

The Bible, The Lottery And New Testament Giving

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 • Dr. Jerry Vines • 9/16/90

In 1 Corinthians 16, the apostle Paul lays before us the subject of the giving and he does it right in the context of the great theme of spiritual matters. Of course, you know that God's children live in two realms. Our hearts are in heaven and our feet are on this earth. We are rejoicing in the sweet by and by, but we also know that the Christian life applies to the nitty gritty of the here and now.

The Bible is a wonderful book. It is a wonderful book because it shows us that we are to be deeply spiritual but we are also to be definitely practical. The Christian life lays warm sympathetic hands on the daily issues of life. The parables of the Lord Jesus Christ (over 35 in number and about 16 of those parables of our Lord) have to do with material possessions. Our Savior understood that money and the use of money and the abuse of money are vital matters that have to do with daily life. Most of you spend the majority of your waking hours dealing with how to make a living -- earning a salary, earning your money in order to pay for the things you need and to meet your responsibilities. It would be unthinkable that the Bible which is such a practical, down to earth book would not spend a great deal of time talking about the subject of giving and the proper relationship of God's child to the matter of money.

I. THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE LOTTERY

Having just introduced these verses in that matter, we raise the question, what does this have to do with the subject of the lottery? Why do we relate what we are told in these verses to the subject of the lottery? I think it is because in the lottery and in these verses of Scripture here we have a contrast between a lottery lifestyle, which is based on greed, and a Christian lifestyle, which is based on grace. The antithesis of the lottery, which is based on getting is the Christian life which is based on giving.

The lottery, of course, has been a very major topic of conversation in Florida for the last several days. It's almost as if there has been a feeding frenzy going on in our state. Hysteria almost developed. People by the thousands and tens of thousands have been purchasing lottery tickets. They say the prize will run around 105 million dollars. Some people stood in line for five hours buying tickets and waiting to buy tickets. Enough lottery tickets have been purchased so that every adult in Florida could have ten apiece. At noon yesterday tickets were selling at the rate of 560 – 570 per second. One man I read about spent seven hours purchasing for himself and for his family 50,000 dollars worth of lottery tickets. The paper today shared with us what the odds were that a person could win the lottery. The odds that you would win the lottery are one in fourteen million. Your odds of dying in a car crash are much greater than that. In fact, you have a greater chance of being hit by a falling object than that. The odds of your dying with syphilis are greater than the odds that you would win in the lottery. Yet three out of every four people in America gamble in some form. Eighty percent of the people of America are in favor of a state form of gambling of some kind. Even Ozell Miller in Georgia got in on the act. He's probably going to be elected governor of the state of Georgia so he comes traipsing down here and brings his cameras and it's just so terrible that the people of Georgia are spending their money on lottery tickets down here so he wants to make it legal up there so they won't have to come down here to get their lottery tickets. Poor Ozell. I've known him a long, long time. He's no more intelligent now than he was when I first met him. I'm sorry, if that was ugly, forgive me. If Zell is your uncle I just meant it in jest. The question that is raised tonight is: Is it wrong for a state to have a lottery and is it wrong to play the lottery? The answer to that is -- of course it is. You do not have to have a Phd from Harvard to know that the lottery is wrong. In fact if you have an IQ just a little above the level of plant life you know that it is wrong for there to be a state supported lottery and for people to play the lottery. There are many reasons. Let me quickly give your four reasons why the lottery is wrong.

A. It enables compulsive gamblers to pursue their addiction.

There are 10 million compulsive gamblers in America. Probably the one that has been the most prominent in the news in recent times is baseball great Pete Rose. We are told that Pete Rose, who served a term for tax evasion, spent between 8,000 and 10,000 dollars per day in gambling. He owed bookies between 500,000 and 750,000 dollars. He is a compulsive gambler. He is addicted to gambling.

