

1 Corinthians 16

Paul, having concluded his in depth instruction on the resurrection begins to wrap up his letter to the Corinthians with a few practical notes.

He begins with instruction on a special collection for the saints in Jerusalem.

V.1 The early churches pooled their resources in order to bless others, not to have resources for the sake of hoarding wealth. We find that this custom was also practiced by the Galatians, as Paul instructed them in the same manner.

V.2 - First day of the week - Sunday - this is when the early churches met traditionally as opposed to the Sabbath, or Saturday.

This collection was to be a universal practice by the whole church body according to their willingness and earning. We do not however find the principal of a tithe, or 10% of one's income, here.

That was an Old Testament practice that was carried over into the NT church, even into present day times.

The first tithe mentioned is found in GEN 14 when Abraham gives a tenth of his goods to the king of Salem, Melchizedek.

NT references to a TITHE are found very scarcely - briefly in Hebrews, and briefly in the gospels.

Christ's references to a TITHE, are actually corrective in nature. Jesus corrects the Pharisees for their laser focus on giving 10% of the smallest of things in their lives.

[Mat 23:23 NKJV] 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier [matters] of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Ultra religious people became focused on the number. They believe that God is a respecter of the number, rather than the heart.

So it becomes a point of pride for the giver. I pay my tithe - I should have a say, etc. This is not an uncommon attribute of contemporary christians.

Giving is not an exchange of goods or services. It is grace - charis, a gift - especially in this context of helping the saints in Jerusalem.

John Bonner - "God blesses us and gives to us so that we might give it away." We are to be a generous people.

Paul, after apparently receiving some push back on this issue, goes into further detail in his second letter to the Corinthians.

[2Co 9:5-7 NKJV] 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. 6 But this [I say]: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 [So let] each one [give] as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

[Deu 15:7-11 NKJV] 7 "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, 8 "but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs...10 "You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. 11 "For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'

We should open our hands wide and give liberally. Not only as individuals but as a church. This is Paul's instruction to the Corinthians - be a giving church. Care for others.

Much of a person's heart is revealed in how they give - are we strict 10%ers or are we liberal, gracious givers?

We are to be a generous people because that's our Father's nature and we are to reflect His nature.

Paul also realized that when he visited them he didn't want to be doing business. He didn't want to pressure people by his presence. He wanted the people to make up their minds before hand on how they were going to give.

There's also some wisdom in limiting knowledge on who is giving. We never want to look down our noses at others or conversely elevate them because of their giving. We limit that knowledge here as well, we don't pass the plate. We are all free to give as we purpose. And we as a church have committed to being a giving church rather than a church that hoards money just to have it.

V.3-4 - this gift was bound for the churches in Jerusalem.

Famine, widows, a large church, etc.

The whole point here in the first four verses is that Paul desires that the churches be giving churches that are concerned with other churches and that are concerned with people - not just themselves. He even advises to send a couple of people down to Jerusalem, quite a journey, to help out.

While we are very often skeptical of other churches and groups - This kind of giving still happens today in the very best sense. We are part of Christ's big big church and we ought to have some skin in the game when it

comes to our relationship with other churches, rather than just building our own brand. Our intention is to abandon the competitive framework that we've been raised in and follow biblical guidance on serving other churches! And, to the extent that we have the ability - we are doing that.

V.5-9 Paul desired to see the Corinthian church and made plans to do so. He was purposeful in his planning. He didn't just want to swing through and shake hands but wanted to have a meaningful time with them.

It's important to point out that Paul wasn't flaky in this regard as we sometimes get. We sometimes cover our flakiness by saying, "if the Lord wills," while we never intend to do anything of the sort. We may not be doing anything at all in fact.

We see here that an effective door for ministry had been opened for Paul in Ephesus so Paul was grinding away in Ephesus. He was committed to the work there and in doing so, proved his diligence. It would have been wrong for him to bail on the Ephesians to go visit the Corinthians. Paul had an understanding that he was to commit to the work of the ministry, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord -- even though there may be adversaries.

