

I & II
CORINTHIANS

A Logion Press Commentary

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VIII. CONCLUDING INSTRUCTIONS 16:1–24

A. The Collection For God's People 16:1–4

¹Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ²On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Paul now takes up the matter of a “collection for God’s people,” probably in answer to another question in their letter to him. Those of God’s people he has in mind are the poor saints in Jerusalem (v. 3). He does not want the Corinthians to think he is putting all the responsibility on them or that he is asking them to do something other assemblies are not doing. So he tells them he is giving them the same instructions he gave to the Galatian believers. In his letter to the Galatians (probably written prior to this) Paul tells about his eagerness to “remember the poor” (Gal. 2:10). Acts 11:27–30 records Agabus predicting a famine and the people of Antioch responding by sending Paul and Barnabas with a gift. Now there was another opportunity to help the stricken saints in Jerusalem. So Paul tells the Corinthians what he told the Galatians.

What Paul directed them to do calls for the regular weekly setting aside of a sum of money as God has prospered them. The Greek is literally, “Let each of you by himself set aside storing up something in keeping with his gains.” “By himself” means “at home.”¹ That they are to do this specifically on “the first day” of the week seems significant. Other mentions of the first day, such as the gathering at Troas (Acts 20:27), taken together with Jesus’ resurrection on the first day of the week, suggest that Christians met for worship on Sunday. There is evidence also that Jewish Christians went to the synagogues on Saturday to witness and then gathered for their own worship and encouragement on the first day of the week. Paul’s point, however, is that by sav-

¹Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 813.

ing up weekly they would have more to give than if only one collection were to be made when he came to them.

³Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

Paul was very careful about finances. He wanted to be sure that the gift, which would be a heavy load of silver coins, was properly protected and taken care of, so that it would reach the poor in Jerusalem that it was intended for. Therefore, he wanted them to select more than one person—“men you approve” (and trust)—and send them with their gift (Gk. *charin*, “gracious gift”) to Jerusalem.

Paul did not intend to pick up their offering and deliver it. Instead, he would write “letters of introduction.” If they thought it “best,” then he would “be glad to travel with them” (v. 4, *The Message*). Their presence would make the gift more personal and would help to make the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem appreciate not only the gift but fellowship with Gentile believers as well. Their presence would also make sure that Paul would be above suspicion with respect to whether he took all the credit for it or the Jerusalem believers got all that had been collected. (See Rom. 15:25; 2 Cor. 1:16, which show Paul did accompany them with the gift.)

B. Paul’s Expectation To Come To Corinth 16:5–9

⁵After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. ⁶Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote this letter. He wanted the Corinthian believers to know that they still had considerable time to set aside money for the gift to the poor in Jerusalem, so he explains his travel plans. He would stay in Ephesus “until Pentecost,” which was probably several months away.

See Acts 19:1 to 20:1 for Luke’s description of the “great door for effective work” and the many adversaries that Paul speaks of here. God was doing many extraordinary miracles through Paul. A number who practiced sorcery believed and brought their scrolls (of magic formulas, etc.) and burned them. So many believed that the sale of silver images dropped off and the silversmiths stirred up a riot.

Paul expected to go next to Macedonia, where he would spend the summer and fall, and then go to Corinth to spend the winter. He wanted to spend considerable time with them and he hoped they would be able to help him on his journey. This probably did not mean he expected a money offering for himself (see 2 Cor. 11:7). More likely he hoped for traveling companions.

That he says “wherever I go” and “if the Lord permits” show that Paul was careful not to make plans that the Lord couldn’t change. The Book of Acts shows how he was sensitive to the guidance and checks of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus (e.g., Acts 16:6–7).

C. Concern For Timothy And Apollos 16:10–12

¹⁰If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. ¹¹No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

The word “if” (Gk. *ean*) in this case means that Timothy should be expected to come, but the time is indefinite, so the idea is “whenever Timothy comes.”² Paul had already said he was sending him (4:17), but it may be that Timothy would have some stops on the way.

What Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to do was to welcome Timothy, realize he was a faithful and true worker for the Lord, just as Paul was, and take care of him. It may be that Paul sensed there might be some opposition to Timothy, just as their letter showed there was some opposition to him.

