

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Church Treasury Pointers

(Jerry Fite)

Did the New Testament church have a “church treasury”? Did the Spirit, direct the church to gather into one treasury the individual contributions from the members of a local church? If so, what was the money in the church’s treasury used for?

The local church in Jerusalem, at least on one occasion, gathered contributions into one bounty or treasury. Coming to the aid of their new brethren in Christ, Christians sold land and houses and “...brought the prices of things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and distribution was made unto each, according to anyone that had need” (Acts 4:34-35). On this occasion, solid assets were turned into money, accumulated and placed at the “apostle’s feet”. Money, gathered in one place, formed a single treasury to provide help for needy Christians.

It was expedient for the church in Corinth to have a single treasury of funds. Paul was coming to Corinth to gather the funds collected by the church, and take the bounty to help the needy saints in Jerusalem. A single treasury had to be formed, so that “no collections be made when I come” (I Corinthians 16:2).

Paul had commanded the churches in Galatia to do the same thing as he is exhorting the saints in Corinth to do. Upon the first day of the week, each person was to lay by in store. The first day of the week was important, for each week Christians were assembling to worship and partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7). At this time, a “storing” was to occur. Christians were not laying by in store in their homes, for that would defeat the purpose of having no collections occur when Paul arrived. It appears that the storing up would be the single treasury formed by the weekly contributions. Upon his arrival, Paul would not have to collect from various individuals, but he could take away the funds already collected and stored.

The local churches in Jerusalem, Corinth and Galatia formed their own treasuries under the guidance of the Apostles and the authority of God. Therefore, local churches today are authorized to form a “church treasury” to help accomplish what God has authorized the local church to do. The church’s treasury is thus a pointer to the local church’s authorized work.

The example of forming a treasury in the churches at Jerusalem, Corinth and Galatia point to

benevolence as an authorized work of the church. Specifying that the money from the stored up funds was “*the collection for the saints*”, is significant (I Corinthians 16:1). While individual Christians are commanded to assist all men when opportunity arises, the “church’s treasury” is to be used in helping only fellow Christians in need. Such assisting was “*ministering to the saints*” (2 Corinthians 9:1), and with this collection, “*ministering unto the saints*” that were “*poor*” “*at Jerusalem*” (Romans 15:25-16).

The church’s treasury was also used to support evangelists in the preaching of the gospel of Christ. The Philippian church sent funds to assist Paul when he left Macedonia. He writes, “*No other church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only*” (Philippians 4:15). Paul, determined not to take money from the church in Corinth to avoid a hindrance to the Gospel there, “*robbed other churches, taking wages of them that he might minister unto the saints in Corinth*” (2 Corinthians 11: 7-8). These two passages point to churches, not individual Christians, in providing wages.

The church’s authorized work is funded through the church’s authorized treasury!