

Basics of the Church Collection 02-11-18 AM

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

The Apostle Paul gave a direction to the church of Christ in Corinth that they were to take up a collection (of money) on the first day of every week. Paul tells them that this was a command made to all churches. He tells them in this passage that the collection was to consist of people contributing what they thought appropriate, in accordance to their prosperity. We still follow this pattern in regards to a collection, as well as the pattern of the use of that collection.

KNOWING WHAT TO GIVE

One of the most common questions people have on church collections pertains to the amount that they should give. Paul deals with this more in depth in his next letter to them. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-12 Paul tells that that they are giving of your own accord or desire (vs. 3); that it is not according to what you don't have (vs. 12); and that while there is no obligation to give (consider Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5), it is to your advantage spiritually to participate (vs. 10). In the next chapter he again describes the nature of giving in verse 7 when he says *"each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"*.

One way to understand these statements is to see what they mean the collection is not. First, it is NOT tithing (giving a mandatory 10%). Tithing was an Old Testament practice that was for the support of the Levites and the temple; it was practical for that organization, not spiritual for ours. Nowhere in the New Testament is tithing seen as a church or Christian work. As well, Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 8:12 (*it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have*) rules out the concept of pledges, as we are to only give of what we have prospered, NOT what we think we might receive (consider James 4:13-16).

WHAT HAPPENS TO WHAT WE GIVE

We might consider that our giving is now dedicated to the Lord, and is to be used for the work of the church. We sometimes use the word "treasury" to describe the collected amount. In Acts 11:28 the collection was made before the need had arisen, showing us that we are to collect even before a need arises (hence the *"first day of every week"* command). Paul told the Corinthians to hold in collection the money for his arrival in 1 Corinthians 16:3. Thus storing that contribution is the scriptural method of collecting it.

The first collections (Acts 2,4,6) demonstrate one of the primary uses of the collection: the aid of local Christians. We see that these collections were used as local Christians had a need (2:45). This point, for local Christians who had ANY need, is again found in Acts 4:35. Finally, there is mention of a daily distributions to widows in Acts 6:1.

Later collections mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 11, 1 Corinthians 9,16, Romans 15:26-27) discuss using funds collected at one congregation for the aid of brethren in another congregation. It is clear that this was based on emergency needs, and was not a regular use of the collection. As well, these passages

also tell us that the same collection was used to support those who work in the Gospel (apostles, elders and evangelists, 1 Timothy 5:18).

In using the collection, the need of the local members seems to be the first issue. There are two types, both with qualifications: emergency (limited) needs of members, and long term support of widows. Those members with emergency needs must be willing to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10), suggesting some type of investigation into their need. Widows were to be regularly aided once it was determined they met specific qualifications (1 Timothy 5:3-10).

These are the limited purposes of the collection: aiding brethren (Benevolence), the wages of teachers of the Gospel (Edification and Evangelism). We add to this the other work of the church, worship. There is no authority for it to be used for social activities, for non-Christians, and for organizations to do church works.

IS THE COLLECTION A PRACTICE MATTER OR A SPIRITUAL ONE?

Sometimes we wonder about the true purpose and intent of the collection. Is it meant to enrich the giver by increasing his faith and his involvement in the church, or is it meant to be a practice means to accomplishing church purposes? There seems to be a statement that it should be viewed as both. In 2 Corinthians 9:12 Paul says *“the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God”*. This *“not only...but”* seems to point to two views of the service; one is practical, meeting the needs, but one is spiritual, bringing us closer to God. For the giver, it is a reminder that HE supplied the blessing. For the receiver, we thank HIM for the support and the promise made in Matthew 6 *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”*. Finally, we praise HIM for each other, and are brought more tightly together in our relationship.