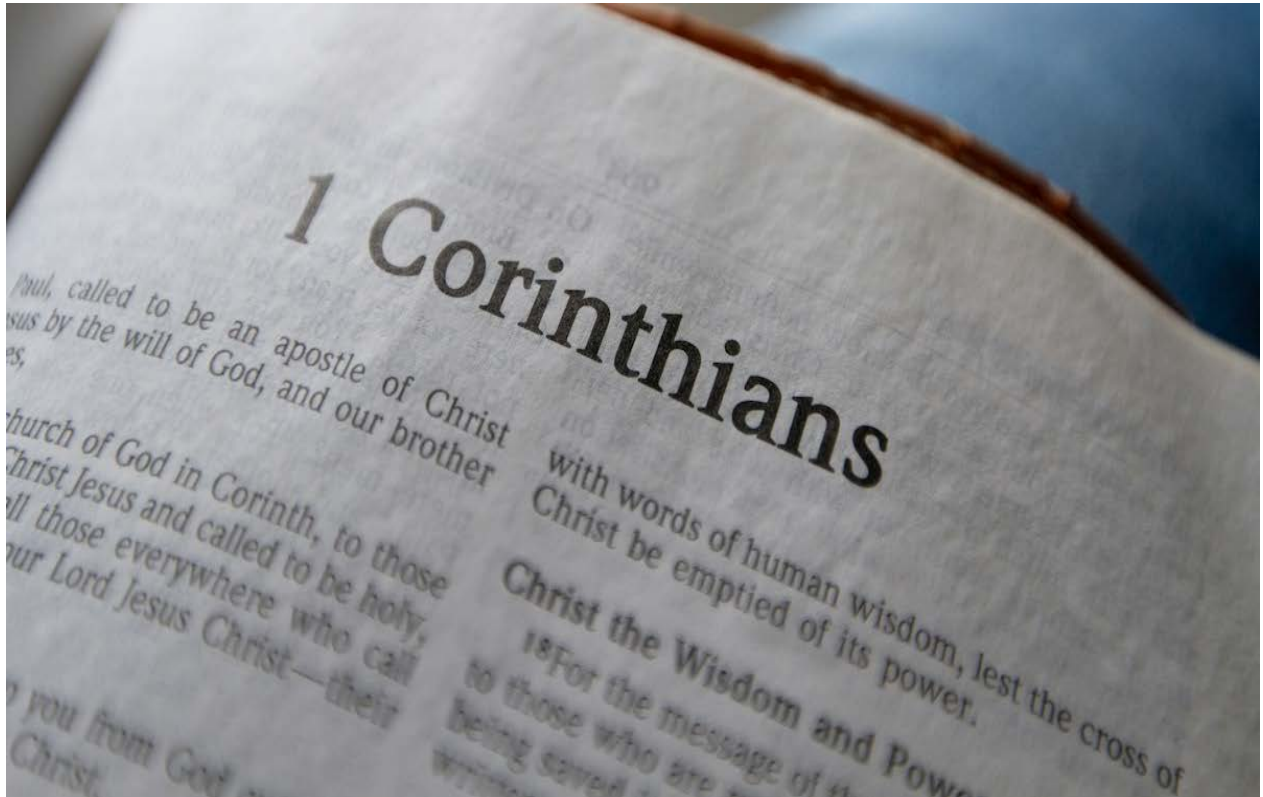


Back on Track

1 Corinthians 16

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 17



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Back on Track: 1 Corinthians 16
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 17
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Introduction to *1 Corinthians 16*

In chapter 16 Paul linked the Corinthians into the larger network of the growing Body of Christ (vv. 1-4); set the stage for a visit—by himself or Timothy (vv. 5-11); summarized his instructions to the Corinthians (vv. 13, 14); commended their leaders (vv.15-18); and sought the grace of God for their refreshment and renewal (vv. 18-24). One gets the feeling that, in Paul’s mind at least, things in Corinth were getting back on track.

Our calling as believers is to love the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 22). If we love Him with all our soul and strength, He will fill us to overflowing with love for the people around us. And where love prevails, all other challenges and difficulties can be readily resolved.

