

# Day 98, 1 Corinthians 16

by David Servant

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*The sermon highlights the misuse of 1 Corinthians 16:2 and the drift from the biblical pattern for ministry, where churches focus on administrative costs and salaries rather than supporting the poor.*

**Scripture:** Acts 20:33

**Topics:** "Church Giving", "Stewardship"

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## Description

David Servant addresses the misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 16:2 commonly used to motivate churchgoers to give weekly offerings, emphasizing the original context of collecting for the poor believers in Jerusalem due to persecution. He highlights the simplicity of early church structures with no expenses for buildings, staff salaries, or special funds, contrasting it with the modern church system. Servant encourages pastors to follow the biblical pattern of self-sufficiency and giving to the weak, as exemplified by Paul's work ethic and teachings.

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## Transcript

It is going to be difficult to restrain myself from writing the truth today, so I think I will just throw caution to the wind. If you've stayed with me four-and-a-half months, there is probably little danger of losing you now! So here goes!

I can't tell you the number of times I've seen 1 Corinthians 16:2 quoted on church offering envelopes: "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper..." This verse is used to motivate churchgoers to give to the church on a weekly basis, and it is a classic example of ripping a verse from its context.

Notice that Paul was not referring to receiving collections for churches. He was writing about a "collection for the saints," namely the very poor among the believers in Jerusalem (16:1-3). Why there were so many poor Christians in Jerusalem we are not told, but I suspect it was due to the high degree of persecution leveled against them by the Jews.

There are no biblical records of any offerings "for the church." The reason is because churches had no expenses. They had no special buildings to pay for because small flocks met in homes, just as we read today of a church that met in the house of Aquila and Prisca (16:19). There were no mortgages or utility bills. There were no "building fund drives" to add a "fellowship hall" or "Sunday school annex." Moreover, there were no staff salaries to pay. There were no "senior pastors," "associate pastors," "administrative

pastors," "youth pastors," "music ministers" and so on, all creations of modern church structure. There were only pastors/elders/overseers, and most of them did not need remuneration due to the part-time nature of their responsibilities to care for and disciple a small group. We will soon be reading, in Acts, Paul's address to the elders of the church of Ephesus, in which he said:

I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:33-35).

At the most, pastors/elders/overseers who devoted part of their time to shepherd their flocks needed only part-time wages. But many, like Paul, worked to support themselves, thus having something to share with "the weak," and by so doing, set a good example before their flocks. Paul, typical of traveling ministers in his time, normally relied on free-will offerings from those he served, as well as the shared earnings of his traveling band.

As I survey the great mass of frustrated pastors around the world, I can't help but think they would all be much happier and more fulfilled if they simply adopted a biblical pattern for their ministry, so I write this out of love for them!

Most churches receive offerings every Sunday, often using envelopes on which 1 Corinthians 16:2 is written. Yet very little, if any, of what is collected is used to support poor Christians who are lacking basic necessities such as food and covering. This is an astonishing fact, and it shows how far we have drifted from the biblical pattern. Think of the millions upon millions of dollars that are collected in wealthy Western churches every Sunday, dollars that are used for things that are never mentioned or recommended in Scripture, while more than half of the Christians in the world live on less than two dollars a day!

Were there any administrative costs related to meeting the pressing needs of the Jerusalem believers? Certainly a small percentage of what was collected in Corinth had to be used to pay for delivering the collected funds to Jerusalem. But no one, I can assure you, was taking \$400,000 per year for their administrative work in serving the poor, as are some today who head large Christian humanitarian organizations. May God have mercy on their souls!

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