

The Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 16:1-9

Session 74: The Collection for Jerusalem

The doctrinal part of this epistle was closed at the end of the 15th chapter; all that is left now is a bit of housekeeping. Before ending the letter, Paul addresses a few miscellaneous subjects, and he starts with the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

Why is Paul taking up a collection to take back to the church of the Believing Remnant in Jerusalem? I think it was not just one thing, but several things that contributed to the plight of the saints in Judea. One of the things which is normally mentioned is that there was a prophesied famine that contributed to their necessity. To see this, we need to turn to Acts 11.

The first part of Acts 11 has Peter recounting the vision of the unclean animals where God told him to “Arise Peter; slay and eat.” Peter disputed with the Lord about it but ended up going to see Cornelius; you know the story.

Acts 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. ²⁰ And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. ²² Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. ²³ Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. ²⁴ For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

And then, beginning in verse 25 the book of Acts confines its history to the travels of the apostle Paul.

Acts 11:25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: ²⁶ And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

But what we are really after begins in verse 27.

Acts 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. ²⁸ And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit **that there should be great dearth throughout all the world:** which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹ Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: ³⁰ Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

So, this “great dearth” of famine, is the first item in this “perfect storm” of events that happened to the saints at Jerusalem whereby they became poor.

Secondly, the church at Jerusalem had a large number of widows which they were supposed to take care of.

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

Thirdly, the church at Jerusalem had pooled its money and resources and through the years, had exhausted those resources.

Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.³³ And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,³⁵ And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

As time went by, these resources were used up. And so Paul is collecting money to help these people. And since that time, generally speaking, through the centuries Christians have excelled in these efforts of practically helping people in need.

For example, why do you think the Red Cross is named the Red Cross? Because it began as a Christian organization. Did you know that the first hospitals began as Christian organizations?

The Salvation Army began in 1865 as a Christian organization; also The Young Men's/Women's Christian Association (YMCA and YWCA). All sorts of missions of mercy and charities that help people all over the world, if they're not Christian now; that's how many of them started.

So, while we are on the topic, I want to spend some time talking about how the local church handles charitable giving. Fortunately, the Bible gives us principles which guide us as to who is qualified to receive financial support from the church. And I said "fortunately" because this is an issue which is always a potential source of conflict and division.

It is the job of every church to prevent these kinds of disunity problems by walking after the Spirit; submitting ourselves to the authority of God's word, dedicating ourselves to a spirit of unity, and the exercise of godly love.

We find instructions in Paul's epistles that tell us that the local church does have a responsibility to help those among its members who are truly needy. In

1 Timothy, Paul tells us that certain widows meet the qualifications of deserving help from the church.

1 Timothy 5:3 Honour widows that are widows indeed.

What is a “widow indeed?” A widow is a woman whose husband has died. If she does not have other surviving family members, such as children or siblings, she is a widow indeed. Why is this designation important? Because, if she has family, the Bible says it is their responsibility to care for her. Paul emphasizes this point by saying that if they don’t take care of those in their family which are without means to care for themselves, they are worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is **worse than an infidel**.

1 Timothy 5:16 **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.

Did you get that? If any man or woman is a believer in Jesus, and there is a widow in their family, they are responsible to care for them. So, is that all it takes, for a woman to have lost her husband and has no surviving family? No, Paul says this widow must also be over 60 years old.

1 Timothy 5:9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old...

Not only must she be over 60 years old, but she must also have a reputation of serving God and the church of which she is a part.

1 Timothy 5:9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,¹⁰ Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

So, what about those who are not widows; is there any responsibility to help them? The church has an obligation to help those who are truly needy, provided

they also are a functioning part of the church, and that they are unable to work in any capacity on their own. The Bible indicates that if a person can work, they are not needy, but should support themselves by the work of their own hands. This is also true of the widows we just talked about.

Is there a Bible criteria for what it means to be needy? There is.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

“Food and raiment” (verse 8) is not so much about the limit of what a church should do, but the limit of what we, as individuals, should be asking. In other words, if I am having a hard time financially, that is not something I would ask for help with, as I am to be content with food and clothing.

