

Sunday, July 29, 2018—I Corinthians 16:1-4 The Liberality Grace Produces

## **Introduction**

- Last Sunday we studied I Cor. 16:1-4 as they stand in the passage. In doing so, we discussed why Paul was taking up a collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem as well as how he wanted the process handled.
- We did not have time, however, to look at a couple other matters related to this collection that are important to consider. This morning I would like to consider the following points:
  - Undesigned Coincidences in Paul’s epistles and the book of Acts related to this collection.
  - The principles of grace-based giving.

## **What is an Undesigned Coincidence?**

- In short, *UCs* provide us with evidence for the reliability and truthfulness for what the Biblical writers report in a way that made up stories or simply copies of made up stories or forgeries claiming to report events not really witnessed could not provide.
  - “An undesigned coincidence occurs when one account of an event leaves out a bit of information which is filled in, often quite incidentally, by a different account, which helps to answer some natural questions raised by the first.” (McLatchie)
- In our day, the notion of *UCs* as a defense of the Bible’s divine nature has been championed most loudly by Dr. Timothy McGrew, a professor of Philosophy at Western Michigan University. Dr. McGrew has produced a nine-part lecture series on the reliability of the Bible in addition to participating in websites devoted to Christian Apologetics such as [Apologetics315.com](http://Apologetics315.com)
- Dr. McGrew states the following regarding *UCs*:
  - “Sometimes two works by different authors (for example Acts, which was written by Luke, and the Pauline epistles) interlock in a way that would be very unlikely if one were copied from the other or both were copied from a common source. For example, one book may mention in passing a detail that answers a question raised by the other. The two records fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Fictions and forgeries aren’t like that. Why would a forger leave loose ends, unanswered questions? And how could a forger control what another writes to make it interlock with what you have written? But this is what we expect to find when both writers are talking about real historical events that they both are familiar with.” (McGrew)

- While McGrew uses the notion of UCs in his defense of the veracity of the Bible, he was not the first to do so. Earlier Christian thinkers and theologians to use UC in support of the Bible's truthfulness include:
  - William Paley—English Clergyman and Apologist: 1743-1805
    - *Horae Paulinae* (1790)
  - John James Blunt—English Anglican: 1794-1855
    - *Undesigned Coincidences in the Writings Both of the Old and New Testament : An Argument of Their Veracity : With an Appendix, Containing Undesigned Coincidences Between the Gospels and Acts, and Josephus* (1851)
  - Edmund Bennett—American Lawyer: 1824-1898
    - *The Four Gospels From a Lawyer's Standpoint* (1899)

- When we see parallel passages in the N.T. we usually simply see one as filling in a few more details not supplied in the other account. But sometimes they supply much more than that, especially when we find details in passages that are not even in the same context as another passage.

When considering UCs it is important to keep in mind that we have the luxury of possessing a completed Bible. We have all twenty-seven New Testament books bound together in one book. Consequently, we sometimes miss or don't think about things like these UCs. Bear in mind that the New Testament books were not originally bound together in one book. Rather they were twenty-seven separate books written by eight to nine different men. That is what makes the cumulative force of this argument for the genuineness of the Bible so strong.

### **The Contribution for the Poor Saints at Jerusalem**

- “One of the benefits of having both Paul’s letters and a history of Paul’s activities (the book of Acts) from another hand is that we are able to compare points of contact across the two genres. Their overlap is all the more valuable since they appear to have been written largely or wholly independently of one another, with very little verbal similarity at any point.

What should we expect from such material, if each is independently grounded in the facts? With luck, and if the material is extensive, we should be able to find multiple instances where the documents refer to the same people or events. Of course we should not expect the history and the letters to correspond point-for-point; in the nature of the case, there will be much in the letters that would be out of place in the history, while the history—in keeping with the historical standards of the times—may organize material conceptually rather than chronologically and may compress or pass over some incidents in the course of the narration. And occasionally, the correspondences may cross over several letters, creating a network of related passages that cannot

with any plausibility be dismissed as fabrication or forgery.” (McGrew, [Undesigned Coincidences: Part 3](#))

- Romans 15:25-26—here we have three points of interest all in the same passage in one of the letters: a collection being taken up in Macedonia, a similar collection in Achaia, and Paul’s plan to travel to Jerusalem to take this aid to the saints there.
- Acts 20:2-3—we find Paul on the way back to Palestine, but there is not a word about a contribution.
- Acts 24:17-19—Paul mentions that he came to bring alms to his countrymen, but there is no mention of where the monies come from.
- The points of correspondence are so indirect that there is no suspicion of copying here. Two other passages from the letters enable us to fill out the picture.
- I Corinthians 16:1-4—we see that there was a contribution being collected at Corinth, the capital of Achaia, for the Christians of Jerusalem.
- II Corinthians 8:1-4, 9:2—we find the churches of Macedonia introduced as already engaged in a collection for this very purpose.
- “Thus all of the circumstances brought together in those two verses in Romans are corroborated by a number of other passages in the history of Acts and in the Corinthian epistles. And each of these, by some hint in the passage, or by the date of the writing in which the passage occurs, can be fixed at a particular time—a period toward the close of Paul’s second missionary journey.

