



## 1 Corinthians - Chapter Sixteen

### Summary of Chapter Sixteen

The letter concludes with instructions to the Corinthians to prepare their offering for the poor in Judæa and informs them of Paul's travel plans that will include a visit to them. He then finishes with personal greetings and a benediction, reminding them that it is love that binds them together.

### **VII**      1 Corinthians 16:1-12 - The Collection for the Saints and Travel Plans

As Paul draws the letter to a close, his attention turns to the details of his future ministry as it involves the Corinthians.

#### **VII.a**      1 Corinthians 16:1-4 - The Collection for the Saints

Paul issues a reminder that the other churches he is associated with are arranging a collection of money to help the poor Christians in Judæa. It is Paul's expectation that Corinth will do likewise and advises them to make weekly donations towards the collection so that it will be ready for him to take to Jerusalem when he comes to them.

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the collection for the saints: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:1

Now concerning. Paul returns again to an issue raised in their letter to him as discussed in 1 Corinthians 7:1.

The collection is Paul's collection of money for needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem: <<*Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation and to offer sacrifices*>> (Acts 24:17). Refer also to Romans 15:25-31 and 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9. Paul brought relief aid to the church in Judæa more than once: <<*At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius.*>>

*The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judæa; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul>> (Acts 11:27-30), to which Galatians 2:10 may refer. On generosity among Christians refer to 2 Corinthians 8:9-15.*

The Christians in Judæa had become poor because of the economic situation in the region; lack of family support where there was conflict between those who had remained fully Jewish and those that had become Christians, which had led to persecution within families as well as by the authorities; and indeed by the pooling of resources as described in Acts that had left no further wealth to tap into once it was spent on meeting the needs of the early church. Jerusalem had known poverty before: <<*All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength*>> (Lamentations 1:11a). Paul was determined to do all he could to relieve the situation of those living there during his lifetime and establish a protocol for providing aid throughout all generations of the church.

By organising this collection, Paul knew he would bring problems upon himself that went beyond simply helping the poor. The problems arise from the very purpose that Paul was using the collection for: to signal to the Gentile Christians that they were part of the same family as the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem; and, more importantly still, to signal to the Jewish Christians that those Gentiles out there, who have come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the true Lord of the world, are part of the same family as they are, even though they have not become Jews in the process.

You should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia is most likely a reference to the letter to the Galatians that appears in the canon of Scripture. Galatia is a region in modern day Turkey. See the map.

<sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.

### 1 Corinthians 16:2

The first day of every week is a Jewish expression for Sunday, and similar to the phrase used in the Gospels to describe the day of the week on which Jesus rose from the dead: <<*After the sabbath, as the*



*first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb>> (Matthew 28:1), <<And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb>> (Mark 16:2), <<But on*

*the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared*>> (Luke 24:1), and: <<*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb*>> (John 20:1). This shows that Christians gathered for worship on Sunday, not Saturday: <<*On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight*>> (Acts 20:7), and: <<*I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet*>> (Revelation 1:10), in order to acknowledge the crucial importance of Christ's resurrection.

The reference in Corinthians is chronologically the first in Scripture to reference a weekly Sunday activity for Christians. It is interesting that it refers to making a financial collection!

Whatever extra you earn. Paul is not asking that their giving should be sacrificial but affordable from their surplus income. He does not wish to make the Corinthians as poor as their fellow believers in Judæa.

So that collections need not be taken when I come. Paul had already indicated he intended to visit Corinth in 1 Corinthians 4:19. The reason for him not wanting them to start a collection after his arrival was to avoid it becoming a distraction to him; he also wanted them to view such giving as an ongoing value in their lives.

<sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:3-4

I will send any whom you approve. Paul intended to send the money with several representatives chosen by the Corinthian church, and the other churches who had contributed, showing that he took care to prevent even an appearance of misuse of funds. For his journey: <<*He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia*>> (Acts 20:4).