The request to send Timothy on his way “in peace” means that they would consider his needs and well-being (see the Acts 19:22 mention

²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 210.

of Erastus, who was probably the leader of those who went with him). Paul's mention of "the brothers" indicates some other believers would be traveling with Timothy, perhaps for encouragement and protection. Paul wanted them all to come back safely to him while he was still in Ephesus.

¹²Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

Now Paul is taking up another question in response to his letter from the Corinthians, which may have asked him to encourage Apollos to come back to Corinth. In view of the discussion of 3:4–9, Paul considered him a fellow worker for the Lord, so Paul did urge him to go "with the brothers" (probably the three mentioned in verse 17). That Apollos was not willing to go at that time shows that Paul did not try to use "apostolic authority" to tell him what to do. We can be sure he was willing to let the Holy Spirit guide him. However, Apollos did say he would come when he had opportunity. He was not insensitive to the needs of an assembly where God had previously used him.

"Our brother Apollos" is better simply "Brother Apollos." Paul had good relationships and good fellowship with him in the Lord. There is nothing unscriptural about addressing fellow believers as Brother and Sister.³

D. A Challenge To Faith, Courage, And Love 16:13–14

¹³Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. ¹⁴Do everything in love.

With five imperatives Paul sums up the exhortations he gave earlier in this letter. They needed to be alert, watchful, on guard against false teachers, the temptations of the world, and the old sinful nature. They needed to take a firm stand in the faith and for the faith, for the truth of the gospel. They needed to show manly characteristics such as bravery, or courage (the Greeks used this term even of old men whose hope in life was being renewed and of women who took a strong stand).

³Cf. Rom. 16:1 where a woman deacon of the church in Cenchrea is addressed as "sister Phoebe." (Paul calls her a *diakonon*, which in Gk. is masculine, referring to the office of deacon.)

They needed to grow strong. Paul later wrote that he prayed to the Father “that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph. 3:16). But all this courage and firm stand for the gospel must not be displayed the same way the world takes its stand on issues (such as those so against abortion that they bomb abortion clinics or murder abortionists). We must “never let down from the holy calling of Christian life.”⁴ But everything must be done in love. “Everything” must be more than what was specifically dealt with in chapters 12 to 14. It must include their response to all the questions and problems that Paul dealt with earlier in this letter.

E. Recognition For The Household Of Stephanas 16:15–18

¹⁵You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, ¹⁶to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.

Paul has a special concern that the Corinthian believers “submit to” the household of Stephanas, that is, yield to them voluntarily in love. He gives two reasons: They were the first (Gk. *aparchē*, “firstfruits”) converts in Achaia (Greece). Paul personally baptized them (1:16). Calling them “firstfruits” indicates that they were the first of a harvest of souls (which they helped to bring in). Paul implies that they were leaders and remained true to the gospel in the midst of the false ideas and false teachings that were being circulated.

There was another reason for submitting to their leadership in love. The people of the household of Stephanas “devoted themselves” (Gk. *etaxan heautous*, “appointed themselves”) to the service of the saints. That is, without anyone’s urging, they gave themselves to serve the saints in a practical way. They and others like them who continually worked together with them—not just going along but working hard, laboring in the work of the Lord and in the ministry of the Word—deserved to have the Corinthian believers voluntarily subject themselves to them.

⁴Donald S. Metz, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1968), 7:480.

17I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

Stephanas (Gk. “crowned”) himself had arrived from Corinth along with Fortunatus (Lat., “fortunate” or “blessed”) and Achaicus (Lat., from Gk. “belonging to Achaia”), two other believers, the Latin form of whose names possibly indicate that they were Roman citizens like Paul.⁵

They probably brought the letter mentioned in 7:1, and they ministered to Paul in some way, perhaps bringing gifts. The fact that they “supplied what was lacking” means they made up for their absence, or they represented the Corinthians in their absence. This seems to be a gentle rebuke to the Corinthians. These three brothers supplied the affection that Paul so desired from the Corinthians but which must have been lacking in their letter. The three “refreshed” Paul’s spirit by their coming, and the fact he was blessed should refresh the spirits of the Corinthians as well. Paul commands the Corinthians to recognize them (the Gk. verb is imperative), something they well deserved.

