



## 1 Corinthians 16:1-4\_The Generosity of the Early Church Part 1

November 23, 2014

### Text: 1 Cor 16:1-4

- His doctrinal instruction and encouragement now concluded, the apostle turns to another question that was apparently asked of him by the church at Corinth (7:1).
- Before we can understand his instructions, we must understand that the church in Paul's day was "The Church." What I mean is that there were no denominations, few schismatic groups, no buildings, and no regional/geographic boundaries in the minds of the people.
- The church was simply the church. Indeed in this very epistle Paul speaks of the church as both local and universal at the same time:
  1. *1Co 1:2 ESV To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:*
  2. *1Co 7:17 ESV Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*
  3. *1Co 11:16 ESV If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.*
  4. *1Co 14:33 ESV For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,*
- The point is that when one local church rejoiced, all the churches did. When one suffered, all did. When one dealt with falsehoods, all were warned.
- Via the letters and travels of the apostles and their companions, the churches communicated with one another, prayed for one another, and as we'll see, supported one another financially.
  1. *1Co 16:19 ESV The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.*
  2. *1Pe 1:1-2 ESV Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (2) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*
  3. *Gal 1:1-2 ESV Paul, an apostle--not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead-- (2) and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:*
- Although the church has grown quite a bit in 2000 years and endured many hardships, we've also grown very much apart. **We should strive to keep this good principle of supporting one another alive. As true Christians, we are a part of The One True Church everywhere!**
- Undeniably friends, voluntary generosity IS God's plan for care for the family, the church AND the poor:
  1. *1Ti 5:8 ESV - But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

2. *1Ti 5:4 ESV But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.*
3. *Lev 19:9-10 ESV "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. (10) And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.*

### **1 Cor 16:1-2: What's Going On in our Text?**

1. We've mentioned a few times that in part, 1 Corinthians was written to respond to questions the Corinthian saints had for Paul:
  - *1Co 7:1a ESV Now concerning the matters about which you wrote...*
2. In our Text, Paul mentioned a collection of money he had directed the churches of Galatia to take up. For who?
3. Apparently, it was for the church in Jerusalem which had undergone immense persecution, and famine:
  - *Act 8:1 ESV And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*
  - *Act 11:27-30 ESV Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. (28) And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). (29) So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. (30) And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*
4. It is generally thought that Paul continued to take up offerings in the Gentile churches for the church in Jerusalem throughout his ministry:
  - *Rom 15:25-28 ESV At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. (26) For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. (27) For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. (28) When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.*
  - Macedonia (Greece) would have included places like Corinth, Philippi (Acts 16:12) and Thessalonica (Acts 17:1) and Berea (Acts 17:10).
5. So Corinth, as well as other churches, was being exhorted to contribute to help others in need in other places. Paul exhorted them more than once, as we'll read next week in 2 Corinthians 8-9.
6. But here are a few points to consider:
  - a. The whole point here was not a collection for the local church at Corinth, but actually a call for this local church to give **outside** of themselves...to give to the needy in another place.
  - b. This in no way lessens the importance of each local church giving to support itself, its ministries, and its leaders...
  - c. But it is to say that in context, the church should be concerned not just with "us" but also with "them..." our brothers and sisters in every place.

7. Verse two of our Text says, “*1Co 16:2 ESV* On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.”

- a. Again, this passage refers to a specific offering, one very likely for the poor saints in Jerusalem. However the principle of consistent generosity is on full display.
- b. Dr. John MacArthur writes on this passage:

“This evidences that the early church met on Sunday. The point is that giving must occur regularly, not just when one feels generous, particularly led to do so, or instructed to do so for some special purpose. No required amount or percentage for giving to the Lord’s work is specified in the New Testament. All giving to the Lord is to be free will giving and completely discretionary.”

8. I agree. If I had to pick one verse in the NT to define church giving it is verse two. Give:

- a. **Regularly** on the Lord’s Day (the “first day of the week” principle). This doesn’t mean we cannot give monthly; it means giving must done often enough to be a part of our worship.
- b. Regardless of socio-economic status (“each of you”). Giving can be hard for rich, poor, and everyone in-between. The wealthy may say “that’s too much.” The poor may say, “I have nothing.” Folks in the middle might say both!
- c. With **forethought** (“put something aside”). Giving to Christ’s work isn’t to be done in a haphazard manner.
- d. With an intentional, budgetary mindset (“store it up”). Worshipful New Testament giving is set aside with prayer and cheerfulness.
- e. According to **ability** (“as he may prosper”). No one is to feel guilty during times of giving.
- f. With little fanfare and hooplah (“so that there will be no collecting...”). Paul wanted to both exhort giving and generosity while deemphasizing the process. The last thing he wanted was for anyone to think he was out for money. (1 Cor 9:3-18)

9. Verse three is interesting. Only certain people were to carry the offering. They needed to be approved and trusted by the people of the church. It is interesting that no one person was to take the gift, but a group of people. Again, good principles here:

- a. Men who are proven to be trustworthy should bear the responsibility.
- b. What counts them as trustworthy is the respect and accreditation of the people.
- c. Again, it is more than one person. This helps to ensure **accountability**.

10. Verse four is also interesting.

- a. Paul would only accompany the offering team if the church wanted him too (“If it seems advisable”)
- b. A principle this church has walked in since its founding is this: the pastor doesn’t touch, count, check on who gave what, or deposit offerings.

#### **Final Thoughts:**

We’ll look next week at 2 Corinthians 8-9 and unpack a few *principles of generosity*. Until then, know that the local church is called by Christ to possess a giving, generous spirit, and to give outside themselves in love. As we’ve taught before, generosity is a blessing in many ways to our becoming better disciples of Jesus:

1. Giving forces you to examine your heart for **selfishness**.

- *Php 2:4 ESV* Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
2. Giving helps prevent **idolatry**.
    - *Lk 16:13 - No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*
  3. Giving promotes **contentment**.
    - *1 Tim 6:6-7 - Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*
  4. Giving acquaints us with **sacrifice**.
    - *2Cor 8:2-3 (CEV) - Although they were going through hard times and were very poor, they were glad to give generously. (3) They gave as much as they could afford and even more, simply because they wanted to.*
  5. Giving requires **discipline**.
    - *2Co 8:7 ESV* But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also.
  6. Giving gives you the **joy** of helping others.
    - *2Co 8:3-4 ESV* For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, (4) begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints--
  7. Giving tests the strength of our **love**.
    - *Jas 2:14-16 ESV* What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

For years, CRCC has held to a simple philosophy with respect to giving:

*We will give consistently and sacrificially to worship God, to support His local church, to bless people around the world, and to Reach, Teach, and Release the hurting in our communities through the power of Jesus Christ.*

And we do this cheerfully, regularly, according to ability, and to honor Christ.

Amen.