

1 Corinthians 16

Verses 1-4:

--(1) **Now concerning**. . . brings us back to the letter the Corinthians wrote to Paul as referenced in **7:1**. Apparently they had some questions about the collection that Paul was directing for the saints in Jerusalem.

--That collection is mentioned also in **Rom. 15:26-27 + 2 Cor. 8:13; 9:9-12**. We don't know why the saints in Jerusalem are so poor but it is likely because of famine (**Acts 11:27-30**) and constant persecution from the beginning.

--We also know that it was always in Paul's heart to help the poor and also to see unity between the Jewish and Gentile believers.

--We know that Paul had come through Galatia on his way to Ephesus in **Acts 18:23** and had given them similar instructions for the collection.

--One of the most wonderful things to see here in this little chapter is the church—seen in areas, cities, and individuals—working together and caring for one another. They are all busy in **the work of the Lord**.

--(2) This little verse gives us two important insights into the practice of the early church.

--First, the early church met **on the first day of the week**. This was when Christ rose from the dead. This was when Christ appeared to the apostles (**Jn. 20:19+26**). This was when John was in the Spirit alone on Patmos (**Rev. 1:10**). Most directly, Paul waits for believers in the book of Acts *because* he knew they would gather then.

Acts 20:6-7: But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days. Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued the message until midnight.

--This was the clear practice of the early church and without persecution or unlikely circumstances it should be ours. We do not demand this particular day as a command, as Paul makes clear in **Col. 4:16**, but neither can anyone demand the worship of God on Saturday as a command of God.

--Second, we see here Paul's basic church instruction for giving.

1) To **lay something aside** on the first day of the week.

2) To lay aside **as he may prosper**. That means, in proportion as the Lord has prospered you in your current state of life (Notice there is nothing of a tithe here!).

3) To keep the material secondary! **That there be no collections when I come**. Paul had absolutely no intention of whipping up the giving when he arrived. He wanted all of that done with and out of the way so that he could focus on the most important things.

2 Corinthians 9:5: Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

--Paul didn't want anyone to feel obligated, pressured, begrudged, or extorted. How different from so many modern gatherings where the important person comes to make the appeal for money. In all of it, you can taste that the material is primary and the spiritual is secondary.

--**(3-4)** Not only that, but we see here that Paul wasn't even taking the money for himself, or by himself. It was for others and to be brought by those in Corinth. Some of this was cultural. Some of it was safety related. But certainly it was also wisdom.

--If God allowed, through fitting circumstances, Paul would also bring them along with him.

Verses 5-7:

--Here Paul shares with them his personal plans. Yet all his plans are held loosely with ***if the Lord permits***. Paul knows that God's plans may be different than his plans. He holds all his intentions with an open hand. *Our purpose as Christians never changes but our plans can change at any moment.*

Verses 8-9:

--How often we think of these things as mutually exclusive! Yet, the heat of the battle will often tell us the value of the target. Some of God's greatest works in Paul's life took place in Ephesus and that is also where some of his toughest enemies were found.

--Interestingly enough, as he is gathering monetary gifts for the Jewish church, it was also the Jews who proved to be his bitterest enemies in Ephesus: ***serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews (Acts 20:19)***.

--If God begins a good work in your life or through you life, expect some resistance!

--Also, pray for open doors! (By the Lord—**2 Cor. 2:12**; Pray—**Col. 4:3**; See—**Rev. 3:8**).

Verses 10-11:

--Now, poor Timothy, he is eternally young and eternally fearful to most commentators. I think the truth was really somewhere in the middle.

--Timothy may have been young in age but he was most certainly mature in Christ. Paul makes it clear as his constant companion, representative, and spiritual son. ***Philippians 2:19-24***

--It is also clear that Timothy was no coward. He likely saw Paul stoned and still chose to leave and follow him. Was willingly circumcised. Was in constant danger with Paul. And let's not forget—Paul himself was afraid when he first came to Corinth! Being brave and feeling fear are not mutually exclusive.