Of those ten million compulsive gamblers, 20% of those are teenagers. 3-4% of those are women. It used to be men who were addicted to gambling, but now the large majority are teenagers and women. Studies have been done about the effects of compulsive gambling on their spouses and also on their children. The effect of compulsive gambling on the spouse -- 67% of the spouses have been harassed by creditors. 61% have become violent toward the gambler. 78% suffer from insomnia. 11% have attempted suicide. The effects of compulsive gamblers on their children -- 25% of the children have exhibited behavioral and adjustment problems in school. The lottery is wrong because it is government feeding on the habits of the compulsive gambler and preying on his addiction. It enables the compulsive gambler to pursue his addiction.

B. It ensnares the economically deprived.

Those who are in the poverty level spend disproportionate amounts of their money to their number in the purchase of lottery tickets. This is why you will always find a larger concentration of stores that are selling lottery tickets in the economically deprived areas. The lottery is a form of economic immorality. It appeals to those citizens who are least able to afford it. It is a regressive form of taxation. Studies have been done in lottery states and they have discovered, among other things, that those whose income are under \$5,000 a year spend an average of \$6.80 per \$1,000 of their income. Those whose salaries are over \$25,000 a year spend only \$1.46 per thousand of their income. Yet, government which preys on the poor with this kind of regressive form of taxation never sets aside any funds for the poor. Gambling, lottery breeds new gamblers. It draws organized crime. It brings illegal forms of gambling into a state- It makes a state dependent upon the weaknesses rather than the strength of its citizens. Instead of calling a lottery it ought to be called a lootery. It ensnares the economically deprived.

C. It elevates materialism to improper levels.

The Bible never says that things are wrong. In fact, the Bible teaches us that God has given us things. The Bible says God has given us all things richly to enjoy. There is nothing wrong with things. Things become wrong when they become ends and of themselves. Jesus said man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Jesus was saying that there is more to life than the material. The material is important, but it must not be elevated to an improper level. The lottery teaches a materialistic lifestyle. The lottery teaches people to believe that the sum total of happiness in life is the acquisition of material things. So, the lottery is wrong because of that improper elevation of materialism.

D. It encourages a "something for nothing" value system.

The debate is on as to whether or not the lottery indeed aids education. The debate is on and there are those who say it does and those who say it doesn't. I won't involve myself in that particular discussion, but I would say we are sending an ominous message to young people in our school systems when we are suggesting that the way to fund education is to do it by means of a chance instead of a designed program of responsibility on the part of the citizens.

The lottery teaches people to depend upon chance instead upon hard work and instead of trusting in God. The Bible says that God will meet the needs of your life. If you will put your trust in

Him, if you will depend upon Him, he will meet your needs in life. But the lottery is wrong because it encourages a "something for nothing values system."

The question is raised - what about the Bible? Does the Bible condemn the lottery? Absolutely! You don't have to be a PhD in theology to know the Bible condemns the lottery. "I've got you now preacher. No where in the Bible does the word gambling occur." you are exactly correct. No where in the King James Bible does the word, gambling, occur. No where in the King James Bible does the word, pornography, occur. Does anyone in this building deny or would doubt that the Bible would condemn pornography. No where in the Bible do the words child molestation occur. Does anyone in this congregation deny or doubt that the Bible condemns child molestation. The fact that the Bible in the King James version does not use the word gambling does not in any way suggest or imply that the Bible is silent on the subject of gambling. Of course, the Bible condemns gambling.

Let me give you several Scripture verses.

- 1) Exodus 20:15, the 8th commandment - "Thou shalt not steal." The lottery is stealing from the poor.
- 2) The tenth commandment - Exodus 20:17, "Thy shalt not covet." The lottery is desiring what rightfully belongs to others.
- 3) Isaiah 3:14 - "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people (talking about leadership) and the princes thereof (officials): for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses." Government is to assist the poor, not exploit the poor.
- 4) Proverbs 13:11 LB - "Wealth from gambling quickly disappears. Wealth from hard work grows."
- 5) Proverbs 28:20 LB - "The man who wants to get rich quick will quickly fail."
- 6) II Thessalonians 3:10 - "If any would not work, neither should he eat." The Bible places its approval upon the work ethic.
- 7) Matthew 6:33 - "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

Let me just give you a wrap-up on why the lottery and gambling is wrong. They are wrong because they undermine values, mock work, finance crime, rob children, enslave their addicts, subvert government and it poison whatever they touches. Those are just a few of the reasons why gambling and the lottery are wrong. Enough said, end of subject.

