

## First Epistle to the Corinthians

### 32 – Essay Six: Concluding Notes (6.a) – Finance for the Ministry

1 Corinthians 15:58-16:14

#### 1. Outlines

- a. *ESV Study Bible*
  - i. The Collection for the Saints and Travel Plans (16:1–12)
  - ii. Closing Admonitions and Greetings (16:13–24)
- b. *Reading the New Testament: Reading Corinthians*
  - i. Plans, Prescriptions, and Pleasantries (16:1-24)
    1. Two Answers (16:1-12)
    2. Parenesis (16:13-18)
    3. Closing (16:19-24)
- c. *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle*
  - i. About the Collection (16:1-11)
    1. Arrangements for the Collection (16:1-4)
    2. Travel Plans—Paul's and Timothy's (16:5–11)
  - ii. About the Coming of Apollos (16:12)
  - iii. Concluding Matters (16:13-24)
    1. Concluding Exhortations (16:13-18)
    2. Final Greetings (16:19-24)
- d. Bailey<sup>1</sup>
  - i. Funding, Leadership, Greetings and Final Admonition (15:58-16:24)

#### 2. Rhetoric

- a. Opening and closing admonitions
- b. Three inner sections, each dealing with request for financing
  - i. Outer section for others
  - ii. Middle section request for Paul himself
  - iii. Middle section the rhetorically the longest, with five sub-sections
  - iv. Each section also includes travel plans for various leaders

Table 1: Bailey, location 5638

1 Corinthians 15:58-16:14 (ESV)		Motif
1	58 Therefore, my beloved brothers [and sisters], be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.	General admonition
2	1 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.	Finance for the saints
3	2 On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.	Basis of finance
4	3 And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.	Finance for Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, loc. 5635.

5	5 I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia,	Through Macedonia
6	6 and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.	I visit you
7		Finance for Paul
8		I visit you
9	8 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.	In Ephesus
10	10 When Timothy comes, <u>see that you put him at ease</u> [see that he has nothing to fear] among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. 11 So let no one despise him.	Visit of Timothy (is coming)
11	Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers [and sisters].	Finance for Timothy
12	12 Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers [and sisters], but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.	Visit of Apollos (not coming)
13	13 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, <u>act like men</u> [be courageous (NRSV, NET, others)] <sup>2</sup> , be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love.	General admonition

### 3. Details (1, 13) – admonitions

- a. Character traits and work in the Lord<sup>3</sup>
- b. Waiting for the Lord – but it is an active waiting
- c. One way to wait and work is to finance the work of ministry

### 4. Details (2, 3, 4) – finance for the saints

- a. For the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem
- b. Part of the work of a Christian is to assist financially those who are in need
  - i. But note: Paul's concern is not with those within the immediate community, but with those who are outside
  - ii. Paul's reasoning: A common purpose can unite a divisive community
    1. A sense of greater mission can set aside petty squabbles

On the surface this assembling of an offering can be understood as a good-will or relief effort, but consideration of the full dynamics of the project indicates that the collection was a great deal more than mere charity. Paul's purposes, as noted in the several mentions of this collection (esp. Rom 15), reveal the real importance and theological significance of this act of Christian benevolence. Remarkably, Paul saw the difficulties suffered by members of the Jerusalem church as an opportunity to break down the wall of hostility and skepticism between conservative Jewish and less law-observant Gentile Christians, for in the giving and in the receiving of the collection both the givers and the recipients were mutually acknowledging the bond that existed

<sup>2</sup> *Complete Jewish Bible* translates this word as *mentsch* (or *mensch*). Via <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mensch> (retrieved 19-May, 2014): a person of integrity and honor; Yiddish *mentsh* human being, from Middle High German *mensch*, from Old High German *mennisco*; akin to Old English *man* human being, man. Greek: ἀνδρίζεσθε (*andrizesthe*) - 1x, to render brave or manly; mid. to show or behave one's self like a man [*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary*]. Only a few English translations retain the literal, gendered translation (e.g., KJV, NASB, ESV).

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, location 5658.

between them in Christ. Differences in culture and practice could perhaps be minimized as love was expressed in Christian charity. Thus, Paul attempted to use generosity and caring to build bridges across gulfs of suspicion that earlier dialogues had not spanned.<sup>4</sup>

- c. Paul does not want to hold a fundraising campaign when he arrives
  - i. He wants each believer to systematically set aside something, as he/she is able to give
  - ii. Paul does not specify amounts, nor does he say everyone must give
  - iii. Paul does not want someone who is barely able to meet their own needs to sacrifice their own well-being in order to give

What is less clear is the clause that apparently is intended to refer to the amount set aside each week. The NIV translates, "in keeping with his income." But that is probably a bit too modern, especially for a culture where a number of the community were slaves and had no "income." More likely it is intentionally ambiguous and does not mean that each should lay aside all his or her "profits," which a literal rendering of the Greek text would allow, but that in accordance with "whatever success or prosperity may have come their way that week," each should set aside something for this collection. There is no hint of a tithe or proportionate giving; the gift is simply to be related to their ability from week to week as they have been prospered by God.<sup>5</sup>