That is not to say that our brothers and sisters in Christ cannot help to fill some kind of need, of course we can. But, a church can only do what it can do.

In this day, we like to think that our needs go beyond food and clothing, but not according to scripture. Did you notice that Paul does not include a “house” in verse 8? And while some things certainly make life easier, a new car, a cell phone, and a television are not needs in the sense that food and clothing are.

That does not mean that we, as members of the same body of believers, may not give to that which is beyond food and clothing, but the obligation of the church is to help its members who are incapable of helping themselves, with food and clothing.

So, is that all it takes, is to be destitute of food and clothing? No, Paul says that those who are being helped by the church must be an active, participating part of the local assembly that is helping them. That means that the person who gets help will be someone who is living to the glory of the Lord Jesus. And if the church does help them, Paul says that person owes a debt to the church, even if it is nothing more than praying night and day for the church as a whole and the individual members of it. Also, the church has a right to evaluate the moral

conduct of those they are helping. The church has no obligation to help those who are living an immoral life.

All of that being said the church does have an absolute obligation to support the poor among its members who have no family and are unable to work.

But the issue in 1 Corinthians 16 is not about helping individuals within their respective churches, but helping another group of believers; the church of the believing remnant (BR) at Jerusalem.

If you notice Paul's epistles, he brings up this issue of helping the poor at Jerusalem quite a lot. Why is this so personal to Paul? I believe that part of this is due to the fact that Paul loves the saints of both programs. The doctrine has, no doubt, worked in Paul to produce godly love and a desire to alleviate suffering.

It may also be because Paul remembers how he persecuted these people before his conversion, and now he wants to help those that he previously afflicted.

1 Corinthians 16:1 Now **concerning the collection** for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 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. ³ And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. ⁴ And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Paul does speak about giving in his epistles. In Romans, giving is one of the offices that we are called to fill so that the church can continue to function to the edifying of its members. But here in 1 Corinthians 16, this giving (collection) is an offering which is in addition to what they are already doing in their local churches. And notice that Paul asks them to gather it before he comes so he doesn't have to address it when he gets there. Paul is not placing an obligation on anyone. If some of them did not want to give, then they didn't have to. Paul simply says for them to "lay by in store" each week when they meet, and he would pick up that offering when he comes.

One more thing: Paul does not teach giving by talking about tithing, but instead he says...

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**.

Romans 12:8 ... he that giveth, *let him **do it with simplicity***...

Paul asks them to “lay by in store” on the first day of the week because the church had already begun meeting on the first day of the week (Sunday) and not following the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). But, this is not a verse dictating on what day of the week a church must assemble together, nor is it the only day they can give. As Paul said back in Romans 14...

Romans 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

We do meet on Sunday in Monahans, because of the way our society works, that is most convenient, but we assemble together here in Glen Rose on Tuesday. That is because I can't be in two places at once on Sunday. And since Tuesday is a day in the middle of the work week, we meet in the evening when most people are off work. I don't mind meeting on any day to teach the word of truth and edify the saints. For me, I esteem every day alike, but we all need to be persuaded in our own mind.

In this dispensation of grace, God isn't interested in us observing certain days, but He does want us to assemble ourselves as a body. There are some who think it can only be on Sunday, and it must be at 10 a.m. if there is a Sunday School, and 11 a.m. for preaching. Sometimes the traditions of men get mistaken for scripture.

In this day, we enjoy the technology of Zoom and the Internet to allow many people around the world to participate live as part of our Sunday and Tuesday assemblies, and some of those people give faithfully to the work of the ministry. I believe it is important to be a part of some local church, to participate within that

church by the various offices. I also think it is important to give, to learn to give cheerfully. There is a grace to giving and we should look for ways to give.

If you are reading these notes, did you know you can join us live on Zoom on Sundays and Tuesdays? We have notes for every session.

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The Most Important Decision