And thus we will be on track with Him as well.

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We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Maintaining Unity

Pray Psalm 125.1, 2.

Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 2.

(St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers)

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 16.1-4.

Preparation

1. What were the Corinthians supposed to do?
2. What would happen after that?

Meditation

To the Ephesians Paul wrote that we must work hard to maintain the unity we have in the Body of Christ (Eph. 4.3). He called on the Corinthians, as he had the Galatians (v. 1), to take up a collection to relieve the famine-stricken churches in Judea (Acts 11.27-30; cf. Acts 18.1, 2 for the date). They were to bring their gifts to the Lord's Day assembly and offer them as part of their worship of the Lord (v. 2). Paul would then arrange for the gifts to be taken to Jerusalem so that they could be distributed to the needy believers throughout Judea (v. 3).

Here Paul extended his metaphor of the local church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12) to a worldwide scale. As all believers are members of a local body with gifts to share for edification, so all churches are members of the worldwide Body for the same ends. Paul wrote to the Romans—from Corinth—that it was appropriate for the churches throughout the world to make this offering for the believers in Judea, because it had been through the believers in Judea that the Gospel had gone out to all the world. They shared spiritually with the churches throughout the empire, so it was fitting for those churches to share materially with the believers in Judea (cf. Rom. 15.25-27). Thus, he further demonstrated the unity of the Church worldwide by adapting the principle he taught in 1 Corinthians 9 about sharing with those who teach (1 Cor. 9.8-14).

In our day we have lost much of the sense of oneness Jesus indicated was so important for His followers to maintain (Jn. 17.21). Whatever we can do—in our church and among the churches of our community, as well as worldwide—to strengthen our unity in the Spirit will serve to bring the glory of God into sharper focus (Ps. 133). And thus, not only in the small things of life, but in large-scale matters as well, God will be glorified (1 Cor. 10.31).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul was expanding our joy by providing new ways to serve and give, along with our required tithes: “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20.35). Abundant joy.

Since there are so many people in need, we have no chance of ever feeling sad or without purpose, as the multitude of ways to give are limitless. We are daily surrounded by opportunities to experience the abundant life that Jesus promised us (Jn. 10.10). Abundant peace.

“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Lk. 6.38). Abundant blessing.

“Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (Prov. 3.9, 10). Abundant life.

“The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all the people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you” (Deut. 28.8-10). Abundant grace.

But all this collecting and saving and giving is not done as an end in itself, or merely for our joy in giving, but it is done to prove our love for God and to be obedient to His command.

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 Jn. 4.20, 21). Abundant love.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints...” (1 Cor. 16.1) we are on board, looking forward to the joy found in giving, sharing, and loving those who belong to the Lord. Abundant unity.

For reflection

1. So much of what it means to be a Christian involves giving ourselves for others. How does that show up in your life?
2. The unity of Christ’s Body is the responsibility of each member. How do you work at maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with other believers (Eph. 4.3)?
3. Corporate worship is an excellent context for the work of giving. Explain.

The day itself was enough to encourage them to give alms. For the Lord’s day was the day on which we received all the blessings which we now have. It is the root and the beginning of our new life in Christ. This is not the only reason that it is suitable for almsgiving, however. It is also the day of rest, when our souls can relax from their toils and open themselves to show pity. John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* 43.2

Pray Psalm 125.1, 4, 5.

Pray that God will do good and bring revival to His churches everywhere, and that churches will work together in seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 4, 5.

(St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers)

LORD, do good and care for those upright in heart.

Those who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

2 Plan, Wait, Work

Pray Psalm 119.33-35.

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall keep it *to* the end.
Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law;
Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.
Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.

Sing Psalm 119.33-35.

(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)

Teach me, LORD, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!
From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.
Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Make me walk in Your commandments, let me keep Your holy part.
I will keep Your Law unflinching; from it let me ne'er depart.
For Your Word is my delight, Lord; help me keep it from the heart.

Read 1 Corinthians 16.1-9; meditate on verses 5-9.