II. BIBLICAL VIEW OF GIVING

I'm now moving into the matter of giving. The lottery and New Testament giving are in perfect contrast to one another. They are each the antithesis of the other. The lottery is based on selfishness. New Testament giving is based on unselfishness. The lottery hurts people. New Testament giving helps people. The lottery is based on being a taker. New Testament giving is based on being a giver. The lottery is based on greed. New Testament giving is based on grace. That's what Paul is talking about when he talks about this whole matter of the collection. The matter of the giving of a believer is so very important because the collection is good gauge of your spiritual life.

‘What you are spiritually will often be reflected by what you do in the matter of your giving. All of us are selfish by nature. We are born selfish. That precious child comes into your home, oh what a precious little darling he or she is. It isn't long until you find out that that precious little darling is just as selfish as he or she can be. In fact, he is so selfish he doesn't care if you haven't slept much, he'll just get you up at 2:00 a.m. and insist you bring him something to eat. We are born selfish and when we come to the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. God has to break up the choked channels of our selfishness and get us out of ourselves and get us into thinking about others. One of the greatest ways to do that is in this matter of giving. Notice the purpose of the collection. Paul says, "Concerning the

collection for the saints..." Then in verse 3 he says, "I will send them to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." There are two purposes for this matter of giving. Number one, it is to benefit the receiver and to bless the giver. There were some real needs Paul was addressing in this collection he was taking. There were some saints in Jerusalem who were poor and Paul was getting up a collection to help meet that need. There had been a famine in the land and many of the people were poverty stricken. The early church in Jerusalem had become ingrown in its ministry -- had not taken seriously the Lord's Great Commission. Any time a congregation of God's people become ingrown in their ministry instead of looking upon the world as a mission field that kind of church becomes a mission field itself. A church is either a force to work with or it is a field to work in. So, Paul says we are going to get up a collection and send it to the poor saints of Jerusalem. So, needs are met when people give as God commands to give. It not only blesses the receivers, but it also benefits the givers. There is a blessing that comes. Paul says your liberality - the word grace. We give as an expression of the grace of God in our life. Did you hear about the man who bought himself a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away? That is exactly the way grace giving is. You just can't outgive God. You just give to God and God will just give back to you. Jesus said, "Give and it shall be given unto you, pressed down, shaken down and running over..." God is simply saying you become a grace giver and you look at life not for how much you can get out of life, but how much you can give into life and God says I'll just keep heaping up the blessings on you. That is the purpose of the matter of giving -- the collection. Notice the procedure. How are we to go about this matter of giving as New Testament believers. There is a procedure in verse 2 that I want to follow.

A. New Testament giving (grace giving) is punctual.

"Upon the first day of the week..." We have pointed out the fact in other messages that the first day of the week is Sunday. We do not gather together for worship on the sabbath day. The Jews worship on the sabbath - that's Saturday. They gather together to commemorate God's work of creation. You and I gather together on the Lord's Day to commemorate God's work of resurrection. When we come together we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, in the New Testament and today it is a day of worship. Giving is to be a part of our worship. When we give we worship the Lord in our tithes and offerings. Our worship is an expression of our love for the Lord. You love your wife, you love your children -- if you love them you will give. I saw a lovely little baby carriage the other day. It was a gift of a happy grandfather. That grand dad loved that little grandbaby so he just wanted to buy something. Love always expresses itself in giving. You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving. It is an expression of love. It is to be punctual -- on the first day of the week. That simply is the basis for the envelopes for we send out. We send out envelopes so you can put an offering in that envelope and on the Lord's Day, first day of the week, you can bring it. That's why we have a Chest of Joash Day and give you an opportunity to fill out a commitment card to commit yourself to systematically give to the work of the Lord. That's why we send out statements. That's why we do all of these things. That's the basis of it. These verses teach that giving is to be a systematic matter. I heard about a man who got fired up at church and when you get all fired up for Jesus you want to do something at your church. He came to the preacher and said, "Just give me something to do. I want to do something, I'm on fire for the Lord and I'm just burning up with zeal. Just give me something to do." Pastor said, "Only thing I can think for you to do is - we have about ten men who have been inactive this past year why don't you just write them a letter. They haven't come and they haven't given anything this year. Why don't you just write them a letter." He said, "I'll do it, just give me the names and addresses." About a week later the pastor got a letter from one of those men. That letter said, "Dear Pastor, I am aware of the fact that my attendance has been delinquent in the past year. I want to assure you that I will be more faithful in my attendance. Pastor, I must admit also that I have not been giving the way I ought to give, so enclosed you will find a check