--Paul had already sent Timothy (**4:17**) and it seems that Erastus was with him (**Acts 19:22**). Paul would also later send Titus and others (**2 Cor. 2:12-13**).

--Paul knows he is sending Timothy into a tense situation. He was likely not going to receive a warm welcome as Paul's "accomplice". So Paul makes it clear that Timothy is doing **the work of the Lord**, alongside of him. So he should not be despised.

--We should be careful that we do not despise those who come to us in the work of the Lord. They may be young, or even slightly fearful, but they may still be about God's business.

*Ian Maclaren tells a story of John Carmichael, a minister that was shy and doubting but with a good heart. His elders came to him one day and finally said: "As the smoke goes up from the homes of the people in the morning, so will their prayers be ascending for their minister." That moment helped solidify his faithful ministry among them.

Verse 12:

--There are some wonderful things to notice in this verse as well.

--First, we see that there is no rivalry in Paul. Some were choosing Apollos over Paul yet Paul has no issue with Apollos and is in fact asking for his help!

--Second, we see that there were no popes in the early church. Apollos doesn't have to listen to Paul, and Paul doesn't have to be upset with Apollos for doing what he believes God is telling him to do.

--You are in a sinful and fleshly position if you feel like another believer "needs" to lend their influence to *your* cause. God is not enough? Is God behind your cause? Why do you need a man?

Verses 13-14:

--**(13) Watch:** is *Be on Guard!* For what? The Lord's coming (**Mt. 24:42**); Temptation (**Mt. 26:40-41**); Moral sleepiness (**1 Thess. 5:6**); the Devil (**1 Peter 5:8**); Spiritual life (**Rev. 3:2**).

--**Stand fast in the faith:** The idea here is not to fall from, or be pushed aside from **the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**.

--We cannot consider every point of doctrine as something that is up for debate by "learned" or "spiritual" people. *Something* has been delivered to us. We have *truth!*

2 Corinthians 4:2:** ***But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

--This was happening with them in issues of sexuality, sinful lifestyles, resurrection, etc.

--**Be Brave:** the Greek word is used only here and it has the idea of *to make a man* or *act like a man*. We might say, *Grow up!* They had been acting like children. It was time for them to look at their life and faith like adults.

--**Be Strong:** the Greek here has the idea of *being strengthened*. Interestingly, it is used of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ as they grew up and **became strong in spirit** (**Luke 1:80 + 2:40**)

--Paul would pray for Ephesian church: ***that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*** (**Eph. 3:16**).

--Don't we need to be strong in our spirits!? Most of us do not need more Christian information. We need Christlike maturity and strength of spirit.

--(14) And all of this watchful, immovable, mature, strong life can be lived in love. Love *must* be the source of all our Christian virtue. Love Him first. Love others next.

Verses 15-16:

--Paul had mentioned this household in **1:16** as the only household he had baptized. Which makes sense if they were the first. Wonderfully there were some good leaders and godly saints in this confused church.

--What a testimony they had! A household devoted to the ministry of the saints—given over to the work of God and angels! Let me ask a question to you husbands who are listening. Is your household run with the same purpose? Is it clear enough for others to see and testify of you? Can you truly say as Joshua: *As for me and my house?!*

--Paul asks for mutual submission for these co-laborers (**Eph. 5:21**).

Verses 17-18:

--These are the men that likely brought the letter from the church (**7:1**) to Paul. It seems they were in good fellowship with him and true brothers in Christ.

--They were mutually refreshed as should be the outcome of true Christian fellowship! Are you a refreshment to other Christians when you come into their life?

--There is a healthy type of Christian acknowledgment. ***Phil. 2:29-30***

Verses 19-21:

--(19) The shared love of fellowships.

--Also notice that Aquila and Priscilla, who were only in Corinth for a short time (**Acts 18:1-2**), but had an incredible impact in the church and through Apollos. God may have you somewhere for a short time but we are all on the same team!

--(20) Not a deceitful kiss like Joab or a hollow kiss like Judas!

