

God's Plan of Church Finance

It goes without argument that God has planned everything in connection with the work of a local congregation. He has not left to man the responsibility of deciding what the church is to do or how it is to finance its work.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16: 1-2).

It has been contended that this authorization is for the "collection for the poor saints" only, and is not a pattern for collection of money to defray the regular expenses of the church. Such contention is not well founded. Here we have a work to be done by the church, a work demanding the gathering of finance. How is gathering to be done? By a free-will offering on the first day of each week. If then there is another work to be done by the church, how is it to be financed? We answer, by the same procedure, and if not, WHY NOT? If this method of gathering funds for the relief of poor saints is wise in the mind of the Lord, is it not also wise in the gathering of funds for other works? If we are to accept this as the Lord's plan of collecting money we should regard it as being inclusive and exclusive. It includes a free-will contribution in the first day of the week and it excludes the raising of money in any other way. The first is accepted by most brethren, but the second is thought not to be binding, that is, we can raise money any way we desire.

If, and when, members are taught to LOVE the Lord supremely, to "seek ye first the kingdom of God." they will freely give into the Lord's treasury in sufficient amount to do what the Lord expects of the church. If we must resort to some unique, and naive, method of chicanery to open the purse strings of the members it seems to reflect on the simple pattern of the Lord and is an indictment of His wisdom.

It is impossible to improve upon the Lord's plan of doing the Lord's work, or of finding a better institution through which to do it than the Lord's church.

- by Wright Randolph

Bring Them In - To What?

In the church of our Lord today we find a concentrated effort to enlarge the kingdom numerically. This is indeed good, and we commend the efforts of those who faithfully proclaim the gospel to save souls. Yet there is an element which appears to us most unsavory. This is the aiming at sheer numbers with neglect to the spiritual, and thereby the arrangement which God has provided.

We hear of vast promotional schemes, of millions of dollars spent to make the church (?) known in the world. Churches of Christ are entering the secular education business the, entertainment business, the welfare business in order to bring souls into the church.

This sort of action has results. We are told of the churches growing by leaps and bounds. Meeting houses are built and furnished at the cost of millions of dollars. Results, yes; but at what cost!

It would appear that brethren never profit by the lessons of history. We are reminded of the fact that in the early days of the church, when Christians were suffering under heavy persecution, the faith was exactly kept. Christianity was pure. Worship was conducted in spirit and truth, and lives of the saints were lived in moral excellence. The doctrine was strictly that which was revealed in the New Testament by inspired men.

Then, in the fourth century the Roman emperor, Constantine, was "converted to Christianity." The religion suddenly became popular in the world. Thousands flocked to it, but bringing with them their deeply ingrained pagan customs and beliefs. Just as suddenly, Christianity began to decline. Morals receded. The worship was corrupted. The doctrine evolved to the teachings of men. The way was paved for the establishment of the Catholic Church a few hundred years hence.

Today in the process of the various church enterprises and promotional schemes, principles governing the operation of the church have been neglected and abandoned. The abandonment of one principle leads to the abandonment of another. Spiritual decay spreads fast.

When we bring our vast numbers in, to what do we bring them in? A decadent church, an institution no longer recognized by God? Why teach a man the truth if it leads him to membership in an organization operating according to the dictates of men? Bring them in, yes indeed! But bring them in to the church founded upon Jesus Christ as He is revealed by His apostles; the church based soundly upon the teaching of the Word of God Almighty!

- by J. David Lawrence

'It's In The Greek'

As we study and discuss the New Testament there is sometimes a reference made to things that are contained in the original language. Someone will mention that "the Greek says" this or that. It's not a bad thing to try to understand something about the meaning of words as used by the inspired writers, but a couple of warnings are in order.

First, there are relatively few real scholars of the Greek language, and there are NONE who have become such by spending a few hours looking at reference books or following links on the Internet. Not even those who have enrolled in one or two semesters of Greek studies at a college or university are qualified as true experts in this complicated field of study. This being the case, it is highly unlikely – effectively impossible – that the average person is going to find some undiscovered 'nugget' of information hiding in the Greek that was never noticed by those who have spent long years of dedicated work studying and learning the language. For instance, we had a situation where, in discussion of the meaning of certain words in an important New Testament text, one fella made it a point to emphasize his high marks in two semesters of Greek during his college days. He then proceeded to claim that the established Greek authorities were wrong, and that he had a better understanding of what the words meant and how the passage should be translated. There was little use in further discussion because he had – at least in his own mind – settled the matter with some 'insider' knowledge of what was 'in the Greek.' How foolish!

Additionally, we should never convey the idea that the average person who has never studied Greek is incapable of comprehending the will of God. The truth is that large teams of competent scholars have combined their efforts to produce a number of excellent translations in the English language. Any diligent student today can take these versions and fully understand what God would have him to do. It may very well be – and often is the case – that a guy who couldn't tell an 'alpha' from an 'omega' knows more about the real sense of a Bible text than another individual who has trouble 'seeing it' from behind his pile of Greek reference books.

Any and all efforts to fully understand the inspired Word - including studies of the original languages of the Bible - and apply it to our daily lives are commendable. But, be cautious about novel interpretations and conclusions that are based upon claims about what is 'in the Greek.'

- by Greg Gwin