

“Now Concerning the Collection of the Saints”

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*“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also”
(1 Cor. 16:1).*

In the following three passages, the apostle Paul speaks of a common offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem.

²⁸ “One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. ²⁹ And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. ³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders” (Acts 11:28-30).

²⁵ “but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things” (Rom. 15:25-27).

¹ “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints” (2 Cor. 8:1-4).

Paul makes an appeal for churches to give to a common cause within the church. His call is for a giving that celebrates the enormity of Christ’s body. A unity exists within the church whether we recognize it or not and for us to deny this unity is to fight against the nature of the Trinity.

Consider the historical context of the petition made by Paul.

“For some time Paul had been encouraging the churches to co-operate in a generous offering for the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem. Persecution in this capital city of Judaism had kept them impoverished and made life hard for them. Because of his compassionate concern for them in their need and because of its unifying influence in drawing the Jewish and Gentile churches closer together, Paul was very enthusiastic about this offering.” (Millard J. Berquist, Studies in First Corinthians, 134)

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Paul's request reminds us that the local church is a part of a larger family of churches. Somehow, the local church is not only a family of families, but it is also a church of churches.

“It is not simply that one local church supports its own membership and work, as did the first Christians in Jerusalem, but that all churches support other believers and churches as there is need.” (John MacArthur, 1 Corinthians, 451).

This tells us that we are to be in a relationship with other churches to carry out and support the mission of the church.

God invites us to give for the sustaining of His work here, and through us to be in union with other local fellowships for the sustaining of His collective work through His larger church. One of the ways we see this unfold is in the supporting of other Christian ministries and church planters.

However, for this to happen effectively we must fix what is broken. We will never be able to move beyond our borders until we, with humility, teach-ability and charity, face our present state of affairs. If we do not set aside our own interests, then we will continue to implode. For us to work with and for others, we must move past ourselves, and this will never happen if we do not place our eyes on Christ. May God give us the courage to set aside our differences and then to serve one another selflessly.