Preparation

1. What was Paul planning?
2. But what did he have to do first?

Meditation

Paul shared his tentative plan to visit the Corinthians and stay with them for an extended period (vv. 5, 6). This may be the unfulfilled journey to Corinth Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 1.15-23. He qualified his plans, as we all should, by waiting to see how the Lord directs or what He intends (v. 7). Paul did not make this trip, it seems, because the Lord willed otherwise.

At any rate, he had work to do in Ephesus, from where he was writing (v. 8). And the work was not easy.

The Gospel does not go forward, nor does the Kingdom advance, without much hard work. Even when wide doors of opportunity are before us (v. 9) and many are responding and much fruit is in evidence, many adversaries will oppose us. These will be spiritual, of course, seeking to make us fear or doubt, encouraging us to boast in ourselves or to compete with brethren; but there will also be human opponents, from within the church and from without.

We must be alert to the workings of our foes and determine to stay the course of our endeavors. Prayer, diligence, encouraging one another, keeping our eyes fixed on Christ exalted in glory, taking every next step faithfully and well, offering ourselves and our work to the Lord, stimulating one another to love and good works: This is the way to stay the course of our callings from the Lord.

We should make our plans, but continue waiting on the Lord to confirm or redirect. And while we wait, there is always good Kingdom work to do, right where we are.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16.9).

Paul was not taking the Corinthians aside and saying, “Look, I’ve got some good news and some bad news.” No. He was sharing some good/good news. A door for ministry has been opened and I’ve got some adversaries!

We know this to be true because of his attitude in the face of other crises: “And see, now I go bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20.22-24). None of those things moved him. He had one thing on his mind, and that was to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God. Determinedly.

Why did he have this attitude? And how did he manage to maintain his courage and delight? “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (1 Cor. 15.2). Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4.6-8). He, like Jesus, “for the joy that was set before” them endured hardships and death, for the sake of the Gospel of the grace of God (Heb. 12.2). Willingly.

Paul also was constantly aware of the propensity of the Adversary to attack in a multiplicity of ways; but being aware kept him ready and properly dressed for the confrontations (Eph. 6.11-18). Paul was also never frightened by these attacks nor taken down by them; but he always encouraged the followers of Christ to never, in any way, be terrified by our adversaries (Phil. 1.28). He held fast to Jesus’ words: “I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16.33). Victoriously.

We are watched over and cared for by the Good Shepherd, Who was willing to give His life to protect His sheep (Jn. 10.11). Paul knew, as did David, that the LORD is our Shepherd, and even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will not fear because God is with us (Ps. 23.1, 4). Sovereignly.

This is the secret to Paul’s attitude of courage in the face of whatever. As James wrote: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (Jms. 1.2, 3). Eternally.

A great and effective door has opened to us, and we have many adversaries!

For reflection

1. What adversaries will try to keep you from working your Personal Mission Field today?
2. How will they try to do that? How should you prepare?
3. Will we ever *not* have adversaries trying to keep us from seeking and advancing the rule of King Jesus? How should we encourage one another in making the most of open doors of opportunity?

The main thing indeed is, that, in the inward affection of the mind, we submit to God and his providence, whatever we resolve upon; but at the same time, it is becoming that we should accustom ourselves to such forms of expression, that whenever we have to do with what is future we may make everything depend on the divine will. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16.5-9

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Pray Psalm 119.36-40.

Call on the Lord to show His path for you this day. Rejoice before Him in the reliability of His Word. Seek His Spirit for revival and renewal in all your ways.

Sing Psalm 119.36-40.

(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)

To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious LORD.
Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.
O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy LORD!

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, LORD, am I.
Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.
Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

For Your holy precepts, Jesus, my whole heart longs earnestly,
for Your judgments all are good; Your Word is a delight to me!
In Your righteousness revive me! For Your goodness I would see!

3 Teamwork

Pray Psalm 133.1, 3.

Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity...
It is like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing—
Life forevermore.

Sing Psalm 133.1, 3.

(Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara: *Children of the Heavenly Father*)
O behold, how sweet, how pleasant, when the brethren dwell together;
all in unity abiding find God's blessing there presiding.

Read 1 Corinthians 16.1-12; meditate on verses 10-12.

