

## 1 CORINTHIANS – CHAPTER 16

This chapter is the closing remarks in one of several letters Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth. This chapter could be thought of as “tidying up loose ends” after the doctrinal discourses on many controversial issues that the Corinthian Christians were struggling with.

It is thought that the letter was written about A.D. 55 and, from the remarks in the letter, was written while Paul was in Ephesus. Several points were touched on in this final chapter: Collection for the Jerusalem Christians; Paul’s Pending Visit to Corinth; Timothy’s Time in Corinth; Exhortation to Faithfulness and to Follow Good Examples; Greetings from the Brethren; and Warning and Blessing

### **Collection for the Jerusalem Christians**

*1 ¶ Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On 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. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.*

Why was there a need to help the Christians in Jerusalem? (Persecution by the Jews)

Was this a good thing or a bad thing? (Most will say “Bad.”)

What was going to happen in Jerusalem in about 15 years from the time of Paul’s letter to Corinth? (Destruction)

Did God allow the persecution of his people in order to get them to leave the doomed city before it was destroyed?

Lesson to be learned: Most of the time we cannot tell if an isolated incident is good or bad at the time it is happening.

Verse 1 is a simple reminder of a request of which they were already aware. Paul was providing a method of collecting the contribution so that everything could be done “decently and in order.” There is not a good excuse for the church to be operating in crisis mode when we can plan ahead.

We see some idea of the way the church in Corinth operated from these verses:

- They probably met on the first day of the week
- They had a financial person to look after operating funds.
- They did have special offering when the need arose.
- The church gave approval to people assignments to special tasks (they formed committees or teams).
- They practiced accountability in that they had more than one person handling the money.
- Paul was willing to submit himself to the advice of the church body with regard to his going to Jerusalem.

Helping our fellow Christians should be a financial priority in our lives. We need to have a storehouse against the bad times -- example of Joseph in Egypt -- so that we are not into crisis management every time some incident comes up.

## **Paul's Pending Visit to Corinth**

*5 ¶ After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 I 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. 8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

The work of the Lord takes time to be with people to teach and to build relationships where discipleship can be effective. We are trying to accomplish it with “a passing visit.” We use mass evangelism and great rallies and television broadcast, but there is no substitute for one-on-one discipleship.

We must be careful that we do not schedule the work God wants us to do out of our lives. When God opens the door for us to be effective, then we must be willing to cancel other plans and take advantage of what He has provided. We also must be careful to not let the circumstances of opposition or cooperation determine what doors God has opened. Paul recognized an open door, yet many opposed what he was doing.

So often, I have heard people give testimony to the effect that when they were trying to follow the Lord's will in a certain area that when they met resistance they interpreted it as God closing the door to a particular option.

How can you discern if resistance to a ministry approach is opposition from the devil or it is God closing the door? [Jesus open doors that no one can close and closes doors that no one can open. Therefore, just because we encounter resistance, does not mean that God has closed a door; it may simply mean that the forces of evil are attempting to hinder the work to which God has called us.]

## **Timothy's Time in Corinth**

*10 ¶ If 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. 11 No-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. 12 Now 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.*

Paul knew there was a large potential for a lot of opposition to anyone who would try to minister at Corinth. Many of the Christians were so carnally minded that they were striving to be in control and the idea of submitting to some one in a position of authority was foreign to their thinking.

To make matters potentially worse, Timothy was a young man and, in that culture, elders were more likely to be respected than a younger person. It is probable that many there wanted Paul to send Apollos rather than Timothy. They knew Apollos and he was a great speaker. Paul was assuring them that the fact that Apollos was not coming was a choice that Apollos made rather than a decision by Paul.