Having such a large party join Paul and his travelling companions for the journey served three purposes:

1. It protected Paul from any potential charges of fraud that his enemies might wish to lay on him.
2. It provided additional security as well as manpower to carry this large amount of cash through some very dangerous regions.
3. It would allow Gentile and Jewish Christians to meet in Jerusalem, providing them with the opportunity to understand what the concept of a single united church actually means.

Paul would ensure they travelled with letters, for this was the usual way of authenticating that travellers were representatives of those sending them: <<*Then*

*I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may grant me passage until I arrive in Judah'>> (Nehemiah 2:7), and: <<Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem>> (Acts 9:1-2).*

If it seems advisable that I should go. Paul had not committed to travelling to Jerusalem at that time but would make the decision whether to go or not when he was with them. He had made the decision to travel by the time he wrote to the Roman church during his over-winter stay in Corinth: <<*At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem*>> (Romans 15:25-26).

They will accompany me. As already noted, Paul travelled with several companions from the churches, who provided a security escort, on what turned out to be his last recorded visit to Jerusalem.

#### VII.b 1 Corinthians 16:5-12 - Plans for Travel

Paul intended to visit the Corinthians and spend a few months with them over winter. However, he intended first to travel north as far as Macedonia before heading south to Achaia. After he had visited them in Corinth, he would be heading for Jerusalem to take the offering for the poor, although he had not committed to that part of the journey at the time of writing this letter.

<sup>5</sup> I will visit you after passing through Macedonia – for I intend to pass through Macedonia – <sup>6</sup> and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:5-6

I will visit you. Corinth was part of the Roman province of Achaia, south of the Roman province of Macedonia. Paul describes a route that would take him from his present location in Ephesus (v.8), north, probably to Troas, across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia, and south to Corinth: <<*Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, 'After I have gone there, I must also see Rome'*>> (Acts 19:21), and: <<*After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples; and after encouraging them and saying farewell, he left for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given the believers much encouragement, he came to Greece, where he stayed for three months. He was about to set sail for Syria when a plot was made against him by the Jews, and so he decided to return through Macedonia*>> (Acts 20:1-3).

Perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter. Paul did spend the winter of AD56/57 in Corinth, and it was during this stay that he wrote to the Romans. He would then retrace his route via Macedonia and Asia before heading to Jerusalem with the churches' gift for the poor, i.e. you may send me on my way, wherever I go. Paul had made a similar request for assistance for others from Titus in Crete: New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised 1Corinthian16-4

<<Make every effort to send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they lack nothing>> (Titus 3:13).

<sup>7</sup> I do not want to see you now just in passing, for I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup> But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

### 1 Corinthians 16:7-9

I hope to spend some time with you. Given all the problems Paul has addressed in this letter a short visit would not be appropriate. It would clearly be more beneficial to the Corinthians for Paul to stay for several weeks in order to cement the ideas he had written to them with solid Gospel teaching in person.

Pentecost is the 'Feast of Weeks', described in Leviticus 23:15-22, and was a grain harvest celebration that culminated and concluded 50 days after Passover. Therefore, Paul was probably writing in the spring between Passover and this final day of Pentecost.

If the Lord permits. Paul knew all too well that human plans were ultimately determined by the will of God: <<*They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas*>> (Acts 16:6-8).

As is so often the case in working for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel, a wide door for effective work, an open door, can so often lead to hardship and persecution along the way, i.e. there are many adversaries.

<sup>10</sup> If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord just as I am; <sup>11</sup> therefore let no one despise him. Send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I am expecting him with the brothers.

### 1 Corinthians 16:10-11

If Timothy comes. Timothy was apparently already on his way to Corinth and was therefore not the courier of this letter as some commentators have suggested: <<*So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he himself stayed for some time longer in Asia*>> (Acts 19:22), and: <<*For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church*>> (1 Corinthians 4:17).

