

The Collection 02-05-17 AM

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come*

Jesus built His church with specific works and purposes. In Ephesians 4:11-15 we are told that the church's fundamental work is to equip and serve Christians for service to God. We find in Acts 2:42 that the first thing that the church did when it was opened was to commit itself to a worship of God. We see in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 a commandment to all churches for a financial collection to be taken up on the day of worship. It is only taken on Sunday, and only by the members of a local church. The collection for the Saints (Christians) is an intersection of the purposes of work and worship. It is one of the tools to accomplish the service to Christians, and it is the act of offering and sacrifice in the worship of the church. There are four important things we need to know about the collection of money (also called the contribution) taken up during the worship of the church.

1. The Collection Has a Limited Purpose

There are only a few things for which the collection taken up on Sunday can be used. In Acts 4:44, 6:1 and 11:29 we see that it can be used to support Christians who have serious hardships or need. There is no example of it being used for non-Christians. It can be used to support the evangelist, who does the work of evangelism and edification for a congregation (1 Corinthians 9:14) Since worship of the church is also a work, we infer that the cost of worship (a place to worship, tools for worship) are also appropriate expenses to be paid for from this sustained collection. What is important to see is that the work of the church is ALL that the collection can be used for.

2. The Collection is NOT a Tithe

A tithe (meaning tenth) was a practice of the Law of Moses in which Israelite gave a tenth of their crops, livestock, etc to the Levites and Priests for the maintenance of the temple. In effect, it was a tax. There is NO mention of tithing in the New Testament, where the Christian is the priest (1 Peter 2:5) and Christians are the temple (2 Corinthians 6:16). In 2 Corinthians 9:7 we are told that our giving in the collection CANNOT be under compulsion (which is EXACTLY what a tithe is, a mandatory giving), and that it is based on what we each personally determine to give. The New Testament contribution has no set amount, and there is no expectation or minimal standard to give. No one can tell a Saint how much they should contribute (as seen in Acts 5:1-4); it is between the Christian and God (2 Corinthians 8:12).

3. Participating in the Collection is a Spiritual Work

We may think that we give to make the church run. However, the design of the church is that it could function without any funds. Giving is not to the purpose of the work of the church (although we have established that it accomplishes this purpose). Instead, giving is a spiritual act by Christians who seek to grow themselves in Christ (2 Corinthians 8:4-5. Jesus said that *"it is more blessed (spiritually fortunate) to give than it is to receive"* (Acts 20:35). While no one can tell another what that giving should be, it is something that we each should aspire to grow. Giving grows faith (2 Corinthians 9:10-11).

4. The Collection Accomplishes Spiritual Things

When Paul spoke about the collection, he wanted Christians to know that there are two important spiritual consequences of giving. First, it manifests God by increasing our faith and trust in Him. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 mention the spiritual results in giving (there is no promise of physical or material

results to giving). Faith is the means by which we know God (Hebrews 11:1-6). Therefore, growing our faith by participating in the contribution manifests God by faith. Secondly, Paul goes on in 2 Corinthians 9:12-13 to describe how the contribution manifests the promises of God to those who are supported by it. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus promised that if we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”. “All these things” are our physical needs. This promise is fulfilled by the action of the church in benevolence, and that action is supported by the contribution. Those Christians (again, the benevolence of the church is only for those who seek first the kingdom, i.e. Christians) who are secured by this collection praise God for His faithfulness, and are reaffirmed in their trust.