

First Corinthians
Chapter Sixteen
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“Instructions and Greetings”

This is a wonderful chapter in that it captures the essence of Paul’s love and concern for all of the people to whom God takes him. It gives us an excellent insight into his character as a missionary for Jesus.

1Cor 16:1 “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.

1Cor 16:2 On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.”

Paul did not want their giving to be emotional as it might be with the coming of this great Apostle to visit them. He wanted them to be giving on a regular basis and out of the concern of their heart for other Christians. Some have taken this verse to mean that if you give you will prosper and that is NOT what Paul is saying. The giving is to be out of the prosperity of the giver and not out of the basic needs of the person. He knew that people needed to use their earnings to take care of themselves and their family:

1Tim 5:8 “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”

He also taught that the giving should then be out of what was “left over” or what would be in line with gaining prosperity on earth. Our treasures are to be in heaven and giving to others instead of giving to our own prosperity is certainly the correct attitude.

Matt 6:19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Matt 6:20 “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;”

These collections are for the saints for we are to give to support those who are working for the Lord and have needs.

Acts 4:32 “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.”

1Cor 16:3 “And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

1Cor 16:4 and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.”

Paul's intent was to take the gifts from a number of churches to the church at Jerusalem that had severe needs. He was very careful not to touch the money himself. The churches were to raise the money, write the letters about the gifts, keep it until he returned and then send it to the approved designation by their choice of messengers. This careful approach to the handling of money raised in a church is very appropriate for us to understand and to follow. Such an approach minimizes the possibility of anyone letting personal greed interfere with the proper usage of gifts. At this point Paul did not know if God's will was for him to also go on the trip to Jerusalem but we read in Acts that he did indeed go with these people to deliver their gifts to that church. Many translators also think that whether or not he would be involved would depend on the magnitude of the gift. It would not be proper for an Apostle to be involved in the giving if the gift were very small.

1Cor 16:5 "But I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia;

1Cor 16:6 and perhaps I shall stay with you, or even spend the winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.

1Cor 16:7 For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.

1Cor 16:8 But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost;

1Cor 16:9 for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."

Paul's driving motive in all of his trips was to carry out the plan of the Lord in reaching people for him. He never knew exactly where he would be going next for he depended upon the will of God to inform him of his destinations. In our study of Acts we have seen clearly how God directed Paul in his travels and how sometimes God would block him for some particular area of travel. We see in the above that Paul very much wanted to spend time with the church at Corinth. He did not want to just pass through but to stay with them for as long as the Lord would permit for he loved them and wanted to spend time with them. That he was "going through" Macedonia meant that he did intend to briefly visit with the churches in that area. He knew that God had opened a great number of people in Ephesus for receipt of the Gospel and he first wanted to complete that task even though there were many people opposed to his message. We know from his trips that he then went through Macedonia to Greece where he stayed for three months.

1Cor 16:10 "Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.

1Cor 16:11 Let no one therefore despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren."

Timothy was a young missionary and somewhat timid as we read in Paul's letter to him but he asks the people to remind Timothy that since he is doing the Lord's work he need not fear opposition. Paul's order to not let anyone despise Timothy seems a harsh rebuke to the church at Corinth. He had already inferred that some people in the church were rather strong-willed and arrogant so perhaps he is warning them that Timothy is on the

work of the Lord and therefore should not be thought of in any derogatory fashion. After Timothy's task there is complete he asked them to send him on his way to him for he and his fellow workers are expecting him to arrive safely.

1Cor 16:12 “But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.”

Apollos is well liked in Corinth and apparently the church had requested in their letter to Paul that he try to get Apollos to visit them again. Paul's statement about Apollos being our brother shows Paul's close ties with Apollos also. Paul tried his best to convince Apollos to visit the Corinthian church but such was not to happen soon. It is not clear why Apollos did not want to go at this time. It may be that he was too busy in his current work for the Lord or it may be that Apollos viewed the current state of the Corinthian church improper for his work at this time. Apollos did seem to indicate to Paul that he would go to Corinth when the time was appropriate. This single sentence tells us much about the work of Apollos and his connection with the great Apostle Paul.

**1Cor 16:13 “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.
1Cor 16:14 Let all that you do be done in love.”**

Paul now gives them a great exhortation. They had demonstrated considerable spiritual immaturity and errors and he was urging them to be more mature. There is good reason for us to be on the alert:

1Peter 5:8 “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

The verb tenses are all present imperative showing that he is not talking about some temporary attitudes but continuing actions. They are in a spiritual battle and they must develop a spiritual maturity that they had not previously demonstrated. True Christians stand firm in the faith given them by God because they are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

*Eph 1:13 “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,
Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

By telling them to act like men he is telling them to be mature and when he tells them to be strong he is reminding them that their strength is from the Lord.

