch 7, Ch 8 & Ch 12).

This particular collection he's referring to was an offering that he was taking to the church in Jerusalem to be distributed to the poor/needy among *them* as the leadership in *that* church deemed appropriate. It was actually a unified effort among *several* different Gentile churches that Paul had founded to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30, 24:17, Rom 15:26, 2 Cor 8, 9).

Why was the Jerusalem church in such need? For one thing, they were supporting a large number of widows (Acts 6). On top of that, they were in the midst of a devastating famine (Acts 11). Add to that, this was at a point whereby persecution was on the rise, people losing their jobs, their livelihoods. It cost them to lead lives set apart to J.C.!

& Paul had a burden to bring the Jewish/Gentile churches together. Let's remind ourselves that before Jesus (through the blood of His cross) made it clear that in Him there was neither Jew/Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free but we are all one in Him...

There was a mentality in the mind of the Jews that Gentiles were somehow beneath them. After all, God hadn't chosen them, He'd chosen the *Jews*, had entrusted His word & His law to the Jews... Now; that mentality wasn't right, nor was it justified in Scripture.

But it existed nonetheless... So there was real struggle initially in accepting the Gentile churches on equal ground. Paul wanted to see that made right. This was an opportunity that he saw, that could help accomplish that. It was a way for the Gentile churches to just love *on*, show support & appreciation *for* their Jewish bros/sisters in a real, tangible way & in so doing build bridges that would help bring them together.

Not to mention that the Bible teaches that by whom we've been blessed spiritually, we have an obligation/duty to help support them materially. (You might write down & read Gal 6:6 or go back & visit the 1<sup>st</sup> 12 Vs of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ch of this book) Those who help us in a spiritual, *eternal* way, we support/help them in a material, temporary way. When Paul wrote to the Romans he said, *"But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things."*<sup>1</sup> The gospel had come to them, having gone out from Jerusalem, it was only appropriate that they show support in time of need to the church in Jerusalem.

Ok; couple things we want to note about this collection. #1 Paul speaks of the "orders" that he's given to the churches of Galatia & that it's something that they to "must do". The idea here is that giving really isn't an option. (& He'll develop that farther in a minute). But he didn't allow the church to put forth the pseudo spiritual position that they weren't going to give anything monetarily, but they'd *pray* for the Jerusalem church or something like that... (In place of any practical help, I've offered this prayer... ☺)

He's essentially saying, "Hey, you guys need to put your money where your mouth is. Whether or not everyone gives is between them & the Lord, but before the Lord you better give people the *opportunity* to contribute." –

Now; we're going to get into this a little bit but let me just say this. No one can ever *obligate* you to give even a single cent to the church. But we're going to discover that it's God's heart that *every believer* gives in some manner. If you're a working individual, you receive income of some kind. God desires that we honor Him to the extent that He's entrusted us w/whatever amount.

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<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 15:25-27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let me also say this, what's in view *here* is an “*extra collection*”. Paul isn't even speaking of the supporting of their local assembly, what he's speaking of here goes above & beyond that. So, if he puts these principles in place for an “extra collection”, (going somewhere else) how much more would they apply toward the ministry of which God has called us to be a part of personally? ... Look at Vs 2 (read).

I want you to notice the principles that Paul puts in place that pertain to our giving...

#1 He says, “On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside.” The idea here is that our giving is to be “systematic”, not random/haphazard or just whenever it crosses our mind. He's telling us that we should be in the habit of giving weekly, when we come to church. The early church gathered, not on Saturday, but on Sunday, the day that Jesus rose from the dead. – & Paul is saying that our *giving* should be connected to our *gathering*. Whenever they gathered together for worship & the study of God's word, Paul *commanded* them to receive an offering during that same time.

& I don't think his point was to bind us legalistically & say, “You need to parse your paycheck so that you have something each Sunday to contribute.” If I get paid on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> or whatever, when I come to church, I should be prepared to give the week of the 1<sup>st</sup> & the 15<sup>th</sup>... He's simply saying that we should be in the habit of giving systematically as opposed to randomly whenever I think about it. (Remember, we honor God w/our 1<sup>st</sup> fruits).

What else do we learn in Vs 2? Who was it specifically whom Paul applied this principle of giving? Those believers who are rich or can afford it more readily? No... He says, “...let *each one of you* lay something aside.”

Now; I'm going to let you off the hook w/respect to how much, or what amount you should be giving (though I believe I can create a compelling case for the tithe [the 10<sup>th</sup>] that preceded the law, was brought into the law & that Jesus acknowledged as well. & Even at that, that would just be God's portion, not an offering that *you/I* make, that's a study for another time). *But I will tell you w/out hesitation that if you claim to be a Christian, in some measure you should be a giver. If you're not a giver & you've walked w/the Lord for any amount of time, then something is out of step/sync in your Christian life... because God is a giver & God dwells in you. Family, we serve a giving God. & As we are transformed from glory to greater glory into the image of J.C., we will be givers as well.*

Follow me here. In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter we read, “...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'”<sup>2</sup> You understand the principle, right?

