

Devotion 18
Therefore . . . (#2)

Wednesday, Week 3

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2a)

Pastor Brad Cusson relates this experience: "I first had a paper route when I was in the third grade. I remember that I had 175 papers to deliver 6 days a week. And I had to make collections. It cost \$1.75 a month to take the paper. After I paid the paper company a certain amount, the rest was mine. This taught me a lot. It taught me I had to have a plan. I soon knew who was going to be home—and when—to make my collections. Mom didn't raise no fool. It taught me I'd better make sure I had a system not to lose quarters, since I received 3 quarters for every dollar bill. It also taught me that if you just make it a part of what you do to save money, it mysteriously increases until you have enough to buy a car not all that many years later. I gave myself 5 dollars a month. The rest went into the bank. (But, of course, part of the plan was the extra paper I gave the donut shop every day so I got a free donut daily, the extra paper I gave the burrito place every day for 2 free burritos per week, and the extra paper I gave the A&W stand every day for two free root beer floats per week, but that's another story, albeit a very tasty one.)"

In today's text, Paul tells the Christians in Corinth every Sunday to, "set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up." Proportional giving! As God had given to them, they were to give to others. This took a little thought and a little planning. It seems to me that this is the way God wanted it. In one way, it was nothing new. The idea was expressed in the Old Testament command, or "the tithe." But now there was no prescribed amount; one's giving was simply a portion of what one received "in keeping with his income." This is a model for us, both in our week-to-week giving towards the daily work of the church, as well as with respect to our 3-year commitment. It seems to me God is saying to us in this text. "Think about it. Plan it through. If it is to be meaningful and faith-broadening, it should be something that you really plan for and think about."

One couple once shared how they gradually grew in their stewardship life as a young married couple, beginning at 3 or 4% per year and then, finding they could not out-give God, they gradually increased it beyond 10%. Planning—and working the plan—can be a tool of God as He grows us. It is my prayer that our loving, Heavenly Father would show each of us what this idea of "proportionate giving as God has given to you" means in each of our lives as we wrestle, pray, and plan for it.

Oh, one more thing! This idea of "proportionate giving as God has given to you" comes after 1 Corinthians 15. It is a "Therefore." It is built on the same wondrous proclamation of our sure and certain resurrection victory in Jesus as was yesterday's devotion. It is as if our Lord is saying, "When you are trying to figure out how much I have given to you, here is a pretty good place to start: with the victory over death and eternal resurrection that I give you in Jesus." Smile, you cannot out-give God!

Prayer: Dearest Jesus, thank You for the resurrection victory that You give me through Your death and resurrection. Guide me so that I might reflect proportionately all that You have given to me and lead me to respond accordingly in the grace of giving. Amen!