Preparation

1. Who might have been coming to see the Corinthians? Why?
2. Who would not be coming? Why not?

Meditation

As we have seen in various places in 1 Corinthians, Paul pointed to himself, whom the Corinthians had known for nearly two years, to help them in achieving greater unity and maturity in the Lord. Here, he also pointed to his team.

He had done this before as well (1 Cor. 3.5-9). Paul's team was a microcosm for the Corinthians, an example of how working together in the Spirit, each according to his own gifts, made for a strong body in outreach for the Lord.

Timothy might have been coming to the Corinthians (Paul wasn't sure). He was good at follow-up, and Paul did not hesitate to use him in this role (cf. 1 Thess. 3.4-8). He did the work of the Lord, like Paul. They could learn from him if he came, so Paul commanded the Corinthians to treat him respectfully and generously (vv. 10, 11).

Paul wanted Apollos to return to Corinth as well, but it was not convenient for him to do so at that time (v. 12). However, he would go to Corinth when he could. It is possible that Paul related the contents—or at least the gist—of 1 Corinthians to both Timothy and Apollos. That way, if they were able to visit the Corinthians, they would have known what the issues were and what instructions Paul had given.

Meanwhile, the rest of Paul's team was still at work in Ephesus (v. 11). Once Timothy rejoined them, they would be on their way to Judea to strengthen the believers there. Paul cared well for the Corinthians, arranging not only for two of his team to check on them if or when they could, but promising that he would try to return to them himself in due course. The promise of those visits might have helped the Corinthians get to work on the things concerning which Paul wrote. I have no doubt Paul hoped that would be the effect on them.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Sadly, church can be a frightening place. Look at the words Paul uses to preface Timothy's possible visit: "see that he may be with you without fear" and "let no one despise him" (1 Cor. 16.10, 11). Yikes! Welcome to our church, Tim!

And then there's Apollos. He could have had a very good reason for not making this journey when Paul had requested it of him: might've been washing his hair, seeing a good show, finishing up a long-deserved vacation? His response just strikes me as a bit off.

In Deuteronomy 1.2, 3 some sad and telling words are recorded about the Israelites: "It is an eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel" to tell them "You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey..." (Deut. 1.6, 7). Yes. That journey. The one that should have been embarked upon after the eleven days' jaunt to the Promised Land—only it took forty years because of their disobedience. To do what God told them to do just frankly was not convenient for them.

And Apollos, perhaps the same. Although Paul urged him to go to the Corinthians "he was quite unwilling", but not to worry, when he could find a "convenient time" he would hustle on over (1 Cor. 16.12).

Granted, I could be completely wrong about him. But he is a convenient target and example of how not to respond to God's calling upon our lives. There is not a "convenience clause" written into "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk. 9.23-25). Or, "See, I have set before you life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess" (Deut. 30.15, 16). But only if you feel like it? All bets are off if it's not convenient? Hmm. No.

Kingdom work is teamwork. And if the whole team is not playing, then someone or something suffers. We are called to work that has been planned for us to do (Eph. 2.10). If we don't do it, who will? All the parts of the body must work together for the good of the body and the community at large.

We find it difficult to function if anything in our bodies chooses to take the day off. The Church is no different. It constantly needs all the parts to function for the good of all willingly and determinedly. And to glorify our Majestic Triune God.

"Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1.11, 12). Teamwork.

For reflection

1. What does teamwork look like in your church? How do you contribute to it?
2. Why is church a "scary" place for some people? How could we make our churches less "scary"?
3. Are you ever tempted by convenience to skip or avoid or compromise on some aspect of your walk with and work for the Lord? What should you do when that happens?

Faithful ministers will not be jealous of each other. It becomes the ministers of the gospel to show concern for each other's reputation and usefulness. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16.10-12*

Pray Psalm 133.2, 3.

Pray that God will bring greater unity into your church, and between your church and the other churches in your community.

Sing Psalm 133.2, 3.

(Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara: *Children of the Heavenly Father*)

Like the precious oil of blessing flowing down on Aaron's vestment,
God's anointing rests forever where His people dwell together.

