

YOKEFELLOW

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THE CHURCH TREASURY

Bobby Liddell

What a blessing God has provided in teaching us to give (John 3:16; Acts 20:35)! Not only has He made possible our giving, by placing the earth under our dominion (Gen. 1:26-29), and by providing us with the ability to get wealth (Deu. 8:18), but He has also taught us scriptural principles that, when properly understood and applied, insure our correct attitudes and actions in accomplishing the work of the Lord's church. We must not forget or forsake the mission of the church of Christ.

The church is a spiritual institution, and as such, it has a spiritual mission... The truth of the superiority of the spiritual over the physical is evident throughout the Bible, and must be recognized in the study of the mission of the church. The mission of the church is still spiritual—it is the proclamation of the message of redemption.¹

How could we misuse the church treasury? To loose where God has not loosed, in using the Lord's money for carnal desires rather than for the spiritual purposes God intended, is a wrong use of the church treasury. Thus, to heed the call of the world (to provide entertainment, recreation, etc.) instead of the call of the gospel (2 The. 2:14; 1 John 2:15-17), is to leave the God-given pattern for the church's work. Additionally, to prohibit doing that which God has authorized, by binding laws, that God has not bound, about the use of the church treasury, is also wrong. Either extreme is error: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD" (Pro. 17:15).

Has God's Word anything to say about the church treasury, and the scriptural use of it? Does the New Testament set forth principles which we must follow? If so, what are they, and how can we understand them alike? To answer these questions, we shall consider these points: (1) Scriptural Authority for a "Church Treasury;" (2) Scriptural Additions to the Church Treasury, and (3) Scriptural Application of the Church Treasury.

Scriptural Authority For A "Church Treasury" The Pattern Of Laying By In Store

Some argue against a church treasury, claiming that individuals should save their money and give it to "needy people or worthy causes of your personal choice."² Brother Guy N. Woods replied to this request: "Please discuss 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; and explain how this passage may properly be cited as a pattern for a church treasury from which funds may be taken for many purposes when it was originally intended to provide for the needs of the poor saints only."³

Brother Woods' response included these points, portions of which I have recorded here.

(1) The *time* when the contribution was to be gathered was "upon the first day of the week." The Greek phrase is *kata mian sabbatou*, literally,

"upon one of the sabbath," Hebrew idiom for the first day of the week... We thus learn that the church was accustomed to meet on the first day of the week (see also Acts 20:7), and it was, therefore, appropriate that the obligation being enjoined by the apostle should be performed on that day.

(2) The *duty* embraced "every one" capable of giving of his means...

(3) The *amount* each was to give was to be determined in harmony with the prosperity he had enjoyed...

(4) The *design* of this arrangement was to avoid the necessity of contacting each disciple for his contribution when the apostle arrived. With their gifts pooled into a common treasury, the contribution would be ready on short notice, thus freeing Paul and his associates from the arduous and often unpleasant task of raising the money directly by personal appeals. This is sufficient refutation of the conjecture of some commentators, and all Sabbatarians, that the disciples were merely asked to place in a treasury *at home* their gifts, in which case the "gathering" which Paul desired to avoid would yet be required to be made. *Each* disciple was to give; each disciple was to give as he had been *prospered*; each disciple was to give upon the *first day* of the week, into a common treasury of the church.

(5) The *purpose* of this contribution was to relieve want and destitution among the poor saints in Jerusalem. (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:3.) It is worthy of note that *only here* is a Lord's day contribution enjoined; and the only *specific* purpose for it was to relieve the poor in the Jerusalem congregation. There is here *no* definite and detailed *pattern* of using the Lord's day contribution to "pay" the preacher; purchase Bibles, song books, literature and communion supplies, or to erect auditoriums in which to meet for worship. There is indeed no apostolic *example* of using the money thus raised for the poor saints of the congregation raising the money—only for the poor of another congregation! It is therefore absurd to insist, as do some extremists today, that *general* authority (as, for example, the command to "visit" the fatherless and the widows, in James 1:27), is not sufficient; and to demand a *detailed* description of every duty from the Scriptures, while they hesitate not to cite 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, to justify the use of the money for all the purposes indicated above, and many others besides, excepting, of course, a *home* for the *homeless*, sometimes styled orphanages!

