

Title: First Things First
Text: I Corinthians 16: 1-4
Date: August 22, 2010
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

You can not put a price on a teachable spirit! In spite of all the error that was in the church at Corinth, there were those present whom the Lord had given a teachable spirit. They wrote to Paul asking him to teach them, according to God's word.

I Corinthians 7: 1: Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me:....(marriage), 8:1: Now as touching things offered unto idols,... 12: 1: Now concerning spiritual gifts,...**16: 1: Now concerning the collection for the saints,...**

What a blessing! The evidence that you have received the anointing and are taught of the Spirit of God, that you need not that any man teach you, is that you are willing to be taught by the Lord through the man he sends to teach you. What a blessing--a teachable spirit!

1 Corinthians 16: 1: Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

This Collection Was for the Needy Saints at Jerusalem

God had prospered his saints in Jerusalem--spiritually and temporally--so that they gave themselves and their substance to provide for each other and to further the gospel into the Gentile world. Through this the King of kings prospered his saints in Corinth.

Now, God has sent a famine into Jerusalem and will use his saint at Corinth to prosper his needy saints in Jerusalem. And by the same God who worked all this out, these saints at Corinth are ready to be taught of Paul how to go about this privilege of giving.

Title: First Things First

1 Corinthians 16: 2: Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3: And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4: And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Paul asked them individually to write him and make a recommendation who they thought faithful to send to Jerusalem with this offering. Then when Paul would come he would ask those who were recommended and he offered that they could even go along with him to Jerusalem. But our focus is verse 2:

Divisions:

1. The Time to Give
2. The Persons Involved
3. The Motive
4. The Manner
5. The Measure
6. The End Purpose of this Instruction

I. THE TIME TO GIVE--(V2)--*Upon the first of the week*

A. In all things God our Father and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ shall receive all preeminence.

1. Our triune God is first--*in the beginning God*. The first in importance in the wilderness was the worship of God by his children in the place he appointed.

Exodus 40:2: On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.

Leviticus 23:7: In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

Even if the appointed time was not the first month, so often we find that the worship began on the first day! This instruction to give on the first day of the week was when the saints gathered to worship the Lord.

2. Giving of our firsts on the first day of the week is to put us in remembrance and settle our hearts on him who is First.

Exodus 22:29: Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me....23:19: The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God.

3. The picture is: Christ is first. The first to rise from the dead ascend to heaven, and present himself to God as the representative of his people. The firstborn among many brethren.

1 Corinthians 15:20: But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Colossians 1:18: And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Romans 8:29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Why is it important to give at the first of the week? It is important so that we begin first--in remembrance of our triune God, of Christ our King and Righteousness. The same reason God gives us a heart to gather with our brethren to worship him on the first day of the week; the same reason we begin the first of each day in prayer and reading of the scriptures; the same reason that we seek God first in all our daily plans--not just saying if the Lord will I will go here--but also seeking and submitting to his revealed will to let nothing interfere with public worship, with giving, with seeking him first in all things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."--first things first.

II. THE PERSONS WHO SHOULD GIVE--(V2)--*Let everyone of you*

A. Who will understand and delight in this wonderful privilege of God?

Those born of the Spirit of God. That is who Paul is writing to--everyone of *you*.

B. This is a privilege from which not one of God's children is to be prevented from or to shy away from.

Hebrews 2:11: For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one:

1. Spiritually

1 Corinthians 6:17: But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13: For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Ephesians 2: 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

We, of the same spiritual Rock as our brethren in the wilderness

1 Corinthians 10:4...and that Rock was Christ.

What does scripture say of those saints in Jerusalem who are now in need?

Acts 4:32: And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

2. Temporally.

Just as believer's are of one Father, of one Spirit, of one Christ, in one body, made one spirit, so it is that all things which we have temporally is of One and belongs to each other. So Paul says to those who are one with the needy brethren in Jerusalem and who possess all things in common--*Let everyone of you*.

Illustration: The governments of the world have tried to imitate the government of Christ the King and his kingdom, but where this oneness is missing in the heart he has made new by grace, there will only be corruption.

