

# A SCRIPTURE ON GIVING—1

## CORINTHIANS 16:2

*B. C. Goodpasture*

Jesus and the apostles taught much on giving. The present lack of apostolic liberality among some professed followers of Christ is not due to any absence of divine revelation on the matter. It may be traced, in some instances, to preachers who, in order to save their imagined popularity, have failed to declare the “counsel of God” on this subject. Doubtless the churches will give more when they are taught more. He who, willfully and for personal considerations, shuns to declare the will of God with reference to giving of one’s means in the service of the Lord, betrays his sacred trust. He disobeys precept and disregards example. He may thus render himself *not* “pure from the blood of all men” (Acts 20:26).

The passage under consideration is plain and emphatic. “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.” Paul here shows the Corinthians how to have their contribution ready when he comes. A collection was to be made “upon the first day of the week”; everyone was to contribute; and the contributions were to be in proportion to the ability of the givers. These principles are fundamental and for all time. They demand our consideration.

**1. *The Time.*** The expression, “upon the first day of the week,” may not represent the full force of the original—*kata mian sabbatou*. Many scholars think the phrase should be translated, “upon the first day of every week.” They feel that the Greek requires the verbal expression of the emphasis that may be only implied in our accepted versions. A few quotations will be sufficient to show how some of the greatest scholars have committed themselves on the translation of the words in question. Charles Hodge, the Princeton professor, says: “The collection was to be made every Lord’s day” (Comment on 1 Corinthians 16:2). T. C. Edwards, principal of the University College, of Wales, says: “Every first day of the week” (Comment in loco). J. R. Boise, one time professor in the University of Chicago, translates the phrase : “On every first day of the week” (Notes on the Epistles of Paul). Marvin R. Vincent, a Union Theological Seminary professor, says: “Kata has a distributive force—every first day” (Word Studies in New Testament). G. G. Finley says: “On every first (day) of the week” (Expositor’s Greek Testament, in loco). James Macknight, the great Presbyterian commentator, says: “On the first day of every week. ... As *kat a polin* signifies every city; and *kata mena*, every month; and, Acts 14:23, *kat a ecclesian*, in every church, so *kata mian sabbatou* signifies *the first day of every week*” (Apostolical Epistles). A. Campbell quoted the substance of the foregoing, with his approval, in the “Christian System.” H. A. W. Meyer, than whom, perhaps, no greater commentator on the Greek text ever lived, says: “On each first day of the week.” (Comment in loco). Edward Robinson, the author of a fine Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament, says: “Every first day of the week” (Comment under *kata*). J. H. Thayer, the renowned author of the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, *the lexicon on the New Testament*, says: “On the first day of every week” (Comment under *kata*). Space forbids further quotations. These are enough to indicate the exactness with which Paul wrote in telling the Corinthians when to “lay by in store.” Of course their giving was not necessarily limited to the first day of the week. He had given the same orders to

the churches of Galatia. He also instructed the Galatians to do good unto all men as they had opportunity (Gal. 6:10). Thus it might be necessary to give on any day of the week, as the emergency might demand. But the text under investigation enjoins a regular and definite time to give, a time so clearly pointed out that there is no room for misunderstanding.

**2. The Persons.** The persons are mentioned no less clearly than the time. "Let each one of you lay by him in store." No one can feel that he has been overlooked or slighted in this matter, regardless of how much he may desire it. It is another case in which "each man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5). Religion is individual rather than congregational or national. We cannot serve God by proxy. Every man must "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phi. 2:12). Every man must contribute for himself. The father can no more contribute for the son than he can repent for him. "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). God never intended that a few faithful members should bear the financial burden of the congregation. This is frequently the case. It is wrong, and unjust to all concerned. Why should not every child of God be ready to give? He has been a good and liberal receiver. He has accepted and enjoyed the unmerited blessings of an all-wise Providence. He has been saved from his past sins through Him who gave his "live a ransom for many" (Mat. 20:28). How inconsistent and ungrateful his failure to give! It is a hideous sin of omission. "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jam. 4:17). Let him who habitually and deliberately fails to give know that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all" (Jam. 2:10). Such a person should be slow to criticize the fellow who thinks he is justified by faith only; he should not be swift to condemn the man who imagines baptism is a nonessential. In the light of his conduct, what does he think of the divine command to give?

**3. The Amount.** Paul says something about the amount—what a man is able to give. "Let each one of you lay by him in store, *as he may prosper.*" This is absolutely just. It gives the rich and the poor, though they have unequal possessions, an equal opportunity to contribute in hope of an equal reward (Mat. 25:21, 23). It is not enough *merely* to give something. It may ease the conscience and relieve the embarrassment occasioned by the passing of the dreaded contribution basket, but it certainly does not meet the requirements of the law. He who gives an old dime when he is able to give a new dollar has not given as "he may prosper." Frequently one man will measure the amount he intends to give by the contribution of another. This is not the New Testament way. Suppose a wealthy brother should determine the amount of his gift by the contribution of a brother of smaller means, he would not give enough. On the other hand, suppose a poor brother were compelled to give as much as the rich brother ought to give, he would give relatively too much. No one can fail to see the wisdom and justice in the inspired injunction. When it comes to contributing, the chief matter with us should be *how much* rather than *how little*. But such is not always the case. That servant who did not do as much as he was able to do was punished for his *failure* (Mat. 25:24-30). The poor widow who "cast in two mites ... cast in more than all they that were casting into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even her living" (Mark 12:43, 44). "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he

that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6). It is a fearful thing to have so much and give so little.

Finally, “remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Do we believe it?~

Deceased