

Pentecostal Believers: Dirt Poor 1 Corinthians 16:1

Introduction:

1. Paul begins chapter 16, "*Now concerning...*" Paul has handled a variety of issues, problems, and questions in this book. Now we come to the final chapter, and Paul is going to deal with a sensitive issue - money!
2. Notice verse 1 - "*the collection for the saints.*" Paul was a fund raiser. Some Christians are very sensitive about this subject. The pastor can remind the congregation about their obligation to witness, study their Bible, pray, serve the Lord, etc., and everybody "Amen."
3. But when the subject of giving comes up, and he reminds people of God's command to grow in this grace also, people say, "All he ever talks about is money. Why can't he just trust the Lord to meet the needs of the ministry?"
4. But Paul didn't hesitate to talk about this subject and call people to action. Paul spent all of **2 Corinthians 8-9** talking about this issue. Paul had called upon all the Gentile churches in Macedonia, Galatia, Achaia, etc. to contribute to this offering.
5. I think it would be wise to examine this issue and get the answers to some questions: "Who was this offering for? Why was it necessary? Why was Paul so involved in this?"
6. As we answer these questions, it will prove to be very helpful to us in understanding some key issues and some common misconceptions about Scripture.

Who was this collection for?

1. Many preachers use these verses in 1 Corinthians in ways that are not true to the text.
 - This collection was not for the weekly needs of the local church.
 - This collection was not for missionary projects.
 - This collection wasn't going into the storehouse of the Corinthian church.
 - This collection was not for the poor in any situation.
2. What was this offering? It was an offering for the poor saints that specifically lived in Jerusalem. **Romans 15:25-26**
3. This was not just a general benevolent offering for the poor. It was for a specific group - poor saints that were part of the Jerusalem church.

Why was this collection necessary?

1. Think about it, this was the local assembly that was birthed at Pentecost.
 - The Holy Spirit came in great power in Acts 2, the twelve preached to Israel the truth that they had crucified Christ, but that He was risen. He also preached that Christ would return and bring the kingdom to Israel if they would nationally repent and turn to Christ. **Acts 3:19-21**
 - This church started with a bang with over 3,000 people believing Peter's message that day. There were all kinds of signs, wonders, miracles.
2. What did the believers do? They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spontaneously sold everything they owned and gave it all away. **Acts 2:42-45, 4:32-35**

3. Why did they do this? Because it is what Christ instructed them to do.
Luke 12:32-33
4. In view of the coming kingdom, they were to divest themselves of all assets that would only weigh them down as they went through Tribulation and waited for the King to arrive.
5. But when the King arrived, they would receive a hundredfold more than they gave away. **Matthew 19:27-29**
6. In early Acts, Israel is getting a foretaste of the kingdom, they are all filled with the Holy Spirit, selling all they have and receiving miraculous provision by God Himself.
7. But here was the problem. Israel as a nation rejected the offer of the kingdom by rejecting the King.
8. Instead of God bringing the wrath of the Tribulation, God saved his chief enemy, Saul of Tarsus, and began to reveal to Him something that God had kept hidden (a mystery).
 - Israel's kingdom program would be temporarily set aside, and God would usher in a time of grace for the entire world.
9. The King would not come, but stay in exile. This would mean no kingdom on earth for Israel at this time. Where would that leave these Pentecostal believers? No hundredfold coming back to them.
 - Add to this, a great worldwide famine that came. **Acts 11:27-28**
 - What group of believers would be the most apt to suffer in a famine at this time? The Jerusalem believers who had sold everything they owned.
Acts 11:29
10. With the King rejected and absent, the funds in the common treasury began to dwindle and they were left in poverty. It really was no fault on their part. God's kingdom program was simply postponed and didn't happen. Now Gentile churches would have to help them.
 - You hear preachers talk about, "We need to go back to Pentecost and live like the Pentecostal believers." They ended up dirt poor.
 - If they really believe that, why don't they sell all that they have and let's see what happens to them. It is a failure to rightly divide God's Word and recognize that the Pentecostal kingdom program was set aside for the mystery program of grace that we live in today. The fact that these saints were dirt poor proves that.
11. Did you know that God doesn't expect you to sell everything you have and give it away? **1 Timothy 5:8** - the communal living of Acts 2-5 won't work today.
 - God expects you to work, make money, provide for your family, and not expect anybody else to provide this for you. Paul said if a man won't work, neither should he eat. **2 Thessalonians 3:10**
 - Under the kingdom program they were to give **no thought** of food, drink, or clothing. God would miraculously provide for them. **Matthew 6:31-34**
12. Why were the Pentecostal saints dirt poor? God changed the program. The kingdom doctrine wasn't going to work any more. They had to be reoriented to this change. Acts 15 was a big step towards this at the Jerusalem Council.

Why did Paul expect the Gentiles to give generously to this collection?

1. Why were heathen, pagan Gentiles to help poor Jews at Jerusalem? Why did Paul make an issue of this?
2. When Israel's kingdom program was set aside because of the fall of Israel and their rejection of Christ, who were the biggest benefactors in this? The Gentiles.
3. Because their kingdom program was set aside, the program of the mystery was ushered in and grace was made available on an equal basis to Gentiles everywhere. **Their** loss (of their kingdom) was our gain (spiritually). **Romans 11:11-13**
4. So based on this, Paul presses upon the Gentiles their responsibility to care for the carnal needs of these poor saints. **Romans 15:26-27**
 - Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, life, peace, righteousness, forgiveness of sins, the Word of God, a relationship with God - these were all the spiritual possessions of Israel. The Gentiles were aliens, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, without Christ and God. **Ephesians 2:11-12**
 - But now the offer of God's grace, forgiveness, eternal life, etc., has come freely to the Gentiles.
5. So, if we have been made partakers of all these wonderful provisions through Israel's fall and diminishing, Paul says that it is only right that the Gentiles minister back to them and help to meet their carnal (physical) needs.
 - This is a wonderful principle for us to learn. If a ministry invests in your life spiritually and you are benefiting spiritually, it is right that you help to meet the physical needs of that ministry.
 - People sometimes ask, "Where should I give my money?" It is very simple - you give to the place that is pouring spiritual truth into your life and providing spiritual nourishment for you.

KINGDOM POSTPONED