Like the dew of Hermon's fountain falling down on Zion's mountain,
so the blessing of the Savior dwells where unity finds favor.

4 Last Words

Pray Psalm 142.1-3.

I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble.
When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then You knew my path.
In the way in which I walk
They have secretly set a snare for me.

Sing Psalm 142.1-3 (5, 6).

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

With my voice, O LORD, I cry—hear my plea for mercy, LORD!
My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

Refrain vs. 5, 6

LORD, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

When my spirit faints away, You my falt'ring pathway know;
where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

Refrain

Read 1 Corinthians 16.1.14; meditate on verses 13, 14.

Preparation

1. How many commands did Paul make in these verses?
2. What is the guiding command for them all?

Meditation

In these two verses, Paul summed-up every instruction he had written to the Corinthians in this first epistle.

Watch: Pay attention to what's going on in your life. Guard against temptation. Keep your ego in check. Make the best possible use of the time of your lives. Fulfill your calling.

Stand: Keep your feet firmly grounded in the faith of Jesus and His Word. Be like a tree, planted by living water, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, the tokens of love, the benchmarks of holiness, and power for effective witness to the glory of God in every aspect of your life.

Be brave: No more going-along-to-get-along with the wrong-believing world. Stand out for Christ! Unfurl your Christian colors. Be prepared for whatever the world might throw at you, and do not compromise your witness.

Be strong: Literally, "Be a man!" or, as he has previously implied, "Grow up!" Take on the character of Christ unto Christian adulthood. Flourish in gifts for ministry. Work to edify your brethren in the Lord and to contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ.

Love: Without love, all the above will be useless. Love God so that you grow in Christlikeness, and you will love your neighbors as yourself.

Well, that's about it. Now, get busy.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Watch”

Nehemiah, warned the people to be careful, now that the enemy had been riled up over the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and he said to them: “Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night” (Neh. 4.9). They were told to pray for their safety and to work to protect themselves. “Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Ps. 50.14, 15). I will watch my heart and my ways and glorify God. I have been warned to do so.

“Stand fast in the faith”

Paul told us to dress for the battle: “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. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth...” (Eph. 6.13, 14). We can stand fast because of God's protective clothing. We just need to put it on.

“Be brave”

Moses had a word for the people before he died, as he sent them on to complete their journey into the Promised Land. “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31.6). We can be brave because we are never alone.

“Be strong”

Paul told us how to be strong even when we aren't. This is what Jesus said to him:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

And because of this truth, Paul was able to say, “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12.9, 10). Jesus' grace is sufficient to make us strong even in our weakness.

“Let all that you do be done in love”

John wrote of the reason why we must do it this way: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 Jn. 5.2, 3).

Jesus explained how this works out within the Kingdom framework: “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me” (Matt. 25.40, 45). Our behavior has consequences. Assuredly, we either hear a “Well done” or a frightening “Depart from Me”.

When our children were young and questioned our thinking, we told them, “Because we said so”. Enough said. When God tells us this is the way it must be, without question, we must do it, because He is Sovereign, and because “He said so.” Absolutely enough said.

For reflection

1. What does it mean for you to “watch”? What are you watching for? How?
2. How do you know when you are standing fast in the faith, brave and strong as Paul commands?
3. What can you do to make sure that love pervades all you are and do in the Lord?

A Christian is always in danger, therefore should ever be on the watch. He should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert or give it up. By this faith alone he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation. Christians should be careful

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that charity not only reigns in their hearts, but shines in their lives. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16.13-18*

Pray Psalm 142.4-7.

Pray that God will liberate you from sin and self to a life of serving others and bearing witness to Jesus. Call on Him to be your Refuge all day long.

Sing Psalm 142.4-7.

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

LORD, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.
Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

Refrain vv. 5, 6

LORD, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

Hear my cry, LORD, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.
Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

Refrain

Out of prison lead me, LORD; thanks and praise to You shall be.
Righteous men armed with Your Word will Your grace bestow on me.

Refrain

5 Shepherds and Sheep

Pray Psalm 23.1, 2.

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.

