

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH: GIVING

By Phillip Stuckey

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. 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” (1 Cor. 16:1–2, ESV).

The Bible says that God is the giver of every good and perfect gift and that He has richly blessed all of humanity. He has given us life, a world that can sustain us physically, His word that sustains us spiritually, and above all, His Son, through whom we find forgiveness and eternal life. God is a giver who gives good gifts.

So, it should be no surprise that all of God’s commands are for our good (1 Jn. 5:3). This is certainly true when it comes to giving (Acts 20:35). When we consider what God has revealed in the New Testament, we can see that He has a pattern and plan for the work, worship, and organization of the local church. This includes the contribution that is taken up each Lord’s Day in every local church.

Giving Is God-Ordained

There are several reasons why every local church should take up a weekly collection, but one of the most obvious reasons is because God has shown us that it pleases Him. We know this is true based numerous examples of the early church in the book of Acts (See Acts chapters 2, 4, and 11). In Paul’s letter to Corinth, God clearly communicates His desire for churches to take up a collection from its members (1 Cor. 16:1-4).

Paul, by inspiration, directed the churches in Corinth, Galatia, and other places to take up a collection for the needy saints (1 Cor. 16:1). It was to be taken up by the church weekly when the saints came together on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2; cp. Acts 20:7). While there was no set amount specified, each Christian was called on to give as they had prospered that week (cp. Acts 11:29).

Not only has God directed the saint to give as he has prospered, but He desires him to do so with the right heart and with the right attitude (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Paul called on the brethren in Corinth to give bountifully, rather than sparingly (2 Cor. 9:6). They were not to give haphazardly, but with forethought and planning (2 Cor. 9:7). They were not to give grudgingly or out of compulsion, but willingly and joyfully (2 Cor. 9:7).

The weekly contribution to the local church is something God desires. Every saint who is able should contribute to his or her local church on each Lord’s Day just as God has ordained.

Giving Is Needed To Do God’s Work

Why else should we give?

As you read your Bible you will notice that down through the ages, God has given His people collective work to do. The burden of this work was shared among the people of God. In the Old Testament, some of these were compulsory taxes and tithes (Lev. 27:30; 2 Chron. 24:5-9). There were contributions to provide for the priests (Ex. 35:21, 24; Lev. 7:14, 32; Deut. 12:6, 17-19; 2 Chron. 31). There were also freewill offerings such as those for the tabernacle and for the building and repair of the temple (Ex 36:3; 1 Chron. 29:1-9).

In the New Testament, we see a similar pattern emerge. There are multiple examples of voluntary contributions taken up, most of which were to give relief to needy Christians in other places. The church in Antioch took up a

contribution for the needy saints in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). In Paul's letters, we read about contributions taken up in churches in predominantly Gentile territory, like Macedonia, Corinth, and Rome, to help the needy saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-4).

Not only did churches in the New Testament take up collections for needy saints in other places, but there were other works God had planned for them to do. The local church took up collections to provide for the needy brethren among them (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35). They also supported widows who had no family or means to support themselves (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:3-16). Paul's words to Corinth that ***“those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel”*** indicates that those who preach the gospel had a right to be supported (1 Cor. 9:14; 2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15). Elders could also be supported in their work by the church (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Are there still needy brethren who need assistance? Are there still men who are willing to devote themselves to the proclamation of the gospel? Are there still men who are willing to shepherd the flock? If so, then the local church still has work to do and the contribution is still needed.

Giving Is Worship

One can readily see that the church took up a weekly collection in its assembly in order to do the good works God has proscribed, but is it an act of worship? This is a good question.

What is worship? Is it not an act of expressing reverence to God? If that is true, then at the most basic and fundamental level, all acts of worship involve giving, whether we are talking about praise, prayer, etc. (Heb. 13:15).

Under the Old Covenant, the various sacrifices and offerings that were given in worship were considered ***“gifts”*** to God (Lev. 23:38; Num. 18:11; cp. Heb. 5:1). While Christ has ended the offering of animal, grain, and other sacrifices under the New Covenant, the language of sacrifice and offerings is often associated with the saint's giving.

When Paul spoke about the Philippian church's support in his ministry, he not only called it a ***“gift”*** but said it was a ***“fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God”*** (Phil. 4:14-20). Likewise, the writer of Hebrews connects the imagery of sacrifice with the Christian's giving to others (Heb. 13:16).

Along with this language of gifts and sacrifice that is associated with giving, it is also noteworthy that in Luke's summary of the activity of the early church, the word ***“fellowship,”*** which is mentioned alongside the apostle's doctrine, the breaking of bread, and prayers, appears to include the act of giving and the contribution (Acts 2:42; cp. Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13).

In view of all that the Bible has to say about the contribution, giving is not just dropping some money in a plate. God desires the saint to show Him honor and reverence, to worship by giving to the church each week, as he has the ability, both willingly, joyfully, and generously (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Giving Is A Blessing

God is the giver of good gifts (Jas. 1:17). One of the blessings God has given His people is the grace of giving. It provides the opportunity for the Christian to give back to God who has blessed us with so much in Christ Jesus. It reminds us that we are merely stewards of what we have from God (Ps. 50:10-12). It allows us to have fellowship with others in doing God's work (Acts 2:42). It even helps us keep our perspective on eternity (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Matt. 6:19-21). God blesses those who give themselves to Him and share with His church and with others (Mal. 3:8-12; Luke 6:38; Ps. 126:6). Truly, ***“It is more blessed to give than to receive”*** (Acts 20:35).

God has ordained giving to worship Him, to care for His people, and to carry out the work of edification and evangelism. When we fail to give as we have prospered, we are robbing ourselves of the great blessing God has in mind for us in giving. Let each of us devote ourselves to the Lord, giving ourselves first to Him and then let us give joyfully to the church to His glory and honor. – ***Truth Magazine***, December 2020. ■

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

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