

## The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

### Intentional Benevolence

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

1. **A Common Instruction** (v.1)

Paul was very careful to give the same instructions to all of the churches that he planted and to whom he ministered (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; cf. Acts 15:41; 2 Cor. 11:28; Col. 4:16). Every church or region had unique struggles or difficulties that Paul had to specifically deal with as he led them, but they were all instructed to believe and to behave in a uniform manner.

2. **A Designated Occasion** (v.2a)

There was a great famine in the first century that was hard on everyone, but it was particularly hard on the believers who lived in Israel (Acs 11:27-30). This was an occasion that the Lord used to help unify the gentile and Jewish believers (cf. Rom. 15:26-27). Paul's desire was to remember the poor and needy in his ministry (cf. Gal. 2:10) and in doing so he encouraged the gentile churches to weekly set aside gifts in order to help needy believers.

3. **A Flexible Contribution** (v.2b)

Paul gives a penetrating principle instead of a rigid percentage that was to govern how the believers were to give to help those in need. The Lord established regulations for specific contributions that the nation of Israel was to give in support of the tribe of Levi and, ultimately, of the priesthood (Num. 18:21-24). However, there were always occasions where Israel was called upon to give freely and generously (Ex. 35:29; 36:4-7). While the church has not been prescribed exactly how much of our earnings we are to give, we do have a model (cf. Gen. 14:17-20) and a prescription for how we ought to give (2 Cor. 9:5-7) in order to take care of our obligations (1 Cor. 9:5ff; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

4. **An Approved Servant** (vs.3-4)

Every Christian is to grow up to maturity in the Lord (Eph. 4:14-16) and to live faithfully to Him in order to do the work that He has prepared (Eph. 2:10), to testify of what God has done (John 14:15), and to adorn the preaching of the gospel with good works (Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:3-4). Elders and deacons both have explicit qualifications which must be met in order to serve the Lord and the church in those roles (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9), but every servant in the church ought to be tested and found approved for that task.