Does this conformity, scattered and indirect, with not a whiff of verbal similarity, look like forgery on one part or on the other? Or rather, does each passage stand perfectly naturally in connection with its own context? If so, the suggestion that such a coincidence is the effect of design is most improbable.” (McGrew, [Undesigned Coincidences: Part 3](#))

- “The book of Acts and the Pauline epistles are verbally independent; their interconnections are indirect. That is what makes their harmonies so impressive as evidence that both give us substantially truthful representations of real events.” (McGrew, [Undesigned Coincidences: Part 3](#))

### **Grace-Based Giving**

- I Corinthians 16:3—the Greek word translated “liberality” in this verse is the word *charis*. 130 times the word *charis* is rendered by the King James translators as “grace” in the New Testament.

- II Corinthians 8:2—the English word “liberality” also occurs in this verse but it is a translation of a completely different Greek word. The Greek word here carries the following meaning:
  - “not self-seeking, openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity.”
- According to Noah Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language (1828) the English “liberality” carries the following meanings:
  - Munificence; bounty.
  - A particular act of generosity; a donation; a gratuity.
  - Largeness of mind; catholicism; that comprehensiveness of mind which includes other interests beside its own, and duly estimates in its decisions the value or importance of each. It is evidence of a noble mind to judge of men and things with *liberality*.
- Taken together the connection is simple, an understand of all the God has done for us by his grace ought to produce a heart of generosity within believers. This generosity is not produced and motivated by fear of punishment but appreciation for all that God has done for us through Christ.

### **Giving Under the Law**

- *Amount:* The amount of money Israel was supposed to give was determined by when they lived during the kingdom program.
- Under the Law Israel had specific instructions about how much money they needed to give God.
  - Deuteronomy 14:2, 22—tithes means a tenth. Every year Israel was instructed to give one tenth of all their increase to God.
  - Leviticus 27:30, 32
  - Numbers 18:21, 23-24—tenth to the tribe of Levi since they have no inheritance.
  - Deuteronomy 14:22-23—every year one tenth of their increase.
  - Deuteronomy 14:27—every year one tenth for the tribe of Levi
  - Deuteronomy 14:28—every three years an additional 10th for the stranger, orphan, and widow.
- So, we see right off the bat that all of the ministries that talk about tithing a 10th of your income are not even following the giving outlined in the law.

- 20 % every year
- 30 % every third year
- 23 and 1/3 percent every year
- There were other required offerings and free will offerings that could be added to these totals.
- Last week we saw that out of obedience to the kingdom message of Christ and Apostles, believing Israel sold all their possessions (100%) and laid the proceeds at Apostles feet.
- *Motivation:* fear was Israel's motivation for giving.
  - Malachi 3:8-10—Israel's motivation for giving was like everything else under the Law, fear of punishment.
    - Notice that in verse 10 God challenges Israel to “prove Me” Giving under the law and for that matter all obedience under the law makes God a debtor to the person performing the obedience. When a person obeys God's commandment under the law God become obligated to give him the appropriate blessing.
  - Luke 6:38—if you don't give God is not going to bless you.
  - Acts 5:11—Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying about how much they gave.

### **Giving Under Grace**

- *Motivation:* giving like all obedience under grace is not motivated by fear but by love.
  - II Corinthians 5:14—the love of Christ ought to be our motivator
  - Ephesians 1:3—we have already been blessed richly in Jesus Christ will all spiritual blessings.
- Our giving is no longer a way to prove God it has now become a way for God to prove us.
- II Corinthians 8:8—show me where a person spends his time and money I will tell you what they love. What are we more concerned with the work of the ministry and investing in eternal spiritual things or temporary corruptible things.

- Our attitude about giving in the Dispensation of Grace is to be that we are giving out of a heart of love and gratitude for what God has already done. Our giving is not to be motivated by fear of judgment or by trying to gain additional blessings from God.
- *Amount:* under grace we are not instructed to give a percent.
- II Corinthians 9:6-7—our giving is to be planned out and prayerfully considered. Not what you just happen to have in your wallet.
- You should give God as much as you can and still be cheerful about doing it.
- Always keeping in mind that if we invest in spiritual things we will reap eternal spiritual rewards.
- II Corinthians 8:1-8
- Philippians 4:15-18