

1 Corinthians 16 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

I. GREETING 1:1-9

II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: A CALL TO UNITY 1:10-17

III. MAIN BODY 1:18-16:18

IV. CLOSING Ch. 16

A. Instructions on Giving 16:1-4

¹ Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:

There's an abrupt change between ch. 15 & v. 1 of ch. 16.

In ch. 15 Paul deals with the weighty theological implications of the resurrection.

He's been waxing eloquent on our victory over sin & death.

His mind & heart have been in the heavenlies.

Then, without missing a beat, he's firmly back on earth, dealing with the mundane details of relief for the poor.

Paul wasn't just some wide-eyed dreamer.

He wasn't one of those intellectuals who thinks only in the theoretical but has no experience in the real world.

That's where a lot of university professors are.

They have a lot of book smarts & things fit neatly in their mental theoretical universe.

They're convinced their opinions are what everyone else ought to believe & how everyone else ought to live.

But the truth is, their theories don't work in the real world.

They only work in the classroom, on a whiteboard.

Paul's beliefs weren't mere theories – they were eminently practical & worked beautifully in the real world.

He knew the situation for believers in Jerusalem was serious.

Persecution had devastated the church & left many in deep poverty & need.

A famine throughout the region had made matters worse.

Paul worked hard to raise relief for the needy at Jerusalem where ever he went, specially among the Gentiles.

He saw this as a great way to undermine the prejudice many Jewish believers felt toward their Gentile brothers.

The same instructions he'd sent to the churches in the region of Galatia, he sends to Corinth.

² On the first day of the week

Sunday, the day the church gathered for corporate worship.

let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

Paul tells them to decide what they want to give, then to set it aside.

When they gather on Sundays, they were to contribute it.

But he says this was to be done *before he arrived*.

There'd be no special collections when he came.

He wanted to avoid any appearance of impropriety so he says they're to put their gift together before he arrived.

He wanted to make sure they were giving out of a sincere desire to honor God & help the needy, not out a desire for recognition by Paul.

He also wanted to make sure their gift was motivated by a simple desire to honor the Lord & not out of being hyped to do it, which he was concerned some might feel once he was there.

This yields us some important insights on giving.

- 1) Our giving ought to be planned & regular rather than hit & miss.
- 2) We ought to prayerfully decide how much we're going to give ahead of time.
- 3) As the Lord provides, set it aside to be given at a regular time.
- 4) Our giving mustn't be manipulated or inspired by human hype.

³ And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

The Corinthians would send one of their number with their gift to Jerusalem.

Along with the money would be letters of greeting & explanation as to why they were sending the relief.

If things worked out Paul would make the trip to Jerusalem with them.

He tells them this to add some confidence to the venture.

With Paul and reps from the Corinthians church, they could be sure all the money would get there safe & sound.

This yields another insight into the handling of money – there needs to be clear-cut accountability so that there's never a question about how the funds are handled.

We follow some very strict guidelines for the handling of money around here.

There's lots of oversight & accountability.

B. Paul's Personal Plans 16:5-12

⁵ Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). ⁶ And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go.

As we saw in an earlier study, Paul was in Ephesus, across the Aegean Sea when he penned this.

His probably plan was to sail across the northern part of the sea, land at Troas as he had before, then travel overland through Macedonia & then down south to Corinth where he'd stay for several weeks.

After that, he'd just wait to see what opportunities arose.

If things worked out, as he'd already said, he'd go to Jerusalem.

⁷ For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.

Paul didn't want to make Corinth a quick stop. He wanted to spend some time with them. After reading about all the problems they were having, it's no wonder.

⁸ But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. ⁹ For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are many adversaries.*

The work in Ephesus was prospering greatly.

Being the strategic person he was, he knew the best place for him was where the most fruit was to be had.

What *confirmed* Paul's sense that he needed to stay in Ephesus was the *opposition* that was there.

As revival grew, the enemy counter-attacked. We read about this in Acts 19.

Paul knew he needed to remain in Ephesus until the threat presented by the enemy was handled.

This teaches us an important truth: Enjoying the blessing of God is not a guarantee there'll be no opposition or trouble.

When God is moving powerfully & revival is happening, that doesn't mean the devil will just tuck his tail between his legs and limp off the battlefield.

No – his attack may become all the more fierce – as it did for Paul in Ephesus.

¹⁰ And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.

Timothy was out doing some business for Paul and he knew there was a good chance Tim would pass through Corinth.

Many of the Corinthians had not respected Paul's authority as an Apostle.

He was concerned what they guys would do with the young & often timid Timothy.

So he calls them to recognize & honor Tim's calling.

¹¹ Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren.

Timothy had probably been sent to one of the church that needed to develop some strong spiritual leadership.

Now that, that task was complete, Timothy was returning to Paul's side as his assistant.