But do not all of us cite 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, as the proper way in which to meet all the financial needs of the church in its work and worship today? Indeed so; but, not on the ground that it provides a specific and detailed pattern of such, because it *does not*. We have, in this passage, a demonstration of the way in which apostolic congregations, under the direction of an apostle, *met a legitimate* need. The need, in that instance, was to relieve the poor which then abounded in the congregation in Jerusalem...

The churches thus *met a need* by means of a Lord's day contribution. We reason, therefore, that in any instance, *when a need has been established*, it may be met in the same way. Support for the preacher, literature, song books, Bibles, the communion supplies, church buildings, and other matters in the same category, are proper and legitimate needs of the church. They may, therefore, be provided for from the treasury of the church supplied from the Lord's day contribution.⁴

Especially important to our study is this statement from the above: "The churches thus *met a need* by means of a Lord's day contribution. We

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reason, therefore, that in any instance, *when a need has been established*, it may be met in the same way." To this, we heartily agree.

In his second **Questions and Answers** book, brother Woods answered this question: "Is the case for a common treasury dependent on a necessary inference in 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2?"

No. The obligation here is a direct command. (1) It was an obligation to be discharged on "the first day of the week." (2) It was to be put into a common treasury. If to this the objection is raised that the words "lay by him in store," suggest only that it was an action to be discharged at home, such vanishes in the face of the fact that (3) the reason for the common treasury was to eliminate the need of a "gathering" when Paul arrived. This points irresistibly to a "common treasury" in Corinth. Contributions at home would have required the "gathering" Paul sought to avoid by means of the common treasury. Recognized here is the common meeting of the church on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and the obligation to give as prospered on that day.⁵

Brother Thomas B. Warren (in his book, **When Is An Example Binding?**) wrote these comments on 1 Corinthians 16:2:

The passage lays upon Christians the *obligation* of meeting every first day of the week in order to lay by in store (treasure up, put into the treasury). The word *kata* is *distributive* in its effect, meaning, "on the first day of every week"....

Also, it must be noted that the total context makes clear that this was a matter of general *command*. Paul said, "...as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye" (i.e., the church at Corinth, 1:1-2). The members of the churches were commanded to put into a common treasury every first day of the week.⁶

Conclusions derived from the above statements, made by two of the greatest Bible scholars and thinkers of the last century, are: (1) the church was commanded to contribute during the worship assembly on the first day of every week; (2) all the brethren gave, as prospered, to meet the legitimate, scriptural needs of the church's work; (3) their giving was into a common church treasury; and, (4) this was a general command; thus, applying to all Christians and to all congregations everywhere.

The Provision Of Things Honest

Great care should be taken with the Lord's money. Brethren should insure the safeguarding of the treasury, as well as the reputations of those who deal with it. Contributions and entire treasuries have been stolen, or otherwise dishonestly handled. Common sense and tragic experience teach us that the contribution should be counted immediately after services, by at least two men, and deposit made as soon as possible (contributions have been stolen from the building, or a member's home). Likewise, two signatures should be required for checks written for expenditures, all of which should be approved by the elders/brethren. A published budget along with regular financial reports and bank statements should be provided to the brethren. These are simple, precautionary steps to the proper receiving and distribution of funds.

Who shall be treasurer? Lipscomb and Sewell's book, **Questions Answered**, demonstrated the appropriateness of the church treasury, and right ways to handle it.

