

LAYING BY IN STORE

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In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write a commandment for the church of Corinth to take up a collection on the Lord's day: "*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.*" We know that the church gathered every first day of the week in order to partake of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7). Therefore, we have a binding commandment to give of our material means every Sunday.

Why every Sunday

To fully understand why Christians should take up the collection every Sunday, we should consider the background of the commandment originally given in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. This was during Paul's third missionary journey. He began that journey by going "over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23). While there, Paul had "given order to the churches of Galatia" to give as God had prospered them on every Sunday (1 Cor 16:1-2). From them, Paul began taking up a collection to take to the poor saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-31; 1 Cor 16:3). Next, Paul came to Ephesus (Acts 19:1-20:1), where he spent three years (Acts 20:31). While in Ephesus, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and in that epistle, he commanded them to give also (1 Cor 16:1-2). The specific purpose for the "collection for the saints" (1 Cor 16:1) was to bring their liberality unto Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3). From Asia, Paul went to Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2). While in Macedonia, he took up donations from the churches there (2 Cor 8:1-5; 9:2; Rom 15:25-31). Paul wrote 2 Corinthians while in Macedonia and urged the Corinthians to now give according to what they purposed a year before when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (2 Cor 8-9). Paul then went to Corinth (Acts 20:1-3) and took up the collection from the brethren in Achaia (Rom 15:25-31). From Corinth, Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, and told them: "*But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things*" (Rom 15:25-27). Just as he wrote in Romans, Paul left Corinth, and took the money and traveled to Jerusalem to give it to the poor saints there (Acts 20:3-21:15). This was an ongoing work of more than

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three years duration (as Acts 20:31 tells us that Paul spent a total of three years in Ephesus alone on his third missionary journey). Thus, the church at Corinth was commanded to lay by in store upon the first day of the week “*that there be no gatherings when I come*” (1 Cor 16:2). Christians must give every Sunday so that the church has available financial resources to do whatever works are necessary. They should not be scrambling to gather funds as each opportunity comes.

The amount to give

The church at Corinth was not given a commandment concerning the specific amount to give. Christians are commanded to give as they have been prospered by God (1 Cor 16:2). “For if there be first a willing mind, *it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.* For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack” (2 Cor 8:12-15). Thus, Christians are not commanded to “tithe” like the Jews in the Old Testament. Each Christian must give as one purposes in his heart. “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor 9:6-7). Paul told the Corinthians, “Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love” (2 Cor 8:7-8). Paul urged them to give abundantly, but did not command them how much to give. And our giving is to be done secretly: “*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly*” (Matt 6:1-4).