for \$1,000. Sincerely, Name. P.S. Will you please tell your secretary that there is only one t in dirty and no c in skunk. We don't write letters quite like that. When you get letters from us we try to be kind and sweet. But we do acquaint you with the needs of the work of the Lord here because we believe the Bible teaches that giving should be a punctual matter. "Upon the first day of the week" we bring our offerings to the collection.

B. New Testament giving is personal.

"Let every one of you lay by him in store." That means that everybody is to give. The Lord Jesus accepted the gift -- the widow's mite and he also accepted the gift -- the much of Barnabas. The rich are to give, the poor are to give. The young are to give, the old are to give. Everybody is to have a part in the giving to the things of the Lord and the giving to the collection. "Let everyone of you lay by him in store." A good way to translate that is to lay up something as a precious thing. Let everyone of you lay up as a precious thing. When I read that I think about Mary and her box of expensive ointment. Someone said it probably represented an entire year's salary. Mary lost her brother Lazarus.

I can almost imagine that Mary went over there and reached for that box of expensive perfume to anoint the body of Lazarus. She said, No, I'm saving this for something special. I've laid up a precious thing. Then, the Lord Jesus came to her home and Mary got that which she had laid up as a precious thing. She got that expensive perfume and took it and cracked the vessel and poured the entire contents of that box of ointment on the head and feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. She had laid up a precious thing. The most precious reality in her life was Jesus Christ. She just poured it all on Jesus Christ. That's the way we ought to go about our giving. The first check I always write out of my salary is what I'm going to give to Jesus. I want him to have the very first. I want to lay aside as a precious thing. I want to lay aside as something that means something to me. I want to lay by me in store as an act of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. "Lay by him in store."

C. New Testament giving is proportionate.

See that "as God has prospered him." He is saying that you ought to add up the blessings and on the basis of the blessings that's the way you ought to give. Has God prospered you? Materially?

You say it's been a tough year. A lot of people have had a tough year. Not been an easy year. Even in the midst of that has God blessed you physically? How many men have more than one suit? A lot of people in this world don't have one suit. Ladies, do you have more than one dress? There are some folks that all they have is just what they have on their body. God has blessed us physically. Any of us not have enough to eat today? God has prospered us physically, hasn't he? Has God prospered you health-wise? Some of you have had a physical difficulty and went to the doctor and he said it may be serious and yet you went back and you have shared with me that the doctor said it's not as serious as we thought it was going to be. God blessed you. Has God blessed you spiritually? Have you got a Bible? Do you have a church? Do you have a Christian family? Do you have the Holy Spirit? Do you have salvation? Do you have Jesus? "As God has prospered." I used to hear that old song, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." That's the procedure.

D. New Testament giving is practical.

"That there be no gatherings (collections) when I come." Paul is saying let's care of this giving matter, get it on out of the way so we can spend our time on the main business. That's the way we've done it in our church since 1940. For 50 years now we have done it God's way by the tithes and offering of the people. So that there be no gatherings. That we do not spend an inordinate amount of time on the subject of giving. We believe that the Christian lifestyle, based on grace which results in giving, is far superior to the lottery lifestyle which is based on greed which results in getting.

Dr. Jerry Vines is pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida. Used by permission.