¹² Now concerning *our* brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time.

Paul knew the Corinthians needed a firm hand to correct their many errors but as previously sate, he couldn't go himself.

He'd encouraged Apollos who was also in the region around Ephesus to go.

But for some reason, Apollos had balked.

Maybe like Paul, he sensed the Lord's leading to another location.

It was his intention to go to Corinth, only not right then.

What v. 12 does is give us an interesting insight into the leadership of the early church.

AS we look back on the 1st Century, we might assume everyone recognized Peter & Paul as the 2 main apostles.

We think of them as "Large & In charge!"

But that isn't at all the sitch.

Peter *wasn't* the leader of the main church in Jerusalem.

As we saw in an earlier study – while he probably fulfilled that role in the first couple years, just because he was the eldest of the disciples, it didn't take long before Jesus' brother James became the leader of the Jerusalem church.

And contrary to tradition, Peter was never the head of the church at Rome.

He was a prisoner in Rome and was executed there.

Here we see that *Paul* had no authority over Apollos.

He suggested Apollos should go to Corinth but couldn't insist he did.

C. Final Words 16:13-24

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

As Paul drew his letters to a close, he would often issue terse exhortations. We find that here.

He's about to close, so he says –

"Watch" – Be vigilant & on guard. Why? Because we're at war!

Eph 6:10-13 "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

2 Tim 2:3-4 You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

1 Pet 5:8 "Be sober, be *vigilant*; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Mat 24:42 “*Watch*, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

1 Th 5:6 “Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us *watch* and be sober.”

Rev 16:15 “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who *watches*.”

“***Stand Fast in the Faith***” – Don’t let deception & doubt make any inroads on your relationship with Christ.

Battle of Little Round Top at Gettysburg. // Chamberlain

There have been countless men & women who’ve stood firm in the faith over the centuries.

Rather than give an inch to the devil, they were willing to lay down their lives.

They lived & died, not only for themselves but for those who would come after.

They knew if they caved in & compromised with the world, who would proclaim the Gospel to the next generation.

You & I are the heirs of their faithfulness & courage

We now owe **the next generation** the Gospel we’ve received.

We are the end of the line for this generation. We must stand fast!

“***Be brave***”

The old King James renders it more literally when it says, “Quit you like men” which is old English for “Be a man!” It was an idiom for *bravery*.

Bravery *isn’t* a lack of fear.

Many people think in order to do something *risky*, you have to be *brave* & that means being *free* of any anxiety.

But bravery isn’t a lack of fear. It’s doing your duty *despite* fear.

That’s what makes someone brave; they don’t give in to fear.

Fourth he writes, “***Be strong.***”

This is an unfortunate translation and can be somewhat misleading.

Paul is *not* calling them to *make themselves* strong.

It’s in the *passive* voice, this is something that happens *to* them

It would be better to translate it, “***Be strengthened.***”

It’s a command to receive strength by abiding in Christ Who is our strength.

Eph 6:10 “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

2 Tim 2:1 “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Ironman

V. 13 speaks about our posture toward the enemy. V. 14 defines our relationship with other people.

¹⁴ **Let all *that you do* be done with love.**

Amen! → “Is it love?”

¹⁵ **I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry**

of the saints—¹⁶ that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us.

The House of Stephanas had taken the role of providing both leadership & practical help in the church at Corinth.

Since they were among the first of Paul's converts there, they were also the most mature.

So Paul calls the rest of the church to recognize their calling as leaders & respect them.

¹⁷ I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. ¹⁸ For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

Stephanas himself had been the one to bring Paul the *report on & letter from* the Corinthians.

With him were 2 servants. Fortunatus & Achaicus were common slaves names.

The phrase “refreshed my spirit” was a euphemism for financial support.

As their spiritual father & mentor, the Corinthians really ought to have had a sense of duty to support Paul, but they'd not done so.

Stephanas alone had contributed to Paul's work

¹⁹ The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. ²⁰ All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. ²¹ The salutation with my own hand—Paul's.

Then he pens something that seems a bit odd for Paul . . .

²² If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!

The reason most people find this difficult is because of Paul's example.

He'd poured out his life to preach the Gospel & save the lost.

Pronouncing a curse on them just doesn't square with his example.

Actually, Paul ISN'T calling down a curse on those who hate Jesus—he's

ANNOUNCING their condition. They're *already* cursed.

You see, his whole point is that salvation is a question of what someone has done with Christ.

If they love & have received Him, they're blessed & saved.

If they reject & hate Him they're accursed & lost

And that's why he ends it with the word – *Maranatha* = Oh Lord, Come!

Now is the time to decide about Jesus because once He's come again, it'll be too late.

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

Maranatha

It was spelled 2 ways: Maran atha = The Lord has come. / Marana tha = Oh Lord, come!
