

Now Concerning the Collection for the Saints  
1 Corinthians 16:1-4

**1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.* <sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.* <sup>4</sup> *If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.*

## **I. Paul's History and the Final Question on the List**

### **A. Paul's Personal History from Galatians 1 & 2 / Acts 13ff**

1. Paul defends his gospel message as from God not men
  - a. Received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ
  - b. No one else instructed him
    - (1) After his conversion he spent three years in the desert
    - (2) Then he spent 15 days with Peter & James in Jerusalem
    - (3) Then he spent 14 years in the area of his hometown in southern Turkey
    - (4) Then, after receiving a revelation, Paul, Barnabas, and Titus traveled to Jerusalem specifically to make sure the gospel he preached aligned with the gospel being preached by the other apostles.
2. Agreement at that meeting
  - a. Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles (non-Jewish world), Peter and the others would focus on the Jews.
  - b. The ONLY request
    - (1) **Galatians 2:10 (ESV)** *Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.*
3. Paul's missionary journeys
  - a. First journey into the region of Galatia (Turkey)
  - b. The second journey includes many of the churches of Galatia as well Macedonia (Thessalonica and Philippi) and Greece (including Corinth)
4. In all those places, Paul adheres to preaching the gospel and, as part of disciple-making ethics, instructing the new Christian churches to provide for the poor.

### **B. The Collection for the Poor**

1. Not a new topic for the Corinthians
2. The collection for the saints
  - a. is the active participation these new churches are taking in providing, as an act of grace and compassion,
  - b. for the poor in the church in Jerusalem, who, because of their adherence to the gospel, have been severed by their families and friends from the relief that would have been available in the Old Covenant Jewish community.

T.S. In this paragraph, as Paul responds to the final item on the Corinthian “Request for Information List,” he offers seven insights into how Christian churches and Christian people should handle the essential ministry of providing for the poor.

## II. Seven Insights for Christians on Essential Charitable Giving

### A. “Now concerning the collection of the saints” - (HISTORICAL) Provision for the poor is HISTORICAL; it is built into the spiritual DNA of God’s people

1. Already demonstrated it was an integral part of the gospel-driven life in the early church, but where does it come from?
2. **Deuteronomy 15:7-11 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, <sup>8</sup> but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. <sup>9</sup> Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. <sup>10</sup> You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. <sup>11</sup> For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’*
  - a. Jubilee year turns this loan into a gift.
  - b. You shall not harden your heart - providing for the poor is not a matter of law but of heart
  - c. The promise of God motivates a gracious, generous heart toward the poor.
  - d. The poor will never cease in the land, nor should compassion and mercy cease from among the people of God.
  - e. Why?
    - (1) Because people will always be poor in spirit and God will always be compassionate and merciful toward them.
    - (2) Since God’s people bear God’s image in the world, and since the entire world is designed to put God’s glory on display,
      - (a) God’s people who provide for the poor display the glory of God’s compassion for the world to see,
      - (b) thus extending God’s mission to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory.
      - (c) **God builds provision for the poor into the very fabric of His people’s existence as a means of bearing his image in the world.**
3. Also a New Testament inclusion
  - a. **2 Corinthians 8:8-9 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.*

*<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

- b. Paul proves the genuine nature of Corinthian Christian love based on what they know to be true
  - (1) Because you know the grace God gave the world in Christ Jesus
    - (a) **John 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**
  - (2) Because you know the Son of God took on flesh and gave himself to the whip, to the nails, to the cross and to death on your behalf
    - (a) Because you know you were trapped in sin and separated from God and subject to judgment
    - (b) Because you know you had no resources to save yourself from the desperate spiritual poverty that would lead to eternal destruction
    - (c) Because you know Christ, who was in the form of God and did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, took on the form of a servant and became obedient to death, even death on a cross
    - (d) Because you know the righteous, holy, innocent Son of God took your sins in his body and nailed them to the cross
    - (e) Because you know Jesus gave himself to death and to you so that God might give you eternal life
  - (3) Because you know God acted out of the infinite riches of his love and grace and mercy on your behalf
  - (4) Because you know God’s grace transforms you day after day into the likeness of Jesus who divested the riches of his eternal glory to address the horror of your spiritual poverty
  - (5) Because you know God’s giving heart and long to experience for yourself the measure of God’s joy in being God that he extends to you
  - (6) **Because you know these things in your heart, provide for the poor, give from your heart.**

**B. God expects GLOBAL participation in provision for the poor.**

- 1. Paul will bring not only the Galatian churches to the attention of the Corinthians, but the Macedonian churches as well.
- 2. Yes, Paul uses the example of some to urge the quality of participation of others.
- 3. The economic or social standing of the church neither qualifies a church nor disqualifies a church from providing for the poor.
  - a. Some give from their wealth

- b. Some give from their poverty
- c. **All give from their hearts according to the grace God gives them.**

**C. While not a law, provision for the poor should be a prepared practice.**

(THOUGHTFUL)

1. "On the first day of the week . . . set something aside."
2. "Collection" -
  - a. irregular local contributions as opposed to taxes
  - b. Religious, non-legal neither required by law nor expected to be regularly repeated
3. IRS Quarterly Tax Payments
  - a. 4 times a year
  - b. 1800 each time
  - c. Penalties and fines for late payment
  - d. This is not a collection, this is a legal requirement
4. "Putting aside" = a thoughtful process of regular accumulation of savings for the purpose of giving.
  - a. Intentional not spontaneous.
  - b. Helping hand offering
    - (1) Once a month
    - (2) Usually, for many who give, it's a matter of checking your wallet to see what you have on hand when the envelope is brought to your attention.
    - (3) **When it comes to providing for the poor, Paul calls for a thoughtful giving that is prepared**
5. Two final thoughts about thoughtful giving
  - a. There is to be no last minute, superficial scraping together of funds as an unplanned, off-the-cuff gesture. (Defeats the entire purpose of imaging God's glory)
  - b. The weekly setting aside is done at home, preventing anyone from turning this occasion of love for God and compassion for the poor into a competition.

**D. Provision for the poor should be PERSONAL.**

1. "Each of you"
2. **Don't leave your ministry and your grace to someone else.**

**E. Provision for the poor should be GRACIOUS.**

1. As God prospers
  - a. This is about the grace God gives.
    - (1) Grace of given resources
    - (2) Grace of given grace
  - b. **As God provides for you, both of economic and spiritual wealth, give from what He has given you.**

**F. Provision for the poor should be DELIVERED.**

1. **"I will send" - a gift gathered but not delivered is no gift at all.**
2. Immanuel - wasted gift

### **III. Proposal**

#### **A. Autumn Giving Opportunities**

1. Operation Christmas Child
2. Christmas in October
3. Regular worship in giving

#### **B. A Christmas Gift for the Poor**

1. Special Offering Envelopes
2. Weekly amount set aside
3. Gather on 12/8 (12 weeks from today)
4. Send the entire collection to an impoverished, struggling congregation somewhere in the US
  - a. Could be a tiny church in the Appalachian mountains
  - b. Could be a small gathering of souls in the deep South
  - c. Could be a work among Native Americans in the midwest
  - d. Could be a storefront congregation in an inner city
  - e. Could be one of each or some other.

#### **C. Instructions**

1. Take an envelope and each week, as you consider the grace given to you that week, determine an amount, and on Sunday, as part of your worship that day, slip that amount into the envelope.
2. Do this freely, not because you must, but because you can
3. Be as gracious to the poor as God has been gracious to you.
4. Do this in faith, trusting that God will keep his promise to you as you reveal His glory to the world.