Paul planned and worked intentionally for the kingdom.

V.10-11 Timothy and his relation to the church

During Paul's travels he met a young man named Timothy and his family at Lystra (Acts 16). This is the same Timothy for which the two later letters are named. Paul calls Timothy a true son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2).

He had great affection for this young man.

Timothy learned quite a bit about the broader church as he travelled with Paul. Additionally, Paul sent Timothy and some other men on special missions every now and then. In chapter 4 we find that Paul had sent Timothy to Corinth to instruct them. And eventually Timothy is left in Ephesus to raise up pastors in that area.

As an indictment against the Corinthians, Paul finds it necessary to be very clear with them that no one should despise Timothy, that he should be able to dwell among them without fear.

How is it possible that the church despises the worker? (This is why we have breakouts titled, "what to do when somebody stabs you in the back," and "dealing with failure in ministry," etc.

Because dealing with people is intrinsically treacherous work. But should it be so among the churches? No. Workers should labor among the churches without fear, and they should have peace, if not in the world, then we would hope in the church...an ideal.

V.12 Apollos' plans - this is pretty funny, Apollos' is not about it.

Remember some are of Paul, some are of Apollos, etc...I wonder what his

deal is. We know he was a gifted teacher, perhaps he had decided he wasn't going to play their games.

V.13-14 Exhortation to stand fast, be brave, be strong, be loving - very direct instructions. Two actions - watch and stand fast (stand firm). Hold the line. And then two attributes that describe who we are - brave (you can't be brave unless you're scared). Be strong - you can't be strong unless you work out.

Do everything in love. Bravery on its own, strength on its own, watchfulness and diligence alone are meaningless. All these must be built upon the foundation of a genuine love.

V.15-16 We are introduced to the family of a man named Stephanas - the firstfruits of Achaia (REF 1:16) - what a crazy title to hold.

Their defining trait, besides being the firstfruits of Achaia, were that they (he and his family) ADDICTED themselves to serving the saints...God's people.

How often do we hear of Stephanas? COUNT? Not very often.

But he was a servant, he was addicted to serving the saints, and that trait of his carried over to his family.

Again, since the Corinthians had a problem with respect and obedience, Paul had to instruct them to yield to this co-laborers position as a servant.

You'll notice that it doesn't appear that Stephanas was lording over people, he wasn't subjugating people in an arrogant or condescending manner - he was serving. But Paul knew that this church had a penchant for taking advantage of servants - for putting themselves in the top spot with every intention to be divisive and condescending so he instructs them to take their queues from this servant and other servants that serve alongside Paul in ministry.

V.17-18 The saints supplying Paul's need - Stephanas, and the other's actions indicated their heart. They cared for Paul, they provided for him in those things he lacked.

This was firstly the Corinthians responsibility, but they did not fulfill it so these men did for them - God will always accomplish his work no matter how stubborn we are.

Acknowledge such men - to recognize a thing to be what it really is, to acknowledge -- Rectify with being a respecter of persons and not abusing the servants.

V.19-20 - church relationships. Personal relationships (Priscilla and Aquila). Home church. Holy kiss.

Holy kiss - i. John Trapp on the holy kiss: "Not hollow, as Joab and Judas; not carnal, as that harlot, Proverbs 7:13." (Guzik)

V. 21 Paul's salutation and use of a scribe or secretary

V.22 anathema / maranatha (Lord come!)

ii. Accursed uses the ancient Greek word anathema - without hope of being redeemed; therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction. - Jewish synagogue tradition and excommunication. That we wouldn't be found in that state when the Lord returns.

V.23-24 grace and love in Jesus -- this is how we end. No matter what difficult things need to be said - certainly Corinthians has its fair share - this is how we end, always. No matter how the recipient responds - this is how we end, the grace of our Lord Jesus and love in his name.