Sing Psalm 23.1, 2.

(The Gift of Love: *Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*)

Because the LORD my Shepherd is I shall not want, for I am His!
He makes me lie in pastures full; I rest in Him by waters still.

Read 1 Corinthians 16.1-18; meditate on verses 15-18.

Preparation

1. What did Paul want the Corinthians to do?
2. Why should they do this?

Meditation

As was true wherever Paul went, he arranged for elders to be appointed to care for the Lord's sheep in Corinth (cf. Acts 14.23; Titus 1). The flocks of the Lord require careful attending to, so that they can realize their potential for growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and using their gifts in ministry.

Stephanas was a faithful shepherd. He came to faith early in Paul's ministry in Corinth and apparently showed true zeal for the Lord and His people. He and two others appear to have brought the report of the Corinthians to Paul (v. 18) and probably delivered his letter to them upon returning. He had a church in his house ("household") which seemed to have been a kind of model for Paul, since they all had "devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (v. 15). This is what all believers are to do, not just the shepherds. We are all called to the work of ministry, and it is a major responsibility of the shepherds of God's flock to equip the people they serve to that end (Eph. 4.11, 12).

But equipping for ministry takes two to tango. Stephanas and others like him—Fortunatus and Achaicus, for example—were devoted to making disciples and equipping the saints. But the saints need to do their part, which is to "submit" to those who are devoted to equipping them for ministry.

What does such submission involve? Learning from the Lord's shepherds—not just listening as they preach and teach but putting into practice whatever instructions they provide for seeking the Kingdom and glory of God. Submission also involves growing in the Lord, encouraging the shepherds of the church and coming alongside them to help in the work. Giving generously, worshiping faithfully, exercising mutual accountability and edification, helping in every way to order and grow the flock of the Lord: these, too, are aspects of the submission God expects of His people.

For ultimately, all our submission is unto the Lord; and it pleases Him to bring about that submission, to our benefit and His glory, through the shepherds He appoints over His sheep.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

There may have also been a little something, like not financially supporting Paul, that these noble shepherds did do. "What was lacking on your part they supplied" (1 Cor. 16.17). Ouch.

Part of benefiting from the care of a shepherd is to care for him also. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let the

elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (1 Tim. 5.17, 18).

Through the prophet Amos, God had some hard words for those who "did not remember the covenant of brotherhood" (Amos 1.9). God wants us to remember to be kind in word and deed to other people, and as Paul wrote: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6.10). And most especially to those who bear the harsher punishment and responsibility for the oversight of the flock (Jms. 3.1).

"For they refreshed my spirit and yours" (1 Cor. 16.18). Everybody wins when we show kindness to our shepherds.

For reflection

1. What is your responsibility toward the shepherds who oversee your church?
2. How can you encourage them in their work? Why should you?
3. Whose spirit will you "refresh" today?

Those who serve the saints, those who desire the honor of the churches, and to remove reproaches from them, are to be thought much of, and loved. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16.13-18*

Pray Psalm 23.3-6.

Thank God for the shepherds He has given to oversee your church. Pray for them, that God might make them increasingly to be and serve like the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 23.3-6.

(The Gift of Love: *Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*)

My soul He quickens and will bless; He leads in paths of righteousness.

Though I may walk in death's dark vale, I shall not fear – He will not fail!

The LORD is ever by my side; His rod and staff with me abide.

A table rich for me He spreads; with oil my LORD anoints my head.

Goodness and mercy, full and free, shall ever after follow me,
and in the house of God, my LORD, shall I abide forevermore!

6 Grace with You

Pray Psalm 80.8-11.

You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
You have cast out the nations, and planted it.
You prepared *room* for it,
And caused it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shadow,
And the mighty cedars with its boughs.
She sent out her boughs to the Sea,
And her branches to the River.

Sing Psalm 80.8-11.

(St. Theodulph: *All Glory, Laud, and Honor*)

You set us free from sin, LORD, and planted us in grace.
We rooted in Your strong Word have spread from place to place.
Our shadow covered mountains, our branches reached the sea;
Your grace flowed like a fountain of life, abundantly.