It is certainly right to appoint some faithful brother to serve the church as treasurer, to keep a strict account of all money paid to the treasury, and to pay out as the elders may direct, and keep an account of all that is paid out also. In this way all that is done is done by the congregation. And surely the money ought to be paid in regularly on the first day of the week, so it will be ready when needed and not have to

be gathered when the time comes that it ought to be paid out. Paul told the Corinthians to have their means by the time he should come and not have to gather it up after his arrival.⁷

What kind of men should be treasurers? *Not stingy men* who look upon the Lord's money as if it were their own, and who seem intent on "saving" (hoarding) as much of the Lord's money as they can. Many good works have needlessly gone undone simply because of the negative influence of a stingy treasurer. *Not pessimists* who scare brethren away from doing what the Lord has commanded the church to do, sap the strength, weaken the faith, and curtail the God-given work of the local congregation (cf. Num. 13:27-33). *Not insubordinate men* who think being treasurer gives them the authority to make arbitrary, unilateral decisions on using, or not using, the church treasury, without the direction or knowledge of the elders. *Not thieves* (cf. John 12:4-6)! Questionnaires indicate one out of twelve congregations of the Lord's church have lost funds due to theft.⁸

There is a great need to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and this principle applies to the church treasury--and to the church treasurer (2 Cor. 8:18-24). *Continued Next Month*

"To Seek And To Save"

FORTY-THIRD ANNUAL
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WE EXTEND OUR SYMPATHY

On November 26, **Gladys M. Rhodes**, the mother of Keith Mosher, Sr., died. She suffered from lung cancer, but had managed to live ninety years and eleven months. She is survived by two daughters, her son, and several grandchildren and great grandchildren. The family has requested that any memorials be made to the Memphis School of Preaching building fund.

Brother **Jerry Catchim**, a 1975 graduate of Memphis School of Preaching, has died. He was a faithful Christian and gospel preacher and lived to his seventy-seventh year. His good and faithful helpmeet, Pat, resides at 3509 Gesman Place SW, Huntsville, AL, 35805. Jerry was a quiet servant of Christ and a fellow-classmate of mine who was always encouraging to the work of the school and especially to me. As Pat told me over the phone, "We really love you folks." All who knew Jerry loved him and will miss him until we get to see him again in paradise.

Keith Mosher, Sr.

*A Deserving Family Needs
YOUR Support NOW*

Gordon Wells, and his family, came to MSOP from **South Africa**, and began classes in November. The Wells family consists of Gordon, his wife Claudia, and their two children Jude and Leia. Brother Wells is a mature, stable man, who is committed to preaching the Word.

The Wells family needs **\$2,000 monthly support** for the next two years. They have shown themselves willing to make sacrifices, and upon graduation, they will return to South Africa, and will be working there to teach the lost about the Savior Who gave so much for them, making possible their salvation.

Last June, Morne Stephanus and Ricardo Fredericks, also of South Africa, graduated, and are back home working to spread the gospel. They were excellent students and we trust brother Wells will be also. Please consider supporting the Wells family, and let us hear from you as soon as possible. Send your support for them to MSOP. Remember, your contributions to MSOP are tax deductible. Thanks! *BL*

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THE LORAIN, OHIO CAMPAIGN

Garland Elkins

Thirteen students, from the Memphis School of Preaching, and I worked with the Toledo Road Church of Christ (in one of the four campaigns conducted by MSOP students and faculty that week) from November 2-7, 2008. The church at Toledo Road had truly prepared for the gospel meeting. Brother Bob Eddy and the entire membership did everything possible to ensure that as far as possible we would have a good meeting. The Lord blessed all concerned in every way.

- The Lord blessed us with marvelous weather. Although we had been told to bring our overcoats, and we did so, we did not need them. The weather was exceedingly mild; some of the days even in the seventies.
- The brothers and sisters had planned, and did prepare great meals for us, and this they did three times a day, and they served us with pleasure.

- Much good work was done during this time. The students, and others who assisted them knocked on 2,248 doors; set up Bible studies, and one precious soul was restored, and another was baptized.

- Each evening before the regular service began we enjoyed wonderful singing, and also students were in charge of the regular services.

- The members of the congregation were most encouraging to the students.

- A week later, brother Bob Eddy informed us that another two were baptized and one restored which resulted from the campaign.