*Eph 1:19 “and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.
These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might
Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.”*

Finally he reminds them of what he had told them in chapter 13. All that we do is to be done in Christian love. There is no place in our work for the Lord for our self-importance and arrogance. We are to be all that he says in verse 14 but having as our driving force our Christian love for others.

1Cor 16:15 “Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),

1Cor 16:16 that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.

1Cor 16:17 And I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; because they have supplied what was lacking on your part.

1Cor 16:18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.”

It is excellent for us to have examples for our work within our group. Paul had already talked about the family of Stephanas in that he baptized them (1 Cor 1:16) and now he lifts them up as examples of how they are to work for the Lord. These people were the first fruits of Achaia, which included Athens. They may have then been early converts in Athens and then moved to Corinth. It is important to note that they did not lift themselves up as great leaders but were devoted in their service to fellow Christians. Our primary role is that of a servant and we would all do well to remember such and also follow the examples of these people.

Paul often speaks of our submitting to others probably because the human tendency is to do the reverse. We should be in submission to each other and especially to those who have so clearly demonstrated their servant attitude.

Eph 5:21 “and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

Paul is very pleased at the arrival of these three people from the Corinthian church for they brought him great joy. When he says that they have supplied what was lacking on your part he is not chastising them but just saying that he wished that he could be with all of them but the presence of these three people gave him the joy missing from being with them all. The refreshing of spirits was twofold in that the church should be blessed at having sent these people to fill Paul with joy at their presence. When we have been absent from someone that we cared about greatly it is very refreshing to see them again. There is a wonderful Christian couple in Sweden that I have not seen in 30 years. We correspond but how wonderful it would be to actually see them again.

1Cor 16:19 “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

1Cor 16:20 All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

Asia is the Roman province of that name and Paul sends them greetings from all of the churches in that area. Aquila and Prisca were a great Christian couple. Aquila was

originally a Jew who had evidently moved to Rome. When the Roman emperor banned all Jews from Rome he and his wife moved to Corinth. When Paul first came to that city he lived and worked with them.

Acts 18:1 "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.

Acts 18:2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,

Acts 18:3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers."

They had a church in their home in Rome just as they did in Corinth. Such a church would be small because of the sizes of the homes at that time. Even in a house of upper middle-class people the size of the congregation would only be 30 or so. I think such a size is very advantageous for it allows everyone to better develop their Christian abilities and gifts and to better mature in their faith. Remember that they even taught Apollos the correct basis of the faith:

Acts 18:26 "and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

Several times Paul suggests a holy kiss as a method of greeting fellow Christians. Such a method was a more widespread custom then than now. Stating the kiss as a "holy" kiss takes it away from any kiss that might be misconstrued in his action and usually meant kisses on each cheek as we sometimes see in Eastern greetings now.

1Cor 16:21 "The greeting is in my own hand-- Paul.

1Cor 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha.

1Cor 16:23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

1Cor 16:24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

Paul usually dictated to a secretary who wrote his documents for him but now he writes a greeting in his own hand so that they would now that this letter bares his personal touch. He usually ended his letters in this manner and sometimes he specifically draws attention to it as in:

2Thess 3:17 "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write."

People who do not love the Lord are indeed still under the wrath of God:

John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The person who does not have the flame of love in his heart for the Lord is an impostor if he says that he is a Christian for the love of Jesus is the heart of the matter. He uses the Aramaic word “Maranatha”, which means “come Lord Jesus”. Since it was an Aramaic word it would not have originated among the Greeks but must date back to the early days of the church in Palestine. It must have been seen as a very important word or it would not have been incorporated into the Greek language. We similarly use “Amen” and “hallelujah” in our English language even though they are not root English words. The word is usually translated “come Lord Jesus” as it is used in the last part of this verse:

Rev 22:20 “He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

(“Mar” means Lord, “our” is conveyed by the addition of “an” or “ana”, and the latter part of the word is from “atha”, which means “come”.)

Paul always closes his letters with a prayer for grace for the readers. However it is not his custom to close telling of his love for the readers. He has had to rebuke them and talk harshly to them on some topics but he wants them to know that he does all that because of his great love for them. He wants them to know that he bears them no malice and that he is not hypocritical in his command to them to do all in love. He also is writing this letter to them in the love of Jesus Christ.

References

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2. “1 Corinthians”, Leon Morris, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1985.
3. “1&2 Corinthians”, Charles Hodge, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974.
4. “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 10, 1 Corinthians”, Regency Reference Library, 1976.