

SERMON: HILARIOUS HOLINESS

1st Corinthians 16:1-4

(1) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. (2) Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (3) And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. (4) And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

2nd Corinthians 9:6-7

(6) But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

(7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver.

Introduction

These texts are powerful Scriptures with many spiritual and practical principles. However, they can lead to errors if taken out of context. So, please let me review the context.

Paul is asking the church at Corinth to take up a special offering to provide for the church leaders in Jerusalem. These leaders, who had done so much for the cause of the kingdom, were now old and feeble and could not provide totally for themselves. The amount paid in the offering was discretionary; the tithe was not. Tithe is ten percent. When a certain amount is requested in a special offering, it is still understood that one can pay as God has prospered him or her. You can pay much more or much less. Paul called this special offering a "collection." Please keep in mind that this collection was over and above the normal payment of tithe. His method was straight forward with no gimmicks. He went straight to the point but did not badger them. It was extremely successful.

These Scriptures and others penned by Paul also give best practices for cash management. There were checks and balances. These checks and balances protected the money raised, but also protected the reputation of the individuals handling the

money. No single individual was allowed to handle the money alone. Paul uses the word “them.”

These texts also make another important point. Paul asked them to bring this collection incrementally, every Sunday, so that there would not be any last minute chaos and disorganization when he arrived. In other words, be proactive, not reactive.

In verse 9: 7, Paul states that God loves a cheerful giver. Now, let’s zero in on the word cheerful. The Greek word is *hilaros*, from which we get our English word hilarious. We have limited it to laughing when we see or hear something funny. It does mean that God loves it when we are tickled to death to give, but a form of the word was also used to describe an audience that gave thunderous applause for great acting in the theater or great musicality in the performance of vocal or instrumental music. It was also used to describe the admiration and applause spectators give when an athlete performs some stunning physical feat.

So, you should feel just as good when you give from the heart as you feel when the Falcons make a winning touchdown. You should feel just as good when you help the poor as when you see Simone Biles perform one of her “impossible” gymnastic routines.

Hilarious in the original sense meant the expression of cheerful appreciation of an accomplished act. It was spontaneous and uncontrollable. So, yes, there is hilarious holiness. Every time you give freely and joyfully, you are doing four hilarious holy acts. Let’s look at these four hilarious acts.

Exposition

1. Responding To God’s Amazing Grace.

(Christians Respond To God’s Grace By Being Gracious To Others- Especially To Those In Need.)

(It Is An Awful Disgrace, If We Do Not Share God’s Amazing Grace.)

2. Reaffirming Of Genuine Faith.

(Every Time You Give, You Reaffirm Your Faith In God.)

(The Biggest Hindrance To Generosity Is Fear- The Fear That I Will Not Have Enough To Survive.)

(Faith Allows Us To Trust God To Bless What Is Left, After You Have Given.)

3. Repudiating The Greedy Materialism Of The World.

(Materialism Asserts That The Most Important Aspect Of Life Is The Collection Of Stuff.)

(Materialists Love Things And Use People.)

(Jesus Taught Us To Love People And To Use Things To The Glory Of God.)

(You Don't Have To Be Rich To Be Materialistic.)

4. Reflecting Your Immense Gratitude To God.

(It Demonstrates Your Thankfulness In A Tangible Way.)

(Not Only My Time And My Talent, But Also My Treasure.)

Closing Thoughts

Let me close with a story about my daughter Carmen. I have two daughters, Carmen and Rebecca. Both are daddy's girls. My son Daryl is great and thinks, like I do, in a very philosophical way. Carmen, however, is the one who stayed constantly in my shadow.

I hope I can tell this in real time without tearing up. I remember, one day, when she heard the ringing bell of the neighborhood ice cream truck. Her little eyes danced as she rushed to my chair as I was reading. "Daddy, the ice cream man is coming. We missed him yesterday. Do you have enough money to buy us some ice cream?" I told her I think I could manage the cost of a few frozen treats. We walked across the street to the gathering of children and parents waiting for the truck to stop. I asked her if she wanted vanilla or chocolate. She nodded her head in the affirmative and said, "Yes, I want both." As the attendant handed the cone to her, she turned to me and said, "Daddy, you take the first lick. "Oh, no, Carmen. The ice cream cone is for you and I am really not hungry." She insisted that I take the first lick. I asked her why it was so important for me to take the first lick. She replied, "You can do magic and it will taste better if you take the first lick. Since you bought it, it is really your ice cream cone, anyway. In compliance with her "demand" I took the first lick and she was elated.

Carmen had stumbled on a great principle of stewardship. Just as she knew her biological father really owned the ice cream cone, God owns everything that we have. She said it would taste better when her father would get the first lick. Everything is better when God gets the first lick. We can do more with our time, when we give God the first lick of our time. We can do more with our talent when we give God the first lick of our talent. Our money will go a lot farther when we give God the first lick of our income. Everything is better when we give God the first lick.

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Proverbs 22:9

Acts 11:27-30

Romans 12:11

2nd Corinthians 8:20-21

1st Thessalonians 5:22

End Notes

1. In all of Paul's writing this is the only time he used the word hilarious. Since it means a spontaneous uncontrollable response, that may or not include laughter, I assert that there can be hilarious worship. It may occur at home or at work when you think of all of the blessings God has bestowed on you.

2. Just for the record. We have members with the greatest integrity handling and accounting for your tithe and offering receipts. Our books are audited each year by an independent CPA firm and we do our very best to remain GAAP compliant.

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