F. Concluding Greetings And Benediction 16:19–24

19The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. 20All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. 21, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.

Most, if not all, of the seven churches of the Roman province of Asia (in Asia Minor) mentioned in the Book of Revelation were founded while Paul was in Ephesus (Acts 19:10,26). He did not found them personally, for he “had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9), and he implies he was continually in Ephesus for the two years that he did this (Acts 20:18–21). But Ephesus was a center where people came from other parts of the province and were

⁵Fee suggests they were members of the household of Stephanas, possibly slaves or freedmen, perhaps coming on business to Ephesus, so the church asked them to carry the letter and be an official delegation representing them. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 831–32.

converted. Then they went back to their home cities and began winning people to the Lord, so assemblies were established. They all sent greetings to the Corinthian believers.

Then Paul included special greetings that were deep and warm from Priscilla and Aquila. Priscilla (also called Prisca) was a name used by upper-class Romans. In four of six mentions, she is named before her husband (see Acts 18:1–3, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). Aquila (Lat. “eagle”) was a slave name, probably a Jew captured by the Roman army in one of their military campaigns. Romans considered it a religious thing to set slaves free and set them up in business or with a trade. Apparently Aquila won his master’s daughter to the Lord, was set free, married her, and they became tentmakers. In A.D. 49 the Roman Emperor Claudius made an edict banishing all Jews from Rome. The edict was lifted in A.D. 50, but Priscilla and Aquila remained in Corinth plying their tentmaking trade. When Paul first came to Corinth he worked and lived with them. When Paul left they went with him as far as Ephesus (Acts 18:18–19), where they instructed and encouraged Apollos (Acts 18:24–26). They were still there when Paul wrote this letter. Later, they returned to Rome (Rom. 16:3). But in Paul’s second imprisonment they must have been with Timothy, probably at Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19). As always, Priscilla and Aquila were active in their service for the Lord, so their home became a place where an assembly of believers met. This assembly sent greetings as well. So did all the other brothers and sisters in Ephesus.

In view of these warm greetings Paul urged the Corinthian believers to greet one another with “a holy kiss,” a kiss that showed they shared the love of the Lord and respected one another as members of God’s family. This was a common custom in those days. Later we read of men kissing men on the cheek and women kissing women as greetings in the Early Church.

Paul dictated this letter to a scribe (cf. Rom. 16:22). Some suggest this may have been Sosthenes. In any case, Paul added the final greeting in his own handwriting, as he always did (see Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philem. 19). He drew attention to this because some had forged letters of false doctrines in his name (2 Thess. 2:2).

**22If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him.
Come, O Lord!**

Paul did want the people to love him, but he was much more concerned that they love the Lord. Anyone who does not love the Lord

has broken the first and greatest commandment. When Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Jesus responded to his profession of love by saying, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Jesus expected love to be followed by obedience to Him and ministry to others. Paul now adds that those who do not love the Lord with that kind of obedient response and ministry deserve a curse (Gk. *anathema*). This means they deserve to be under God’s divine judgment (cf. Gal. 1:8–9; 2 Thess. 3:14).

Then Paul expresses a longing for the Lord to come, using the Aramaic expression *Marana Tha*, “Our Lord, come!” It was a phrase that the Early Church shouted again and again: It expressed loyalty to Jesus as their present Lord and it also expressed hope and desire of His future lordship, to be manifested fully when He comes back to earth (cf. Rev. 22:20).⁶

23The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

As a final benediction Paul prays that the “grace of the Lord Jesus” would be with the Corinthians. He began this letter speaking of grace and peace. He concludes with grace. “Grace . . . is the single word that most fully expresses what God has done and will do for his people in Christ Jesus.”⁷ Then Paul adds an expression of his love for all the Corinthians who are “in Christ Jesus.” He wants them to know that even though he had to give some strong rebukes and warnings in this letter, he still loved them and recognized them as being the body of Christ.

Study questions for this section may be found in appendix B.

⁶Stanley M. Horton, *Our Destiny: Biblical Teachings on the Last Things* (Springfield, Mo.: Logion Press, 1996), 76.

⁷Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 839.