III. THE MOTIVE (V2) Let--this is not law, it is grace, those who have a willing heart made willing by God's free and sovereign grace.

2 Corinthians 8: 7: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Application: I began by speaking of this great blessing of God gives to have a teachable heart. I did so because there never fails to be those who are offended by a message on giving. Listen carefully: If that is the case with you, then do not give. Giving is not for those who feel they must do it or that grudgingly do so. In fact, if that is your heart, it is best you don't give. Because you will do so, not by grace, but expecting a reward in return. This is privilege motivated by grace in those whom God has made cheerful to give.

IV. THE MANNER--*lay by in store*--Not only a willingness, but a doing of it.

2 Corinthians 8: 8:...to prove the sincerity of your love...[as there was a willingness a year ago to do this] 11: Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

A. The example Paul gives in proving the sincerity of love is Christ:

2 Corinthians 8: 9: For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. In our text v3: "them will I send to bring your **liberality** unto Jerusalem." Liberality means grace, favor. The word here is the same: *ye know the grace*--the liberality, the favor--*of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

2 Corinthians 8: 9:...that, though he was rich,

2. How rich was our Lord Jesus Christ?

Philippians 2:6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Colossians 1:16: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Psalm 50: 10: For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11: I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12: If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

3. But look at this next word--YET!

2 Corinthians 8: 9:...yet for your sakes

- For those who were totally bankrupt: no righteousness, no holiness, no willingness, dead in trespasses and in sins
- For those chosen of Father, not based on any good or evil in us
- For those the Father entrusted to him in the everlasting covenant of grace--yet for your sakes

4. What did Christ do for your sakes?

2 Corinthians 8: 9:...he became poor,

Philippians 2:7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Matthew 8:20: And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Isaiah 53:3: He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Philippians 2: 8: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Romans 5: 6: For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7: For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Isaiah 53:5: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

5. What did grace did he freely give unto us by doing this for his people?

2 Corinthians 8: 9:...that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Rich in newness of life through the Holy Spirit, rich in perfect righteousness, rich in sanctification, rich in redemption, actually joint-heirs with him whom God has appointed heir of all things.

I John 4: 10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11: Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

V. THE MEASURE OF GIFT--(V2) as *God hath prospered you.*

A. Believer, in light of what you just heard, has God prospered you?

Ephesians 1:6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8: Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

B. Giving is an act of faith--the measure is not by how much you give but by how much you have left for yourself after you give.

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Illustration: The widow gave all because she had all in Christ.

1. Do you believe God?

2 Corinthians 9: 8: And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10: Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

The LORD who is able to give and to take away, makes the believer to rest in the truth that whatever my station in life is right now, all things are mine. The LORD is he who is providing for my necessities and so each believer really does have all things common right now.

We may look around and carnally speaking behold some who have more than others. But if we can but see with the eye of faith that our LORD is able to put into the heart of those whom he has prospered making them willing to provide for his children in need--then we behold that we are not dependent upon men, but upon our God.

I Corinthians 3: 21: Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; 22: Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23: And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Someone said, If I do not tithe 10% I am an outlaw; if I tithe 10% I am under law; if I give as God has prospered me it is because I am under grace.

VI. THE END PURPOSE_(V2)--that there be no gathering when I come

A. So that it might be sent speedily to those in need. But there is another reason for this.

B. The end purpose of this instruction is so that the giver receives the full benefit of giving.

Illustration: How often do we wait till the last minute to rush in to the service? Can't concentrate, can you? What about when you forget then write out our check or reach in your pocket and give hastily without thinking on Christ?

1. Do you know what makes a cheerful giver? The cheerful heart comes from meditating upon these unsearchable riches God has bestowed freely upon us in Christ Jesus.
2. When we give after much meditating on Christ our Firstfruits, our hearts are cheered just as new wine cheers a man. And we find ourselves resting in God who always provides in the temporal things so that we have all abundance.

Proverbs 3: 9: Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Amen!