- d. Paul provides instructions on the transport of funds
  - i. There are no wire transfers!
  - ii. Large quantity of "cash" (coins) might invite suspicion – funding a rebellion?
  - iii. A letter indicating source and recipient is necessary to provide legitimacy as well as ensure the those carrying are not unnecessarily suspected of embezzling
  - iv. Paul does not want responsibility for carrying the funds, but he will accompany only if requested to do so
  - v. Paul wants to be seen as the one leading out in the collection to help promote unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians, and to quell any suspicion that he is against the Jews

In their taking the gift to the saints in Jerusalem, Paul is engineering a meeting of the Jerusalem Christians and representatives of the predominantly Gentile churches, who were sometimes subject to skepticism by the believers in Jerusalem. The Corinthians' active role would necessitate a summit of sorts between the ethnically diverse members of the universal church of Christ. Thus, the love of the Pauline congregations would be physically represented in Jerusalem by real persons as well as by the material elements of collection itself.<sup>6</sup>

## 5. Details (5-9) – Finance for Paul

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<sup>4</sup> *Understanding the Bible Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, entry for 16:1.

<sup>5</sup> *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle*, entry for 16:2.

<sup>6</sup> *UBC*, entry for 16:3-4.

- a. Some travel plans for himself
- b. He states his intent to minister in Ephesus for a while longer
- c. But he desires to spend some extended time in Corinth with the recipients of this letter
  - i. Corinth was a good city for craftsmen such as Paul – he could earn money there
  - ii. In spite of the problems in the Corinthian church, Paul loves them and wants to spend time with them
- d. He won't accept payment for preaching to them
  - i. He can earn his own living while residing in a location
- e. But he will accept funds to help him on his travels
  - i. He cannot earn money while traveling
  - ii. Funds are not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of those he will go to
- f. Paul does not state a destination<sup>7</sup>
  - i. He may not know yet where he is headed
  - ii. Or, he may not want to tell the Corinthians in case their giving depends on his destination
    - 1. Mission is directed by God – it is not for those funding it to try to control

Yes, he is a servant and will serve them (even free of charge), but *he will not surrender the right to choose the direction and nature of that servanthood.*<sup>8</sup>

- 2. Paul is saying, "If you believe in my character and integrity, and if you believe in the necessity of mission, you will trust me to make the right decision in regards to where I believe God is leading me to go next."

- g. Paul never says other ministers should not accept pay from their churches
  - i. He will not accept pay because he values independence

Generally speaking the person you pay is in some sense under your control. Why were the Corinthians upset because Paul would not accept a salary from them when he was preaching in Corinth? Paul was obliged to make a spirited defense of his refusal to accept pay (9:3-18).<sup>9</sup>

## 6. Details (10, 11, 12) – Finance for Timothy

- a. Timothy's "fear"
  - i. Could be some of the church's opposition to Paul spilling over to Timothy
  - ii. Or it could be external forces of Corinth in opposition to the church
  - iii. Paul's request is that the church protect Timothy because his work is of the Lord
- b. Apollos
  - i. The Corinthians may have requested Apollos to return, but he (or he felt God) did not want to go to Corinth at this time
  - ii. Paul thought it would be good, but Apollos disagreed. There was no friction between them. Paul accepted Apollos' decision.
- c. Paul asks the Corinthians to provide the means to send Timothy back

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<sup>7</sup> Bailey, location 5750.

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, location 5755.

<sup>9</sup> Bailey, location 5756.

- i. The local church in Ephesus probably provided the funds to send Timothy, but not enough for his return. That is the Corinthian responsibility.
  - 1. No church should ever be only recipients – each has responsibility to give
- d. What happened with Timothy's visit?
  - i. No definitive answer in scripture, but we can infer some things that may have happened

One is left to wonder how this visit by Timothy turned out since there is no further mention of it in Paul's letters. In any case, two things are certain. First, shortly after this letter Paul goes absolutely contrary to the plans here laid out and pays a sudden, unexpected visit to Corinth. Why he did so is purely a matter of conjecture, but that he should so radically alter his plans suggests that perhaps the return of Timothy gave him reason for even greater alarm with regard to this church. The fact that the visit turned out to be such a blowup, apparently under the leadership of one person in particular, and that the visit was so painful for Paul that he refused to return for the time being, seems to give this suggestion some merit. Second, what Paul did do was to send Titus back to Corinth instead of either himself or Timothy (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6–7). For the present, neither of them is a persona grata to the community; it also means that Titus must have been a person of extraordinary grace. This, at least, is one viable attempt to make some sense of these very fragmentary pieces of historical data.<sup>10</sup>

## 7. Summary

- a. This section is not addressing giving to assist those within the immediate church family
- b. Giving to help those beyond the immediate church family is encouraged and even a necessary element of Christian life
- c. Both the giving of gifts and its acceptance is a necessary component in forging Christian unity
- d. Giving should not be done under duress or coercion
- e. Giving need not impoverish the giver
- f. The giver should not attempt to control the outcome of the gift

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<sup>10</sup> *NICNT*, entry for 16:10-11.