

Study 21: Chapter 16

Introduction

The last “issue” that Paul addresses is that of the collection. He then outlines his travel plans, and gives some instructions regarding his messengers. Finally, he closes the letter with his usual style of greetings.

Body of the Study

The collection for the saints

Travel plans

Final exhortations

Final greetings

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *What have you observed about the character of the church in Corinth? How does this church relate to churches that you know?*
- *What have you observed during this study about the character of Paul?*
- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read the introductory / background study, and think about the culture of the church.
- Skim read all of the notes as an overview of the book.

Notes for study 21: Chapter 16

Introduction

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Body of the Study

The collection for the saints

The way that Paul introduces the issue appears to be in response to a question that the Corinthians had asked him “...*Now concerning the collection...*”. The issue had arisen because of a need to help the poor saints in Judea (Rom 15:26), but we do not know why they were poor. It may have been an after effect from the great drought that was prophesied by Agabus, and that occurred in AD 49 (Acts 11:27-28), however this was now 5 years previous to this letter. Or perhaps it was an after effect of their sharing and selling everything that they had in the beginning, or perhaps a combination of the two.

In the second Corinthian letter, Paul tells us of the need to ensure that *there is equality* amongst brethren by giving and sharing what we have (2:8:13-14).

He says that he has given the same instruction to the churches of Galatia. This was not in the letter to the Galatian churches, for that letter had yet to be written, and was still another three years away. So, Paul must have given the instruction during his visit on the start of the third journey. At the conclusion of the third journey, Paul and representatives of the churches would gather together in Troas as they took the money to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-6).

The collection was to be made on the first day of the week, which was the regular time of assembly for the church (Acts 20:7). The passage here in 1:16:2 also says (in some translations) “...*upon every first day of the week...*” (or, upon the first day of every week), which shows that it was not just a coincidence that the Christians had assembled on that day, but that the first day of the week was a special day, and a regular day for the assembly.

The literal wording is that we are to *thrust into the treasury* on the first of the week. It could be argued that we can put aside some money once a week, and then get the money out when the need arises. But that is the very thing that Paul said not to do. The money was to *be thrust into the treasury* so that there will *be no collections when (Paul) comes* (1:16:2).

Whilst this passage authorises a collection that was made for a special purpose, it is one of the few passages in the New Testament that authorises a church to raise money for anything, and shows the way that God has authorised for it to be done. [We should also bear in mind that in Acts 4:34-35 we have the apostolically approved example of the Christians selling their own possessions and bringing the money to the apostles (the church leaders) for distribution. We are not told that the money was given to them by thrusting it into the treasury on the first day of the week – and it would appear otherwise.] But, we do not find the church raising money by having a garage sale, or any other fundraising activity that is popular amongst community and social groups. Those activities may be right and proper in their place, but that place is not in the church! God has given us the example of how the church is to act, and it is the responsibility of the church to do things only in the way that God has authorised.

Before leaving the collection, we should note that Paul did not take the money himself, but went with the appointed representative of the church from Corinth. Paul thus avoided any sense of impropriety on his behalf in the distribution.

Travel plans

His intention was to pass through Corinth on the way to visit the churches of Macedonia, and then come to Corinth before returning to Jerusalem (1:16:5-6). However, he changed his travel plans, and instead went directly to Macedonia before coming to Corinth and spending 3 months there before travelling north through Macedonia again (Acts 20:1-3).

He was in Ephesus when he wrote the letter, and plans to stay there until after Pentecost of the year AD 57. He had great opportunities to spread the gospel there "...a great and effectual door has opened..." (1:16:9), however "...*there were many adversaries...*". Some of those adversaries would cause the riot that caused him to leave (Acts 19:23-41).

Timothy had been sent on ahead to Macedonia with Erastus ahead of Paul (Acts 19:22), and Paul is requesting the Corinthians to accept Timothy *without fear* if he comes to them (1:16:10). Paul's letter had been written very sternly, and Paul's fear was that the Corinthians would turn bitter against him and those whom he was associating with (in this case Timothy). If the Corinthians changed their behaviour as Paul had instructed them to do, then they should have no fear from Paul. In the same manner, they should also have no fear from Timothy.

The factious spirited Corinthians were very likely to have tried to intimidate Timothy, and he was still at this time a young man (Paul's letter to him was written around 8 years later, and he is described in that letter as a youth – 1 Tim 4:12). Any such behaviour would soon be learned about by Paul, for Timothy was to return to Paul with news of the brethren (1:16:11).

Apollos must have been in Ephesus with Paul, and he had urged him to come to Corinth. However Apollos' plans did not include Corinth at that time. It was not that he would not come at all (lest the Corinthians think that), but rather that he would come at a later time. Apollos had been in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28), and then came to Corinth (Acts 19:1). He had then returned to Ephesus and was with Paul when he wrote the letter (1:16:12). Some commentators say that the reason that Apollos left Corinth and returned to Ephesus was because of the violence of the factions. Whilst we have no basis for such a conclusion, it may explain his choice of not being willing to return there at this time.

Final exhortations

The Corinthians needed to be alert and not asleep. They needed to take full account of the things that were needed, and make the necessary changes in their behaviour "...*watch...stand fast...be brave...be strong...*" (1:16:13).

Importantly, in making the changes, all things were to be done out of a motivation of love. This was a far cry from the way that things were happening in Corinth.

Stephanus' household provided an example of the way that they ought to behave. They were amongst the first converts in Achaia (along with Epaenetus Rom 16:5). Their example was one of devotion to ministry, and that was exactly the kind of people that the Corinthians should be.

Not only were the Corinthians to observe their example, they were to be submissive to them, and to those who worked and laboured in the Lord with Paul.

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had (apparently) come from Corinth. They provided the impetus for Paul to write the letter, and "filled in the gaps" of Paul's knowledge of Corinth.

Final greetings

Aquila and Priscilla were in Ephesus, and sent their greetings to the brethren. The letter was written by a scribe, and lest anyone think that the scribe had forged the letter, Paul signs it *with his own hand*.

The final comment that Paul makes concerns the tone of the letter. Though it is a strong letter of rebuke, yet it was written out of a total motivation of love. First, and of most importance, love for the Lord, and then by Paul's love for the brethren.