--(21) The common practice of Paul. (**Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17**)

Verses 22-24:

--(22) **Anathema** is to be accursed or damned. It is also used in: **Acts 23:14; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 1:8-9**.

--**Maranatha** is an interesting use of Greek and means either: *Our Lord come* or *Our Lord has come*.

--This is certainly a very unique way to finish this epistle. Even so, it was not unprecedented for Paul. He finishes his epistle to the Ephesians with something similar:

Ephesians 6:24: Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

--So to Corinth, with so much doctrine and instruction and correction, it is the love of Christ that matters. So too, with Ephesus, given so much heavenly doctrine and spiritual insight, it is the love of Christ that matters. Beauty of high doctrine and clarity of corrective doctrine will only matter if a person actually love Jesus Christ in sincerity.

--Paul knows that the only true security against all the evil in us and around us is genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ. We can love Christians and just love friends; we can love community and just love social life; we can love the church and just love religion; we can love worship and just love art or music; we can love the Bible and just love theology; we can love morality and just love our selves.

--All these things are good but will fail us at some point. If we do not sincerely love Christ, we will leave Him for what we do love. Love as a *means* toward something other than Christ is very different than love *to* or *for* Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 29:13: *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (God isn't into timeshares with our hearts)

--There is all the difference in the world between being a "good Christian" and loving Christ. The difference is seen between the Pharisees and Peter. The Pharisees loved God as a *means* to their reputation, lifestyle, and material wealth. Peter loved Jesus Christ for Himself.

--That type of love is what made Peter go right in the end. ***And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You" (Jn. 21:17).***

--Allow me to pause here for a moment to assure some troubled hearts. Don't fear that you have no love for God just because you don't meet an arbitrary expectation of emotional feelings or religious "fire". Many martyrs and Christians have found, in the moment of temptation and trial, the love they feared might waver was really all for Christ.

--Like Peter, we all love Jesus as best we can but never too much! He is infinite so He is infinitely deserving of our love. Not only that, but our love to Him is a debt, while His love to us is fully free. We cannot love Him too much.

--The old saints used to say: *Lean toward love*. Allow love to be: *The willed tendency of the heart*. *Ask Him to grant you the gift to love Him more!*

--***Anathema***. This warning is severe. Why is this so severe?

--Because there is no greater injustice in the world than for a man to have no love for Jesus Christ! We are so sensitive about injustice between man and man but feel almost nothing about injustice between God and man.

--Jesus Christ has come such a long way for us! From heaven, to Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Nazareth, to homelessness, to the cross, to the grave, and now to the throne above. ***For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9)*** and it is ***by His Son. . . who is the express image of His person (Heb. 1:1-3)*** that God has lastly and finally spoken to us.

--What we see in Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily! How can we have no love for that!?

--To have no love for Christ is to have no love for God. It is to have no love for all the fullness that is in God. It is to have no love for perfection. It is to be the opposite of what God made us to be. To have no love for Christ is to have love for everything that is not Christ.

--I would also like to point out that Paul thought it would be evident who loved Jesus Christ and who did not. By saying this, he is assuming we will be able to tell. How?

--Paul the apostle knew our response to truth will be determined by the reality of our love for Jesus Christ. That is the test.

--There are many that claim emotional love for Christ, or have their emotions stirred up for religious songs and rituals, or for Mother Mary, or sentimental religious figures. Real emotion can be expressed, but is that love for Jesus Christ? What is the test? Jesus gives us the test.

****John 14:15+21+24: If you love Me, keep My commandments. . . He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. . . He who does not love Me does not keep My words.****

--What this means is that anyone living in known disobedience to the commands of Christ, but still claims to love Him, is in fact deceiving themselves. They may have feelings *about* Christ but they have no love *for* Christ. *Think of the grieving of the rich young ruler as he turned his back and walked away from the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

--Anyone who claims to love Jesus Christ that doesn't obey His commandments does not love the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ does come, He will come as Who He said He was, as He is, not as we might have imagined Him to be or wished Him to be.

--**(23-24)** Paul wants to assure them that all he wrote was in love.