



The Church Treasury

(by Terry W. Benton)

Quote: It is true that the disciples were instructed to treasure up some things, "And concerning the collection that [is] for the saints, as I directed to the assemblies of Galatia, so also ye -- do ye; on every first [day] of the week, let each one of you lay by him, treasuring up whatever he may have prospered, that when I may come then collections may not be made;". (I Cor. 16:1-2). But you cannot term this, "church treasury" and form a doctrine with rules and guidelines attached with it. They had no, "church treasury", as you say. The expression, "Church treasury", or, "common collection" did not come out of the mouth of God. (Quoted from a house-church-denominationalist).

Reply: Not only can a church have a treasury, but they must have one if they are going to do the work that God ordained should be done by the church. The local church is to have a "collection," and the collection is called "treasuring" (in verb form), and by implication that which is collected is the treasury.

The above verse shows that every church had its own collected treasury. This is to be done every first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2). In the particular case, this collected treasury was to be designated and set in ready collected position so that it would not have to be gathered out of the houses when Paul came. This pooled or collected fund was a treasury of that church. Thus, it was the church treasury of the Corinthian brethren. It is foolish to say that you cannot call it what it is. It was the act of treasuring (God's expression) that allows it to be a "treasury" (noun form). This treasury was "your gift" (I Corinthians 16:3). Notice that it was not a bunch of individuals gifts, it was pooled by the church to become "your gift." It would be silly to say that "the church gift" is an unscriptural expression that did not come out of the mouth of God. The combined church is the "your" part, and the fact that it had become one "gift," "your gift" means it was the church's gift. So, the gift was a treasury collected by the church and ready for Paul to come by and endorse.

If the church did not have this treasury, God would not have been pleased with them for their selfishness and covetousness. Now, that was a starter precedent for Corinth to see a need far away and feel a common need to collect for that need. Corinth should have seen a need to collectively support those who have sown spiritual

things (I Corinthians 9:11). Those who had been preaching the gospel to them, including Paul, should have been given "your material things". Well, how would that have taken place, if they had done as they should? It would happen like the common gift they collected on the first day of the week for the poor at Jerusalem. If the church had collected material things to send to Jerusalem, then they could collect material things to give to preachers of the gospel. But, watch this: Once a church understands there are needs such as poor saints in other parts of the world, and preachers of the gospel that God ordained should live of the gospel, and the church desires to fellowship (share) in these ways, then the church will see a need for a regular treasury. There is no escaping this as we will demonstrate by the Scriptures.

What is to be done with regular collections?

Seeking to support men who labor in the word is a good way to "fellowship" those men in the gospel. Paul pointed out that in the beginning of the gospel, "when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only" (Philippians 4:15). Notice that a church should share with preachers of the gospel. How would they do that? They would have regular collections and send it to various gospel preachers. That is a "sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable

sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18). (We will demonstrate in another article that giving was for the work of preaching the gospel, not for the fact of being an apostle). What is not acceptable and well-pleasing to God is for brethren to teach that we ought NOT "share" with gospel preachers, when God "ordained" that the church should do this very thing (I Corinthians 9:14). Paul took "wages" from other churches (II Corinthians 11:7-8) when he should have been supported by Corinth. Corinth was simply blind to this need. It is the need to give and not just the need that needs giving to that is emphasized. The churches of Macedonia had the right spirit. They saw an "opportunity" to give and wanted to be a part. They were practically begging Paul to let them be a part. He said they were "implored us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (II Corinthians 8:4). The diligence of the churches of Macedonia was an example by which Paul wanted to "test the sincerity of your love" (at Corinth) (II Corinthians 8:8). So, giving is a test of the sincerity of our faith and love. Do we love the gospel and believe in supporting all the men we can who are dedicating their lives to it? Are we wearing blinders and seeing only what we want to see? If a church does not see a need to support needy saints far away and near, they are wearing blinders. If they do not see a need to support men who devote

their time and life to sowing spiritual things then they are wearing blinders. God is not pleased with the house-church mentality. It looks for reasons not to give regularly. It invents phony reasons not to have and support preachers of the gospel.