See that he has nothing to fear among you. It is clear from the pastoral letters sent to Timothy that Paul held him in high regard concerning his commitment to the work of sharing the Gospel. However, he was still a relatively young man without perhaps the natural leadership qualities or social status that would allow him to impose himself on others, especially those among the Corinthians who were

puffed up with their own pride and self-esteem. Paul had instructed Timothy how he should act towards the Ephesians: <<**Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity**>> (1 Timothy 4:12). Now he instructed the Corinthians as to how they should treat Timothy, therefore let no one despise him.

Send him on his way in peace. Another apostle gave similar instructions: <<**You will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God**>> (3 John 6b). Paul was expecting Timothy to rejoin him before his own arrival in Corinth. Timothy did meet up with Paul and was with him by the time he wrote the final letter to Corinth: <<**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia**>> (2 Corinthians 1:1).

<sup>12</sup> Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but he was not at all willing to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity.

### 1 Corinthians 16:12

Paul would not have urged Apollos to visit Corinth if he disagreed with his theology. Therefore, this verse is an endorsement of his ministry: <<**What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ'**>> (1 Corinthians 1:12), <<**For when one says, 'I belong to Paul', and another, 'I belong to Apollos', are you not merely human?**>> (1 Corinthians 3:4), and: <<**I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, 'Nothing beyond what is written', so that none of you will be puffed up in favour of one against another**>> (1 Corinthians 4:6).

The Corinthians may have viewed Apollos and Paul as being in separate camps and even have fostered the idea that there was disunity between them. This brief reference here by Paul shows that there could have been no animosity between the two men.

## **VIII 1 Corinthians 16:13-24 - Final Messages and Greetings**

Paul admonishes the Corinthians to persevere, love, and submit to good leaders. He then gives greetings from the Christians in Asia, demonstrating the unity that must exist within the Christian church.

<sup>13</sup> Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. <sup>14</sup> Let all that you do be done in love.

### 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Be courageous or act like men in some translations, Greek *andrizomai*, is a frequent command in the Septuagint and is used in contexts encouraging people, especially soldiers, to act with courage and strength in obedience to the Lord and with confidence in his power: <<**Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.**' Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised 1Corinthian16-6

*all Israel: 'Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will put them in possession of it'>> (Deuteronomy 31:6-7), <<Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go'>> (Joshua 1:6-9), <<And Joshua said to them, 'Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous; for thus the Lord will do to all the enemies against whom you fight'>> (Joshua 10:25), <<David said further to his son Solomon, 'Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished'>> (1 Chronicles 28:20), and: <<Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!>> (Psalm 27:14).*

Let all that you do be done in love is a summary statement of what Paul had spoken of in Chapter 13.

<sup>15</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints;

#### 1 Corinthians 16:15

The household of Stephanas were among a handful of people only that Paul personally baptised: <<*I did baptise also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptised anyone else*>> (1 Corinthians 1:16). Verse 16 indicates this family had a role in the leadership of the church and yet Paul makes it clear that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. This is in line with Jesus' own leadership model: <<*just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many*>> (Matthew 20:28).

<sup>16</sup> I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:16

Put yourselves at the service of such people probably implies that some members of the household of Stephanas were elders at Corinth. First Clement 42.4, written in AD95, mentions that the apostles in Corinth appointed the 'first converts' (v.15), Greek *aparchē*, the same word Paul used in 1 Corinthians 15:20 to refer to 'first fruits'. Other NT writers advised their readers on the importance of serving their leaders in the church: <<*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for*

*they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing – for that would be harmful to you>> (Hebrews 13:17).*

Everyone who works or fellow worker is a participle of *synergeō*, meaning ‘to work together with’, and apparently refers to those who ‘work with’ these leaders in their governing tasks.

<sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such people.

### 1 Corinthians 16:17-18

Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus appear to have travelled to see Paul in Ephesus and were probably the bearers of the Corinthians’ letter to Paul. It is likely they remained with him in Ephesus so that they could then take his reply, this letter, back to Corinth.

