

“Now Concerning The Collection ...”

“... for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

From Paul’s words here, it is obvious that the apostle is not springing some new, entirely unknown matter upon the Corinthians: they were the first to make a beginning a year before (2 Cor. 8:10). This *“collection for the saints”* was something that had been *“in the works”* for some time. When Paul and Barnabas, sent from Antioch to inquire of apostles and brethren in Jerusalem about the necessity of the Gentiles being circumcised in Acts 15:2 (along with being directed by the Holy Spirit to go up, Gal. 2:1-2), the apostles there could offer nothing new to the teaching of Paul save that *“only they would that we should remember the poor, which very thing I was also zealous to do”* (Gal. 2:6, 10). Before Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first journey (Acts 13:1f), a prophet named Agabus had come from Judaea warning of a famine which was shortly to occur in that land and the brethren in Antioch, each man according to his several ability, *“determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judaea”* which funds were sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29-30).

This contribution of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 was a collection for relief for Jerusalem Christians. Paul wrote of this contribution in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, as well as mentioning it in Romans 15:25-28. It was an effort that involved churches in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia (Corinth, etc.), and very likely Asia (Ephesus). Acts 20 gives a list of seven men who joined Paul, Luke, and Titus and we believe it is proper to conclude these men were the messengers of the churches, carrying the bounty of those churches to Jerusalem. In fact, some of these are so designated by Paul (2 Cor. 8:23).

So Paul writes to the Corinthians to goad them into completing a work they had eagerly begun some months before. His instructions were clear: they were to regularly make up the collection by giving their contributions into the treasury of the Corinthian church on the first day of the week. The appearance of this term *“The first day of the week”* shows that there was a regular meeting time of disciples separate from the Jewish assembly on the Sabbath. In fact, in an earlier chapter (1 Corinthians 11) he mentions that when they *“came together”* it was not possible to eat the Lord’s Supper because of their improper way in which they were observing it. The particular day in which they were assembling is not named, but since disciples in Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread and since they were specifically commanded to give for the assistance of

poor saints on the first day of the week, the implication is clear that the day they were observing (and desecrating) the Lord's Supper was also on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Sabbatarians, in an effort to take away from this verse its teaching of an assembly of the church on the first day of the week, insist that these instructions were not to facilitate a public collection in a public assembly, but rather that disciples were to each set aside in a special place a designated sum for this contribution. This effort to make the instruction individual rather than collective is shown to be folly by the apostle's words "*that no collections be made when I come*" (1 Cor. 16:2). A church collection each week would have all funds of the Corinthians already amassed in one place; were these to be individual stores at home, a gathering of all those would be necessary when the apostle arrived, those contrary to his instructions.

Some might observe that instructions are not to be found for a specific time for other works funded by the congregation: preaching the gospel and edifying the saints. We do not disagree. Still, since caring for indigent saints is specifically a work of the church and preaching the gospel also is, to have instructions for the collection and funding for one is sufficient that such is the proper time for the funding of all other works God has assigned the church to do.

Jim McDonald