



# Week 11: Giving

1 Corinthians  
June 7, 2009

Paul now moves on to a new subject. This is not, however, an abrupt transition to an unrelated subject. No, rather, if we remember the victory Christ accomplished in his resurrection, and we remember the future resurrection of our own bodies, we should be inspired to give ourselves

fully to the Lord's work. More specifically, we should be inspired to give our money to the Lord's work, not out of obligation or guilt, but out of thanksgiving and excitement for the hope of the resurrection.

## Situational Background (16:1)

Verse 1 tells us that there is a specific collection, or a specific cause to which Paul is asking them to give. Evidently at this time Jerusalem was in an economic depression stemming from a drought (Acts 11:28-30). Many of the poor Christians in Jerusalem were hungry and in great need. So as he would go around and visit churches throughout the Roman Empire, Paul would ask the churches to contribute money to help the believers back in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-28, Acts 24:17).

As Paul writes to the church he founded in Corinth, he is asking them to also consider contributing to this cause. But as he does so he has some guidelines, principles that he wants the Corinthians to follow as they consider giving to this donation. Even though we aren't going to be contributing to the same cause Paul wants the Corinthians to consider, the principles he lays out are transcendent principles which we can use to guide our thinking as we consider how to give ourselves fully to the Lord's work.

## How We Should Give (16:2-4)

### Give regularly (16:2a)

The first principle Paul outlines is that the Corinthians are to give regularly. He doesn't want them to wait until he gets there and then try to raise all the money at once. He wants them to put a little bit aside each week and contribute when they meet "on the first day of the every week."

There is a little known economic fact that people spend at least as much as they make. Very few people just happen to have money sitting around. That's why furniture and home electronics stores offer no payment and no interest until next year on their products. People don't just have money sitting around ready to buy a new flat screen TV or ready to donate to a worthy cause.

Paul must know this little economic fact. That is why he suggests that they begin their own

charitable giving installment plan. Put a little aside every week.

The same holds true for us. If we wait until some big need comes down the line, we won't have any money sitting around to help with the need. Instead, we should give regularly.

Maybe that means giving as regularly as you receive your paycheck, setting aside a little bit for the Lord's work with each check. We all need some kind of discipline to ensure that we give regularly. That's what Paul is recommending. Let's get ourselves in the habit of giving regularly.

### Give proportionately (16:2b)

Secondly, Paul wants them to give proportionately. He tells them to give "as he may prosper."

Not everyone gives the same amount, but we give in relation to what we earn.

Rich people should be giving more dollars than poor people, but all should be giving in proportion to their income.

Often we assume that while we the wealthy may give more money to charity than the poor. However, according to one study, in the United States, low income people give an average of 4.5% of their income to charity, while middle class families give 2% and wealthy families give 3% (Brooks).

What that tells us is that the middle class is not giving in proportion to their income, but in fact, proportionately, are giving less the poor and the rich. However, we aren't to think that just the rich people are to give. We are all to give in proportion to what we have earned.

### Give wisely (16:3-7)

Third, Paul calls on the Corinthians to give wisely. The Corinthians weren't able to call the Jerusalem Christians' Charitable Foundation and just give them their visa card number. They couldn't just send a check to the church in

Jerusalem. They had to send people with the cash. And Paul is advising them to choose messengers who they can trust to take the contribution to Jerusalem. You don't want someone to take the money and abscond with the funds.

Paul is telling them to be wise in their giving. Don't just give your money to anyone and hope it gets to the people in Jerusalem. Pick the right people to go.

Just as Paul asked the Corinthians to be give wisely, so should we. We need to be careful to whom we give our gifts. We need to pick the right people with which to entrust our money. Ask where the money is being spent. Know the people making the spending decisions. You don't want to give your money to someone who will abscond with the funds.

Often Christians are the most gullible in this regard. Millions of dollars have been lost by churches and parachurch organizations to people running ponzi schemes. Jesus tells his disciples that they must be as crafty as serpents, but innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Too often, at least with charitable giving, we are as crafty as a dove and as innocent as a serpent. Let's be smart about our giving.

## Concluding Remarks (16:5-24)

### Paul's Travel Plans (16:5-11)

Paul informs the Corinthians that he is coming to visit them soon. Currently he is in Ephesus where God has opened the door to his ministry. This is consistent with what Luke tells us of Paul's two year stay in Ephesus (Acts 19:10, 20). Following his stay in Ephesus, he planned to travel through Macedonia and then stay with them for the winter. This is exactly what does happen according to Acts 20:1-2, as Paul concludes his third missionary journey.

### Paul's Co-Workers (16:12-18)

Because Paul is not able to come to Corinth right away, it seems he has sent Timothy, his young protégé. From Paul's first letter to Timothy, we know that Timothy's young age tended to

cause people to despise him (1 Timothy 4:12). So Paul asks the Corinthians to welcome him and to not despise him.

Paul also tells the Corinthians that he asked Apollos to return to Corinth, but Apollos didn't want to right then, but he would come as soon as he had the chance (16:12).

Finally, Paul asks the Corinthians to recognize the work of their leaders, namely, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. Paul tells us that these men were among the first converts in Corinth, and that they had come to visit Paul in Ephesus, perhaps to bring the letter to which 1 Corinthians is a response. Paul reminds the Corinthians to submit to these leaders.

## Final Comments (16:13-14, 19-24)

### Man Up! (16:13-14)

Paul summarizes his entire message from the letter in these two short verses. He asks them to stand firm in the faith. Literally, he says, “act like men.”

This admonition does not come out of the blue. It comes on the heels of his great teaching on the resurrection. Because of the Jesus’ victory over death (16:57), we can stand firm, and act with strength and courage through any hardship or difficulty. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can “man up!”

### Final Greetings

Paul passes on greetings from the churches in Asia and from Aquila and Prisca (16:19).

He asks them to greet each other with a holy kiss (16:20). Kissing was a common greeting in that culture, much as we see in some European countries today. In our cultural context, Paul would probably ask us to greet one another with a holy handshake.

Paul finishes the book in his own handwriting. We know that Paul dictated most of his letters to a scribe (Romans 16:22), but often would end his letters with a handwritten note to demonstrate the authenticity of the letter (Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

In his own handwriting he condemns those who do not love the Lord, probably referring to those in the Corinthian church who were causing the divisions within their church. Then, he concludes with the tag line, “Maranatha,” an Aramaic phrase meaning “Our Lord, Come.”



# Bibliography

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Spring 2009

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