Read 1 Corinthians 16.1-24; meditate on verse 19-24.

Prepare

1. Who sent their greetings to the Corinthians?
2. What did Paul wish for them?

Meditation

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” So began Paul’s difficult but crucial letter to the churches in Corinth (1 Cor. 1.3). “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.” So ends that same epistle (1 Cor. 16.23). Paul’s great desire for the Corinthians is summed up in these verses, that the believers there might be renewed in the grace of God for the praise of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians was a powerful channel of grace to those first readers. Grace can be a little hard to swallow sometimes, but it always comes with healing and renewal for those who will receive it. Here at the end, Paul mentioned others who were concerned for, and doubtless praying for, the Corinthians: the churches of Asia (southwest Asia Minor, around Ephesus, from where Paul was writing); Aquila and Priscilla, the church that met in their house, and all the brethren around Paul. Grace was going out from them all for the Corinthians, in prayer and through Paul’s greeting.

Consequently, the Corinthians should receive that grace and share it with one another (v. 20). And especially they should understand that, for all his chiding, scolding, admonishing, and correcting, Paul loved them (v. 24). The grace of God flowed through Paul and his letter to restore and bless the believers in Corinth.

I take verse 23 more as a reminder than a wish. The state of being verb (*be*) is not in the original text, so how it is translated is a matter of interpretation. I do not think Paul was saying, after 16 gracious, truth-filled chapters, “Well, I hope you’ll have the grace of the Lord from here on.” I think a better translation would be, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *is* with you.” Paul offered a reminder, not a wish. The Corinthians need not continue to flounder in their problems and concerns. They have the mind of Christ. They belong to Him. And His grace is always available to revive and renew them.

And so it is with us as well.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer” (Ps. 45.1).

Paul was the quintessential writer, evangelist, and theologian; sometimes he told it slant, but most of the time he put the truth right out front. And here, in verse 22, he placed the point of everything we do and say and are: We love Jesus. And if we don’t, well, we are accursed (1 Cor. 16.22). No point beating around the bush.

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (Ps. 2.12).

“He who hates Me hates My Father also” (Jn. 15.23).

“Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them” (Deut. 27.26).

Wisdom said, “But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;
all those who hate me love death” (Prov. 8.36)

“He who despises the Word will be destroyed,
but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded” (Prov. 13.13).

“He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD,
but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him” (Prov. 14.2)

“You reject all those who stray from Your statutes, for their deceit is falsehood.
You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love Your testimonies.
My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments” (Ps. 119.118-120).

Jesus said, “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent” (Rev. 2.4, 5).

“Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints” (Ps. 31.23).

“We love Him because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4.19).

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;
abide/continue in My love” (Jn. 15.9).

Loving the Lord is the end all, be all, of every Christian’s life.
Not loving the Lord is the accursed end.
No point beating around the bush.

For reflection

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to love the Lord?
2. How would you counsel a fellow believer to grow in love for the Lord (2 Pet. 3.18)?
3. What can you do to keep loving the Lord as the defining motif of your life?

Back on Track: 1 Corinthians 16

Christian salutations are not mere empty compliments; but are real expressions of goodwill to others, and commend them to the Divine grace and blessing. Every Christian family should be as a Christian church. Wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, and he is among them, there is a church. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16.19-24*

Pray Psalm 80.1-7.

Pray that the grace of God will spread throughout your church and community to bring revival, renewal, and awakening to the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 80.1-7.

(St. Theodulph: *All Glory, Laud, and Honor*)

O God of grace, restore us, and shine on us Your face!
O save us, LORD, work for us; renew us by Your grace!
Give ear, O gracious Savior, Who leads us as Your flock:
Stir up Your pow'r and favor, our King and LORD and Rock!

How long will You ignore all Your people's fervent prayer?
Shall bitter tears fall ever? O LORD, renew Your care!
Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress.
Renew, O LORD, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

7 Getting Back on Track

Pray Psalm 71.14, 15.

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know their limits.

Sing Psalm 71.14-16.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Review 1 Corinthians 16.1-24; meditate on verses 13-18.