The work that God is doing is not limited to just what I am doing or what you are doing. It is not even limiting to what some famous evangelist or preacher is doing. It is not limited to one denomination. God is using many people to carry out various aspects of His purpose and plan. Paul endorsed the ministry of both Timothy and Apollos to the church. Many times people are not willing to accept ministry from anyone except the “senior pastor.” People will be in the

hospital and they will feel slighted if the only person who visits them from the church is “just a deacon.” People from their Small Group or Sunday School class may come to see them, but that does not count.

It puts a great demand on the “senior pastor” if people will not accept ministry from others on staff in a church. You know that church members do not understand this principle when they get a decision from the Youth Minister and then say, “I check with the Pastor,” rather than show respect for the ministry of the other person.

### **Exhortation to Faithfulness and to Follow Good Examples**

*13 ¶ Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. 14 Do everything in love. 15 You 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, 16 to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. 17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.*

We must always be diligent and watchful, strong and courageous and keep the faith. This message is similar to the words that Moses spoke to Joshua. Joshua and the Children of Israel who were preparing to enter the Promised Land for which they would have to fight and defeat the occupiers of the land. They realized they would have to do battle to obtain the promises of God. I'm not sure that the Christians at Corinth and the Christian at our church have such a realization. The attitude of most Christians is that we can just sit back and relax and the promises will just be dumped in our laps. It is good to remember that one picture of the church is that we are the army of God and that as individuals we are soldiers in the spiritual battle and that we are to be workers in the physical tasks that have to be done.

In today's vernacular, Paul is tell them to not be a “wimp” but to be a grown man. However, taking a stand was and is to be done with the teachings of Chapter 13 – the motive for what we do has to have its basis in love.

A good example is a very useful teaching device. To illustrate what Paul was trying to teach them he used the family Stephanas. These were dedicated people who ministered to the people in the church at Corinth. In verse 15, the Greek word (*tasso*) translated “devoted” in the NIV and “addicted” in the KJV literally means to “position oneself” to accomplish a purpose. Having the good example, Paul then encourages them to follow this example. Look at verse 16: The word “submit” is *huoptasso* which means to “arrange yourself in proper order” under those who are leading by example. What good does a good example do you, if you do not follow it?

In furthering this idea of good examples, he cites two other people who came to him along with Stephanas to provide a clear picture of the real situation in the church at Corinth. Paul was trying to figure out what was going on from the letters he had received from various people in the church and it was pretty discouraging to him. When the three men came to him and told him face-to-face what was going on, Paul was encouraged and he was confident that they would be an encouragement to the whole church at Corinth.

### **Greetings from the Brethren**

*19 ¶ The 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. 20 All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. 21 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.*

This closing of the letter served to remind the Corinthians that they were part of a larger picture of what God was doing in the world. Their church was not the only one around. There were Christians elsewhere. They needed to know that all congregations were not as dysfunctional as was theirs. The greeting from the others also was a reminder that other people in other areas knew what was happening in the Corinth church.

The admonition to greet one another with a holy kiss was a not-so-subtle suggestion that they treat each with love and mutual respect. Even heathen friends greeted one another warmly and with sincerity. Should not Christian do even better than the pagan since our Leader is the Prince of Peace and He is the God of Love?

### **Warning and Blessing**

*22 If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him. Come, O Lord! 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24 My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

The warning that Paul issued is, in many way “cause and effect.” A curse is already upon all men who do not have salvation through Jesus Christ. It is called the “law of sin and death.” Simply stated, “The soul that sins shall die.” Since all have sinned, then all are under the curse unless they have come under a new law that over-rules the law of sin and death. As Paul stated in Romans 8, the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the Law of Sin and Death.

The word Maran-atha is typically translated, “come, Lord” or “Our Lord, come.” The literal translation is “The Lord hath come!” Combining these ideas, we see that Paul is simply stating that if someone rejects Jesus, then he is destined for destruction since Jesus is the Lord who came to save us.

On the other hand, those who have accepted Jesus find blessing rather than a curse. That blessing is in the form of the grace of God through Jesus Christ and the love of God expressed one to another in the church which is the Body of Christ.