Give recognition to such people. The work of others is always to be recognised and celebrated in the church, i.e. I rejoice at the coming. Paul writes of this attitude to others: <<*Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honour such people, because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me>> (Philippians 2:29-30), and: <<I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother>> (Philemon 7).*

<sup>19</sup> The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord.

### 1 Corinthians 16:19

The churches of Asia send greetings. Ephesus was the principle city in the Roman province of Asia.

The church in their house. Aquila and Prisca, or Priscilla had first encountered Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:2), before travelling with him to Ephesus (Acts 18:19). They had originated from Italy but were expelled by the Emperor Claudius following trouble between Jews and Christians in Rome. It seems they later returned to Rome and held a similar church in their home there as well: <<*Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epænetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ>> (Romans 16:3-5).*

Early Christian churches, since they were small and since Christianity was not recognised as a legitimate or legal religion, met in homes: <<*Then he left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshipper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue>> (Acts 18:7), <<Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house>> (Colossians 4:15), and: <<Paul, a prisoner of Christ*

*Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house>> (Philemon 1-2). There is extensive archæological evidence from many different cities showing that some homes were structurally modified to hold such churches.*

<sup>20</sup> All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

### 1 Corinthians 16:20

A holy kiss was clearly an accepted form of greeting in the early church as it is in some churches today: <<*Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you*>> (Romans 16:16), <<*Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you*>> (2 Corinthians 13:12), <<*Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:26), and: <<*Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ*>> (1 Peter 5:14). This form of greeting demonstrated reconciliation, affection, mutual care and support between all members of the church, irrespective of their geographical location or ethnic origin. This was a distinguishing feature between the pagan religions the Corinthians had known and the way of life they had come to know through Jesus: <<*For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*>> (Micah 4:5).

Like some other practices with symbolic meanings that change from culture to culture, such as foot washing, or head covering for wives, a holy kiss would not necessarily convey the same meaning today that it did in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, and in most cultures it could be seriously misunderstood. Such commands are best obeyed by substituting an action, such as a handshake or hug or bow that would convey the same meaning in the practising culture.

<sup>21</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

### 1 Corinthians 16:21

I, Paul. Paul typically used secretaries to write down his letters as he dictated them: <<*I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord*>> (Romans 16:22). Sometimes Paul picked up the pen himself, either to sign and so authenticate a letter: <<*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:17); simply to give a personal good-bye: <<*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you*>> (Colossians 4:18); or to make a point with special emphasis: <<*See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!*>> (Galatians 6:11), and: <<*I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self*>> (Philemon 19). In light of v.22, Paul's personal signature here probably falls into the third category.

<sup>22</sup> Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come!

## 1 Corinthians 16:22

Anyone who might say <<*let Jesus be cursed*>> (1 Corinthians 12:3) is himself accursed, the Greek *anathema*, which refers to the solemn ban placed on those in the OT who rejected the true God and spurned his ways.

The phrase Our Lord, come! *marana tha* is Aramaic rather than Greek, probably representing an early Jewish Christian prayer for the return of Jesus: <<*The one who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*>> (Revelation 22:20). It is additional evidence that at an early date followers of Jesus gave him a title that they used of God. This is a reminder that Christians should always be praying for Christ to return soon.

<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup> My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

## 1 Corinthians 16:23-24

My love be with all of you. Paul ends with a simple benediction and personal message of love; this is the underpinning message of the Gospel of Jesus. He ended his letter to the church in Ephesus in a similar tone: <<*Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ*>> (Ephesians 6:24), and therefore love for each other as he commanded.

Paul did not want to end the letter simply with the sense that all will be well and there is nothing to worry about; indeed, there were things to worry about in Corinth, and central to them was the danger that some Christians would be so in love with their own spiritual and philosophical attainments that they forget the love, which includes loyalty, devotion and obedience, not just warm feelings, that they owe to the Lord who bought them with his own life and death.