

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 16 (Part 1)

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me” (1 Corinthians 16:1–4).

It has been said that “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” The statement is made to suggest that the sufferings of Jesus’ followers has caused greater Christian influence—and therefore greater numbers turning to Christ. Indeed, there is truth in the statement!

Paul wrote, *“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12–14).*

Therefore, we conclude that God uses suffering and persecution for His glory.

Persecution of Christian believers has been a problem since the birth of the Church. The early Church suffered first at the hands of the Jews, and then via the Romans. Sadly, Church history is replete with cases of rejection, imprisonments, torture, and death. Christian men, women, and children have suffered beatings, burnings, dismemberment, and molestations; were fed to lions and/or dogs; used in theatres and amphitheatres for cruel entertainments; and

suffered drownings, hard labor, homelessness, financial ruin, loss of family and loved ones—you name it.

The early apostles were all martyred—save John the beloved who was boiled in oil and survived. However, while they remained alive and serving as leaders to the growing Church, they suffered abandonment, financial loss, discomfort, and threats—multiple times. Moreover, Christians living in Jerusalem were in great need. Many were underemployed and treated spitefully by the Jews—who caused tremendous hardship on *“the [believing] saints”* in the Holy City. Therefore, without the freedoms other believers enjoyed, Paul called upon the churches to financially support the apostles and the saints who were in distress. His call was that they should plan to give—as the Lord had prospered them—allow the gifts to accumulate, give what they planned, delegate the delivery, and see to it that the gift was delivered.

When reminding the Corinthians of their promised gifts, Paul wrote, *“Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness... Therefore, I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:1–7) (Abridged).

With this in mind let us consider a few points of reflection:

- 1) Paul unashamedly called upon the believers to give to the work of ministry.

- 2) Paul did not use the word “tithe” but taught the necessity of giving and recognized the precedent.
- 3) Paul taught that the blessing of the Lord was (in part) associated with generosity.
- 4) Paul suggested that giving was to be joyful as an appropriate praise for God’s provisions.
- 5) Paul did not personally handle the money given—but asked that it be cared for by trusted co-laborers.
- 6) Paul ensured that money collected was used as intended.
- 7) Paul considered giving a form of worship and praise.

I trust that we will all learn these lessons in giving—and accountability. All we have is of the Lord—and due the Lord. Generously give—as the Lord prospers you.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul