

TITLE: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COLLECTION

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-4

INTRO: When I write emails, I save until last the item I absolutely need addressed, so it's not forgotten. This is what Paul did with the issue of the collection! This lesson has been called the "Sermon on the Amount!" and it's just as important for us today.

I. THE COLLECTION COMMANDED (v. 1):

Now concerning the collection (contribution) for the saints, as I have given order (command)...so do ye (imperative).

- A. Yes, there is a collection! This is touchy topic. Many congregations gravitate toward one of two extremes: They talk about it all the time (it seems to them Christianity is all about \$), or never at all (too afraid to address it for fear of scaring people away)!
- B. What he's about to say is what he's commanded *all* the congregations in Galatia.

II. THE COLLECTION EXPLAINED (v. 2) – The When, Who, What, How, and Why of the collection:

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...no gatherings when I come.

- A. **WHEN:** The collection was to be on "the first day of the week" (literally, "the first of the sabbath"). Is this the "Sabbath Day?"
 - 1. "Sabbath" means "seventh," but also means "week." **Lk 18:12**—*I fast twice in the week*. Was he saying he fasted twice on the Sabbath? Fasts lasted *at least* a day, so how could he fast twice in a day? Also, **Mt 28:1**—*in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week*.... The first occurrence refers to the Sabbath (seventh day; our Saturday). How could the 2nd occurrence still be referring to the same day? So "first of the sabbath" is properly translated "first of the week" and understood as "first day of the week."
 - 2. This was the day of worship (**Acts 20:7**), so this collection was a part of their worship (an act of worship). **Phil 4:18** - *I have all, and abound...having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*. God accepts our contribution as a sacrifice. Is yours acceptable?
- B. **WHO:** *Let every one of you*.... The Greek word means "each" or "every" member. It's universal; nobody is excluded, except those who have no money at all! But recall the widow who gave **all** she had (**Mk 12:41-44**).
- C. **WHAT:** *Lay by him* (put aside) *in store* (imperative – command) – Each is to put aside his own collection *in store* (storing up – into a treasury of the church).
- D. **HOW:** *As God hath prospered him* – literally, "as he has prospered (succeeded)."
 - 1. Each should give according to his own ability (**Acts 11:29**). There is no set dollar amount for each person. The command is clearly for a percentage. But no *specific* percentage is commanded (there is no tithing, which meant 10%).
 - 2. So how much? We're not told. But 10% was expected in the OT, & everything in the NT became more personal & serious, requiring absolute commitment from members (cf. 'killing' to 'angry without a cause'; 'adultery' to 'lust'; 'divorce for any reason' to 'fornication only'). So why shouldn't there be a higher expectation in giving?
 - 3. As you've prospered/succeeded. When I get a raise, so does the church! If I take a pay cut, God understands this too!
- E. **WHY:** *That there be no gatherings when I come*. It should already be done. There are needs to be met! So be ready!
- F. **CONTEXT:** This was a special collection for the needy saints in Judea. So some believe this is the only reason to take up a collection (i.e., this passage doesn't command/authorize our weekly contribution).
 - The principle is that when there are spiritual needs, the money is to come from the church through **freewill offerings**. If the church has monetary needs (the building, preacher, other weekly responsibilities, etc.) the church should contribute on the first day of the week to cover these expenses. And there are **always** needs (e.g., the poor are always with us – **Mt 26:11**).
 - This is the **only** way Scripture authorizes the church to receive money (no bake sales, etc.). So if this *doesn't* command us to contribute weekly, then we have *no scriptural direction* for collecting funds. Yet we still have many financial obligations!

III. ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS & EXAMPLES REGARDING OUR GIVING:

- A. **Instructions:** **2 Cor 9:6-7** – *He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*. This is about what you sow **and** what you reap!
 - 1. *Not sparingly, but bountifully* (like a farmer sowing seed). We should **want** to give! We should look for ways that we can give more! And we ought to expect God's blessings to us in the same proportion as **we're** giving!
Mal 3:10— *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, & prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*. **Lk 6:38**— *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*. He commands us to give bountifully, then gives us a good, personal reason to do so!
 - 2. *As we have purposed* – we should've planned this in advance!
 - 3. *Not grudgingly* (of grief, sadness, sorrow), *but cheerfully* (joyously) – God loves this proper attitude in our giving!
- B. **Example:** **Heb 7:4** – Abraham gave Melchizedek "the tenth of the spoils ("firstfruits, top of the heap, best of the booty"). Abraham's percentage came from the top, not the leftovers! Is your contribution figured at the beginning or end of the month?!
- C. **Example:** **2 Cor 8:2-4** – *How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints*.
 - 1. They gave more than they could afford. This requires sacrifice! Every dollar given is a dollar that can't be used elsewhere. It seems they were following the example of the widow (**Mk 12**), sacrificing their very living, not just a few luxuries!
 - 2. They begged Paul to take it. Apparently Paul told them they were giving too much! But they insisted. This is love!

CONCLUSION: Giving is a very important part of worship. It should be treated with the same respect & effort given to the rest of worship. It should be from the heart, planned/purposed ahead of time, in accordance w/one's ability, and **never** from the leftovers!