Preparation

1. What instructions did Paul give the Corinthians?
2. Why was he glad about the visit from his three friends?

Meditation

In chapter 16 Paul linked the Corinthians into the larger network of the growing Body of Christ (vv. 1-4); set the stage for a visit—by himself or Timothy (vv. 5-11); summarized his instructions to the Corinthians (vv. 13, 14); commended their leaders (vv.15-18); and sought the grace of God for their refreshment and renewal (vv. 18-24). One gets the feeling that, in Paul’s mind at least, things in Corinth were getting back on track.

At least they would be, once his letter had been received, read, and obeyed. 1 Corinthians must have been a hard letter for Paul. It is confrontational, urgent, and unyielding in its assessments and requirements. But the central thread of love is present throughout, and it is in the spirit of love that Paul brought his letter to a close (v. 24). Everything must be done in love (v. 14). Love covers a multitude of shortcomings and sins, so the more they practiced love for God and their neighbors, the better the Corinthians would be at getting back on track with the Lord.

Our calling as believers is to love the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 22). If we love Him with all our soul and strength, He will fill us to overflowing with love for the people around us. And where love prevails, all other challenges and difficulties can be readily resolved.

Know that you are loved by our heavenly Father. Bask in the love of Jesus. Grow in love by the Holy Spirit. And go each day to edify your brethren and glorify God in the world by the love you show in all things. We’ll always be on track with the Lord and His agenda as we love one another.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Dorcas was a woman full of good works and charitable deeds.

“But it happened in those days that she became sick and died...all the widows stood by [Peter] weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them” (Acts 9.36-42). She meant a lot to those women and her community, but probably wasn’t known throughout Israel; yet she

served faithfully. Well done.

“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him” (Matt. 10.2-4). These all served in some capacity, but a few we never hear about again after this list, yet they served faithfully (except Judas). Well done.

The book of Judges tells the story of that time in history when Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson ruled. Some of these got stories, some didn't, yet they all served faithfully. Well done.

Paul wanted the church to learn that all people are important and worthy of appreciation, whether they served in a large, visible capacity, or a smaller way. He told the Corinthians, “Therefore acknowledge such men” (1 Cor. 16.18). Why? Because they devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints and they worked and labored in the Kingdom for God's glory (1 Cor. 16.15, 16).

When we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16) we are able, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to love others in the way prescribed for us (1 Cor. 13).

God's love leads and guides us to love and acknowledge and encourage all those who do the work of ministry. And that would be everyone, as we are all called into our own Personal Mission Field, to do the work that God has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2.10).

We must never get caught up in the world's perspective of who is worthy of praise and who is not. God “does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16.7). And we must too.

Let us always seek to acknowledge the Dorcas, Lebbaeus, Ibzan, and Abdon people in our lives and churches. Because all the parts of the Body of Christ are important and necessary cogs in the wheel of Kingdom work. And always, let all we do be done with love (1 Cor. 16.14).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15.58). Well done.

For reflection

1. What is your most important takeaway from our study of 1 Corinthians?
2. How can you encourage your fellow believers in their “everyday” callings to love God and their neighbors?
3. Where do you need to improve in showing the love of Christ consistently to others?

If love had been present, the Corinthians would not have been puffed up, they would not have divided into factions, they would not have gone to law before heathens, or indeed at all. If there had been love in the church, that notorious person would not have taken his father's wife, they would not have looked down on their weaker brethren, and they would not have boasted about their spiritual gifts. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 44.2

Pray Psalm 71.21-24.

Pray for your church, that it will be a bastion of truth and a lighthouse of love in your community.

Sing Psalm 71.21-24.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

Increase my greatness, comfort me, and unto You shall praises be.
Your truth I will exalt full well, O Holy One of Israel!

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; LORD, humble all who do me wrong.

Refrain

Back on Track: 1 Corinthians 16

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What were Paul's concluding instructions to the Corinthians?
2. Why did he commend Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus? What does it mean to "refresh" someone's spirit?
3. How did Paul seek to incorporate the Corinthians into the larger, worldwide Body of Christ?
4. What was the role of love in helping the Corinthians get back on track?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

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