

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“every one of you”

Giving grudgingly or the lack of giving at all to the Lord’s work is a common problem among many of the Lord’s people. Some seem to think you should give only if you have some extra funds. Some have the idea that the “well-off” brethren are to do the giving. Some have the idea that giving is necessary only on the Lord’s day that is near their pay day; claiming that if you only get paid once a month, then you should be expected to give only once a month. Some have the idea that if you suffer a job loss or some financial difficulty you are excused from giving all together. But, what do the scriptures teach about giving? Are the previous stated ideas good *reasons* or are they just *excuses* some make because of their lack of love for God, the church and brethren in need? Which?

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 the apostle Paul commanded, “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 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.*” In this passage Paul gives the *why*, the *who*, the *when*, the *where*, the *what*, and the *how much*! (1) *Why?* – for the poor saints according the Divine order (command) of the apostle Paul; (2) *Who?* – “*every one of you.*” This means “*every one of you*”! When Peter and the apostles preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter answered the Jews by saying, “*repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). So, the *Who* in our text included every member in all the churches of Galatia and the church at Corinth. And, it is the pattern for all Christians today! (3) *When?*–“*on the first day of the week.*” “*When*” means the first day of every week since every week has a first day; (4) *Where?* – during the assembly of the saints on the “*first day of the week*” when they “*come together*” on this day (1 Cor. 11:17; 18, 20, 33; 14:23, 26; Heb 10:25). The assembly necessitated the saints coming together “*into one place*” (1 Cor. 11:20; 14:23). (5) *What?* – a portion of the physical blessings under our individual control that the Lord as blessed us with (Acts 4:32-37; 5:4; Rom. 15:25; (6) *How Much?* – “*as God hath prospered.*” This means in proportion to what you have been blessed with—and “*every one of you*” have been blessed! In the words of the song we sing – “*count our many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done*” (# 392 — **Count Your Blessings, Hymns for Worship**, Revised).

In the first paragraph of this short article I posed the question – “are the previous stated ideas good *reasons* or are they *excuses* some make because of their lack of love for God, the church and brethren in need?”

Since the treasury of the local congregation is to be used for the Lord’s work, then failing to give to this great work is a lack of love for God! Case in point, Paul used the example of the liberal giving of the churches of Macedonia when he wrote to Corinth. The Macedonians were exceedingly poor! Paul describes their situation – “*How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality*” (2 Cor. 8:2)! Notice that Paul said they gave “*in a great trial or affliction*” being in “*deep poverty.*” But, they gave *liberally* even though they were in poverty themselves! Also, they gave *joyfully*; not making excuse or bemoaning their situation of “*deep poverty.*” They gave *abundantly*! That is, their giving exceeded the expectations of the apostle himself! In other words, they gave until it hurt (cf. Luke 21:1-4)! They looked not on their own poverty, but one the needs or poverty of others (Phil. 2:4).

But, there is a reason why the “*riches of their liberality abounded,*” as Paul told the Corinthians, and which is recorded “*for our learning*” in this text of scripture. Here is the reason why the Macedonian brethren gave as they did—because they “*first gave their own selves to the Lord*” (vs. 5)! They did not make excuses we hear some brethren make, such as but not limited to, “*I’m just as poor as they are*” or “*I have bills to pay too*” or “*I can’t afford to give*” or “*times are tough for me too*” or “*I have a family to care for.*” No, these brethren

gave liberally because they ***“first gave their own selves to the Lord”!***

You see, many brethren have not given themselves over to the Lord! This evidenced by not giving liberally and cheerfully (or not at all!), but by giving grudgingly or out of necessity (2 Cor. 9:7). Other manifestations of a lack love for the Lord are, forsaking the assembly of the saints (Heb. 10:25), not studying to show yourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), walking after the lusts of the flesh and not after the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25; Rom. 8:1-14), etc. Need I list more? I could!

Having said all of the above, now we know the *pattern* to follow concerning scriptural giving! But, this process starts with the ***first*** important ingredient, that being, ***“every one of you” giving our own selves to the Lord?*** When this is done by ***“every one of you,”*** then the excuses we hear some make for not giving and failing to be faithful to the Lord will fade away and the Lord’s church and His cause will prosper abundantly!

Remember, ***“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich”*** (2 Cor. 8:9). Have ***“every one of you” first*** given your own self to Christ? – ***tgmc*** ■

Idolatry Alive and Well

By John Hines

Idolatry is alive and well. It is destroying this world. It is destroying this country. It is destroying this state. It is destroying our schools. It is destroying our communities. It is destroying our families. It is doing its level best to draw us away from God and ***“Christians”*** are falling for it hook, line, and sinker. 2000 years ago, Paul described the idolatry of the day. He saw the city where he was, Athens, was given over to idolatry, so many so that an author of the time wrote ***“It is easier to find a god than a man in Athens.”*** Things have not improved much. Men are still hard to find. And while the gods may look different today, they are just as abundant.

The Politics Idol – Depending on where you shop, you can purchase your idol in either blue or red. Do not people bow down to their respective idol? Do they not lift them up as the messiah of the peoples? Do they not look to them as their benefactor, the giver of all blessings? You know it is true. Many are consumed with their politics idol. They let politics mold their faith. They let politics lead them. They let politics define them.

The Sports Idol – It is all some people care about. They give their children to this idol as assuredly as Israel gave their children to the idol Molech with the same outcome (Jer. 32:35); their children are consumed. They burn for their idol. They sacrifice to and for their idol. They have zeal for nothing else in this universe, other than their idol. Their lives revolve around one thing, and it is their god.

The Sex Idol – Perhaps many lives do not revolve around just one god. After all, there is a whole slew of gods to worship. Many bow down to the sex god. You know her disciples often by how they dress. Turn on the TV. Turn on the computer. Look up at the billboard. What do you see? Idolatry is alive and well. Don’t think it’s a problem? Check the divorce statistics. Check the schools for pregnancy statistics. What, you think they are the only ones having sex? No. Idolatry is alive and well.

The Self Idol – The ugliest but most popular of all the idols. These are the people that are their own gods. ***“I’m going to do what I want to do!” “I don’t have to listen to anybody else but me!” “Nobody is going to tell me what to do!”*** This idol promotes nothing but self, one selfish selfie at a time. ***“Look at me world. Look at how strong/pretty/smart/busy I am!”***

How sad, for in the end, what is an idol? It is worthless and empty. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250