Churches should see a need to support elders who "labor in the word and doctrine" (I Timothy 5:17-18). Such laborers in the word and doctrine are "worthy of his wages." His spiritual sowing is worth far more than any material wages reaped by him. If secular education is important enough to give wages to school teachers, then gospel preachers and elders who labor in the word are worth far more. Carnal brethren have blinders on and cannot or will not see it, but God said that man who labors in the word is definitely worthy of his wages. No man should do it for the money, but a man should have a right to expect that brethren appreciate spiritual things and labors of a man to learn it better and expound upon it. Timothy could give himself to reading and meditation and his "profit" from doing so would greatly benefit the church (I Timothy 4:13-16) potentially enlightening them in treasures of wisdom and knowledge and also making them aware of spiritual dangers of false teachings. This could save him and "those who hear you." What price can a church put on this work? The laborer is worthy of his wages. Saving one

soul is worth more than the whole world. So, how can you measure the worth of gospel preaching that saves the man and those who hear him and provides protection to the church against apostasy? Now, in order for the church to pay "wages" to such worthy men, the church has got to have a regular source from which to pay those wages. What is this source? It is the common collection, the church treasury. A church has to gather a collection regularly in order to pay wages to worthy men in the gospel and other needed works of the church. This is God's plan, but unfortunately, there are rebellious men among us from time to time who do not want to do the will of God in this matter. They will not only not do it themselves, but they seek to persuade others not to do it either, and they invent arguments to justify their positions. Peter said they "speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through licentiousness" (II Peter 2:18). They pretend that they are "free" from "organized religion", but are slaves of corruption.

We should be as organized as the church at Philippi (Philippians 1:1) who pooled their funds and supported Paul time and again (Philippians 4:14-18). We should be as organized as Corinth so that we know when the "whole church" has come together and can exercise discipline against a member that walks disorderly (I

Corinthians 5), organized enough to judge cases between brethren in dispute (I Corinthians 6), organized enough to take the Lord's Supper together in the proper way, organized enough to order our assemblies for decent and in order assemblies (I Corinthians 14), organized enough to know what the church can and should support from a regular treasury, such as needy saints, and gospel preachers all over the world, as well as at home where we have men laboring in the word and doctrine, and also the ones we need to "take into the number" to be charged to the church (I Timothy 5:8-16). If the church can and should be "charged" and pay wages, then there must be a common and regular treasury from which to pay those charges and wages and support those men who labor in the word and sow spiritual things. There are some things for which the church "ought not" be charged (I Timothy 5:16), but there are some things for which the church ought to be charged. The church should be charged with appreciating the value of the gospel enough to let the teacher receive back "material things" with such thankfulness for the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ and His gospel, that it moves all members to want to give freely to the collection each week to keep it going and to keep men and their families going in this great work. The church ought to be charged with appreciating the riches in Christ enough to make sacrifices to

help the church pay wages to laborers in the gospel. The church ought to be charged with love for brethren enough to desire to help brethren in need near and far away. When a church opens its heart and mind, it can see needs that demand a commitment to regular giving on the first day of every week. Giving does not stop with one thing. It opens the door to consider many other things.

Those who foolishly argue that the gift from Corinth to Jerusalem was a one-time deal, miss the point altogether. That was a door-opener for them to consider many other needs near and far away. What else would a collection be needed for? How about men who minister spiritual things to the lost and to the brethren here and in other places? How about "widows indeed"? How about anything that accommodates the work of the church in doing its work? How about the rental or purchase of a meeting place? How about Bibles and tracts to hand out to people? How about edification materials to teach each other in psalm, hymns, and spiritual songs? (song books and class materials). The needs are endless when you open your eyes. Therefore, a good church learns to see and yearns to give as much as possible to all that should be charged to the church. A treasury from which to pay wages of support to preachers and widows indeed and elders who labor in the word and doctrine, and also from which to give to needy saints near

and far away is a scriptural church treasury.

Going back to the argument made at the beginning. A church must have a treasury to do what God "charges" it to do. A treasury is collected from the saints at regular intervals. The example in I Corinthians 16:1-2 is a suitable example that authorizes us to follow it as a pattern of when and how often we can give to the common cause. There is not just one cause to which the church should give (poor saints), but many others. Since the church should pay wages to workers in the word and to widows indeed, then the church must have a treasury. It is shown in the Scriptures and implied in the things the church fellowshiped. All members should do their share in a local church to give as they have been prospered. The collection of the local church is scriptural in every way. In fact it is not scriptural for a church to not have a money box or treasury from which to do these things it is charged to do. Those who teach otherwise are blind and should now be enlightened by these truths. If they refuse these truths, then they should be refused membership in any scriptural church.

The house-church-denomination is often composed of such people as would deny the need for a regular church treasury. If Paul wanted the church at Corinth to look as far away as Jerusalem for needs to support, then how long should it

take a house-church to see endless needs and therefore the need for endless giving? They are blind about needs and sometimes intentionally so. But, they also often invent false arguments about supporting gospel preachers as another excuse not to give regularly. We have addressed this matter in a limited way here in this article, but will deal more in-depth with that in a later article. From the above references it should be easy to see that brethren who refuse to support gospel preachers are refusing to do what God ordained should be done. These brethren need to be marked and avoided as divisive (Romans 16:17). The argument that the expression "church treasury" is not found in the Bible is foolish. It would be as foolish as saying that "personal Bible study" is not a biblical phrase and therefore we cannot do it or say it. Such foolishness is not worthy of further comment.