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Pe 1:15–16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He could've just as justifiably said, "Be righteous, for I am righteous" He could've said, "Be loving, for I am loving". Be gracious, be merciful, be – *giving*... The point found in the principle is this, as He *is* so we should *be*. If God is *in* you, His likeness should increasingly, over time, be shining *through* you. & Ladies & Gentlemen, you can search the Scriptures till you're blue in the face, but at the end of the day there's just no getting around the fact that we serve a graciously *giving* God!

What do we have but that God hasn't graciously, generously given it to us? So we shouldn't fear being overly generous in our giving. What farmer worries about sowing too much seed? He knows the more he sows, the more he will reap. & This is what Paul was talking about in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 9:6-8. You can sow sparingly & reap sparingly, or sow bountifully & reap bountifully, the choices in yours. – The Proverbs put it this way, "*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty.*"<sup>3</sup>

Now; please don't twist the analogy into some kind of "seed faith" theology. As though giving to God is an investment program & if you give God \$100, He'll give you back \$10,000. That's an egregious misuse & abuse of scripture of which people should be ashamed. – *God is searching your heart, & if you give to get, you'll never get. Listen, giving, at its core, should be sacrificial, not self-serving. As David said, "I refuse to give to God w/that which costs me nothing" it should come from the heart. But the point is that we can't out give God, God will be a debtor to no man.* Jesus said, "*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*"<sup>4</sup> Of course, the form in which God gives back to you may not always be material. It may be spiritual, it may be physical, it may be a reward that awaits you in the eternal... But the point is plain, the more you give (like the farmer sowing the seed) the more you will (ultimately/eternally) gain.

So, we're learning Biblical principles on giving. #1 It should be systematic. We should be intentional *about* (worshipful *in*) honoring the Lord w/our giving. It should come from the heart. #2 It's something *each of us* should be about... & At the risk of sounding harsh (though I hope you trust that's not my heart), if we're *not* giving, not only do we rob God (Mal 3:8-11), we rob our brothers & sisters in the body as well! How so?

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 11:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 6:38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Listen, when I don't give in any capacity, I'm essentially saying, "Hey, I'm good w/others bearing the load, the weight of responsibility while I receive the benefits..." I come, enjoy the climate control, soft seats, nice sound, & the fact that someone was able to spend the week in study & prayer all at the expense of everyone else! & That's the least of it, I'm missing out on the blessing of investing in the interests of the kingdom, people being saved, discipled, outreach, missions... all that could be earning me eternal dividends.

But I'm good to just come, absorb off the faithfulness of others & leave... Now, perhaps you've not thought of it like that. & I'm not throwing stones, but these are things to *think* about...

& We *should* think about it, we should pray about it & be prepared in advance. The idea of "laying something aside" & "storing up" is that of a premeditated amount. Don't come to church & just give whatever strikes you in the moment. Seek the Lord in your giving. & If you're prepared in advance, you won't be subject to some smooth talking, heartstring yanking individual who may manipulate you to give...

& If you're at a loss as to how much (again, seek the Lord) but Paul gives us a rule of thumb right here. It's to be proportionate. In keeping w/your income. "...as he may prosper." Those who have more should give more, those who have less will give less. But it should be proportionate nonetheless... Again, if that portion is 10%, then if I make \$100 a week, my portion will be \$10. If I make \$1000 a week my portion will be \$100. But we're each participating equally (& if one wants to give more they can, but again that's between you & the Lord).

Now, as the Lord gives us more, we should give more. If I give \$10 a week when I make \$100, but over the years now I make \$1000 but I'm still only giving \$10, something is wrong... Too often people make more, but rather than give more, they extend their debt more & it's the ministry that suffers. But as the saying goes, "When your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep is your downfall." But here's the point, an open heart cannot maintain a closed hand...

Having said all that, let me say this. If at the end of the day, you can't give willfully, cheerfully & out of the overflow of love for God in your heart. It's best not to give at all, for God (2 Cor 9:7) loves a cheerful giver. I want God to honor what you give to Him, don't give begrudgingly, give only what you can willingly, cheerfully, w/joy...

& So that Paul couldn't be accused of manipulating anyone, or of a high-pressure fundraising program, he says, "When I get there, let's not receive a collection. Just have it prepared in advance."

### Vs 3-4

The word, "Gift" in Vs 3 is literally, "Grace". Something given freely out of the overflow of love for God & their brothers/sisters in Jerusalem.

& So that Paul could remain above reproach regarding the finances he says, "Pick out some representatives from your congregation, & *they* will bring the gift. Not me."

### Vs 5-9

Couple things here briefly. In Vs 5-7 Paul briefs them on his plans, his travel intent. But notice that he's open to the Lord re-directing him. He rounds it off in Vs 7 with "If the Lord permits." & If you read through the book of Acts, you come to realize that things *didn't* happen this way. & Guess what? That's ok!