Many members of the church at Toledo Road made many encouraging comments both to and about our students. Space will allow me to quote only a few of them. Brother Bob Eddy, minister of the Toledo Road Congregation both publicly and privately stated that since the students came "this church will never be the same again." Another brother stated that "the students had renewed his hope for the youth of our nation." Another brother told me that he had taught speech therapy to high school students and others; he said that "our students are the most respectful and humble group of young men that he has ever seen."

Brother Bud Collier, a brother who spent much time with the students in arranging the different areas of the city to be covered, stated publicly on the last night of the meeting, that "they had been blessed with thirteen blessings"; and he named the students, giving their names publicly. He also sent the following e-mail to us.

I especially appreciate the 13 young men who came and worked with us during our Campaign for Christ. Bros. Gary Curry, Daniel Rogers, Apache Crying Bear, Terry Captain, Josh Clevenger, Jeremiah Myers, Quenton Hicks, Quentin Johnson, Stephen Higley, David Dean, Howard Odom, Jermaine Tolefree, and Justin Beard, all went above and beyond what was expected of them, in their door-knocking and in our services, our singings, and devotionals. We were truly uplifted by their zeal and enthusiasm. They all certainly conducted themselves as mature Christians. Everyone here was greatly impressed with their politeness, humbleness, and caring attitudes. In my 35 years as a Christian I have never had the privilege of singing with a better song leader than Bro. Justin Beard. Most of them participated in leading our singing, and were good, but Bro. Beard was outstanding. Thank you so much for allowing us the opportunity and privilege of meeting and working with these fine Christian young men. We certainly will not forget them.

We are thankful to God for the above comments, and especially that we believe that our students deserved them. I need to point out

that when the brethren complimented the students who went with me, I pointed out that we had three other campaigns in progress, and that those three groups of students are just as fine as the ones that were with me. Brother Curtis Cates and a group of students went to Erwin, Tennessee. Brother Keith Mosher and a group of students went to Olive Branch, Mississippi; and brother Dan Cates, and another group went to Chalmette (New Orleans), Louisiana. Good results from these campaigns continue; for example, brother Bob Eddy is engaged in a Bible study with a Catholic.

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Please send us your change of address. Let us know in time that we do not send, to your old address, an issue that will be returned to us. Each month, we spend quite a bit for returned Yokefellows. We are happy to send Yokefellow free of charge. Thanks for your help in keeping our costs low.

Liberalism Continues To Destroy And To Divide Congregations--Let Us Take A Stand

Michael Golwitzer

We cherish the work being done by faithful brethren all over the world. There are many graduates of MSOP, who continue to stand for the truth, yet suffer persecution for doing so. If anyone knows the sacrifice and suffering of Christians, faithful brethren do. Those who "take heed" (Heb 3:12) and "exhort one another daily, while it is called To day" (v. 13) are those who "are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (v. 14).

Many, in our area, have taken up with liberalism and with Rubel Shelly, who teaches at the Bristol Road church of Christ, and is Interim President of Rochester College. Even so, several brethren in Genesee County, Michigan, have taken a stand against the liberalism that has taken the area. These brethren met on October 19, 2008, (twenty in attendance) trying to establish a congregation, and have asked me (Michael Golwitzer, MSOP 1980) to be the preacher at the newly formed church of Christ of Genesee County. I am looking for secular work to continue to preach in this area.

We are asking faithful congregations to help us, for just one year, to establish a self supporting congregation in Genesee County. All supporters will receive regular reports of our progress, and at the end of the year we can evaluate the work. We believe we can be self supporting in one year.

You may contact Marty Stearns at (810) 629-9567, or at martystearns@aol.com, or Michael Golwitzer at (810) 655-3242, or at mgolwitz@comcast.net. Our mailing address is: Church of Christ of Genesee County, P.O. Box 190406, Burton, Michigan 48519.

(Editor's Note: I have been knowing brother Golwitzer since 1978, and have known him always to be faithful, true to God's Word in his teaching and preaching, and a very hard working servant of our Lord. He, and this congregation, are worthy of our support, and are in need of our prayers. BL)

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