It's good to have plans, to set goals & all the rest. But at the end of the day, we need to remember that God owns the editing rights to our lives & if He desires that we go a different way than we had planned that day, great! No problem, we're His. We *want* to be in His will, we *want* Him to direct our steps. James said that it's nothing short of arrogance to presume upon a set of plans anyway. He said, "*Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'*"<sup>5</sup> & That's essentially what Paul is saying here. Remember these words? "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*"<sup>6</sup> Make your plans, have your goals, but couch them w/in the context of "God have Your way."

The next thing I want you to see is that opportunities (in the Lord) will often come w/adversaries.

### Vs 9

You can read of this in Acts 19. You'll see both the opportunities & the opposition. People were being saved, miracles were taking place & the people whose businesses were being adversely affected (because they made idols & people weren't buying them anymore) were coming against Paul & ultimately he would be forced to leave so that they didn't kill him! I've told you before, Paul was a revival or riot kind of guy, but something was going to change when he came to town (sometimes both happened)☺.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jas 4:15-16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Pr 3:5-6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But what I want you to see here is that an “open door” for effective ministry doesn’t mean smooth sailing. In fact, it could be rough waters. Opportunities aren’t accommodated by easy accomplishment, there may be *many* adversaries... You show me a man who will stand uncompromisingly for the truth of the Word of God & I’ll show you a man who will make enemies in his life. **But Paul seized the opportunity so long as he could do so *effectively*. Once his life was in Jeopardy (as Jesus had instructed) he went to another city. Listen, don’t develop a martyr’s mentality. Will some be called to lay down their lives for the gospel? Yes. But you aren’t sharing w/anyone once you’re dead.**

Once the opposition became too fierce, Paul wisely moved on.

### Vs 10-11

Paul had problems w/the Corinthian Christians respecting *his* authority. Timothy was known to be a little on the weaker side physically/emotionally. Paul is worried they’re going to chew him up & spit him out... But he was about the work of the Lord, they were to respect that. Often times people don’t give the same respect to younger people when they’re serving the Lord. But when God is using someone’s life, we should encourage them, support them & respect what the Lord is doing in them.

### Vs 12

**This is kind of interesting. Paul had no problem exercising apostolic authority. Yet he didn’t consider himself above another co-laborer in gospel. & This was probably a blow to the “Apollos” fan-club in Corinth. & It may very well be why he didn’t want to go just yet. He was laboring w/Paul & didn’t want to cater to their divisive tendencies... It wasn’t that he wasn’t willing to come see them, but he didn’t believe now was the best time so Paul just says, “Look, he’ll come when he senses it’s the right time”.**

### Vs 13-14

How many of you realize that an oak tree is nothing more than a little nut that simply refused to give ground? ☺ Paul is saying, “Stand your ground in J.C., watch, be alert & aware of the wiles of the wicked one, don’t be ignorant of your enemy’s devices. Act like men & be brave.” **Whatever God has called you to be it in this ministry, at home in your family, in your life personally... be strong. Don’t quit. Finish well. Develop the stability of maturity. Doesn’t mean you’ll never experience fear or uncertainty, but that you’ll perform properly regardless of how you’re feeling emotionally. Be a good soldier of J.C. & Let all that you do be done w/love.**

### Vs 15-18

I like the way the KJV reads where it says, “They devoted themselves to the ministry”. It says, “They have addicted themselves to the ministry.” The idea is that they never had to be asked, if they saw a need they were all about it. *If there was an area lacking help, or a need that presented itself, they didn’t need to be asked, they were all about it. Paul says, “Pay attention to these kinds of men. Learn from them, submit to them.”* It should be the normal growth & development in a believer’s life. Not the exception. We aren’t saved *by* good works, but we’re saved *unto* good works. We’re to be about blessing & building up the body of Christ.

### Vs 19-20

This was customary, today a holy handshake will do ☺.

### Vs 21-24

It was common for a “secretary” to write the letter. Then at the end Paul would take it & sign off on it personally so that it was verifiably from him.

*Notice again the importance of love. Love for one another, love for Jesus. You can serve the Lord legalistically; it won’t benefit you even remotely. Read the 1<sup>st</sup> 7 Vs of Rev 2. Safeguard your love relationship with Jesus.*

*Then he says, “Maranatha”, “The Lord is coming!” Or “Lord, come”. –  
Love one another, love one another, love one another... let’s pray.*

### Prayer Points:

Father, we thank You for the many life lessons You’ve encouraged us w/throughout this letter. May we be doers of Your word rather than hearers only. May we be a people filled & overflowing w/Your love that You might be glorified in our lives.

All this talk of giving today... & It’s appropriate to have a Biblical understanding in every area of our lives, even if it makes us a little uncomfortable to hear about it. But more than anything, if you don’t know the Lord... the only thing God wants you to give Him, is your heart. Jesus was crucified for your sin, was buried & He rose again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day defeating death & the power of the grave. Everlasting life can be yours, believe on the Lord Jesus & you will be saved.