

## First Epistle to the Corinthians

### 33 – Essay Six: Concluding Notes (6.b) – Leadership and Admonitions

1 Corinthians 16:15-24

#### 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. Leadership
  - i. Step-parallelism
  - ii. Stephanas is example of Christian leadership
  - iii. Exhortation to follow such leaders
- b. Greetings
  - i. From fellow saints
    1. Plus an admonition to the Corinthians
  - ii. From Paul
    1. Five short, direct statements, each a different topic
    2. Interrupted by one last *anathema*
    3. The only inclusion of Aramaic (Maranatha) in this epistle
    4. Just as Paul opened this epistle with grace, that is his closing

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

Table 1: Bailey, locations 5791, 5808, 5816

|   | 1 Corinthians 16:15-24 (ESV)   | Motifs                              |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 15 Now I urge you, brothers [and sisters]—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts [first fruits] in Achaia,   | Stephanas and household             |
| 2 | and that they have devoted themselves [ <i>tasso</i> ] to the service of the saints—   | Devotion and service                |
| 3 | 16 be subject [ <i>hypo-tasso</i> ] to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.  | Submission to such                  |
| 4 | 17 I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus,   | Stephanas, and others               |
| 5 | because they have made up for your absence, 18 for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours.  | Their service for me and you        |
| 6 | Give recognition to such people.   | Recognition of such                 |
| 7 | 19 The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca <sup>2</sup> , together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. 20 All the brothers [and sisters] send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. | Greetings from Brothers and sisters |
| 8 | 21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.<br>22 If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! [Maranatha!]<br>23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.<br>24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.      | Greetings from Paul                 |

### 3. Leadership (vv.15-18)

- a. What qualifies someone for Christian leadership?
  - i. “Devoted themselves” → can mean “addicted”<sup>3</sup>
  - ii. Proven loving, devoted service to fellow saints
  - iii. Nothing here indicative of someone aspiring to leadership
  - iv. Nothing about power, prestige, status, wealth, or knowledge
- b. Who qualifies as a Christian leader?
  - i. The entire “household of Stephanas” qualifies
    1. Stephanas, wife, servants, slaves, children
  - ii. And anyone who shows loving, devoted service in like manner
  - iii. No restrictions on gender, social status, nationality, age, etc.

This sentence functions as the object of the verb "I urge," with which v. 15 began. Paul's concern is that the Corinthians give proper recognition to Stephanas and his household. Thus, "I urge... that you also submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it." The verb "submit" is used only here in the NT to refer to the relationship of a Christian

<sup>2</sup> Some English translations use “Priscilla.” *Prisca*, the formal name, is the correct translation here. *Priscilla* is a diminutive which Paul employs in some of his other epistles.

<sup>3</sup> *Enhanced Strong's Dictionary*, g5021.

community to those who labor among them. Although this could possibly mean to be in submission to them in some form of obedience, both the context and the similar passage in 1 Thess. 5:12–13 suggest rather that it means "submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love" (BAGD), much the same as in Eph. 5:21, where all are urged to be "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."

In the first instance this refers to "the household of Stephanas," which is what the words "to such as these" must mean. That is, Paul is not simply generalizing with this language; that is what the next phrase will do. Here he is referring particularly to Stephanas and other members of his household, which very well might include his wife and slaves and/or freedmen. In any case, for Paul the key to such respect or "submission" is not sex or socioeconomic status but ministry, as becomes clear in the addition "and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it." The collocation of these two words almost certainly refers to the ministry of the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

- c. Christian leadership is not about authority over another, but about mutual submission to one another
  - i. There is no election or appointment of leaders
  - ii. Leaders are those who, by their dedication and service, earn recognition from their local community
  - iii. The very nature of this kind of leadership should preclude anyone with ambitions for power and authority
  - iv. These leaders do not "lead" in human, worldly manner, but they lead by example

No one elected or appointed the household of Stephanas to do anything. They chose to *devote* themselves (*tasso*) to the service of the saints. Paul says, "Look for those who voluntarily give themselves in self-emptying service to others and follow them." The battle cry is, "Line up behind the servants." For Paul, the word *be subject* (*hupo-tasso*) is not about authority and power. It has to do with supporting those who voluntarily offer humble service to others...

With Paul, as with Jesus before him, the system of patronage is reversed, and the one who voluntarily chooses to become a servant is the new leader.<sup>5</sup>

- d. The first part is repeated, in precise matching order, giving a contemporary and concrete example of Stephanas (and his household's<sup>6</sup>) devotion to the saints
4. Greetings from the Brothers and Sisters (vv.19-20)
- a. All the churches of Asia (Minor) were of one fellowship – possibly Paul subtly inferring that if geographically diverse churches could be one, couldn't the church in Corinth be one, too?
  - b. Aquila and Prisca
    - i. Tentmakers, like Paul; met him in Corinth
    - ii. Went with Paul to Ephesus where they instructed Apollos
    - iii. Currently in Ephesus with Paul

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<sup>4</sup> *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle*, entry for 16:16.

<sup>5</sup> Bailey, location 5799.

<sup>6</sup> *NICNT*, entries for 16:17 and 16:18. It is possible that Fortunatus and Achaicus were part of Stephanas' household. There is no way to make this determination conclusively.

- iv. Hosts a house church
- v. Quite wealthy
- vi. Prisca is Roman nobility<sup>7</sup>
- c. All the brothers and sisters – that includes just about everyone!
- d. Greet one another with a holy kiss
  - i. Paul’s desire to see genuine reconciliation take place in Corinth

Paul does not want a formal ceasefire between the warring parties, but rather a dissolving of all hostilities and a kindling of genuine affection.<sup>8</sup>

5. Greetings from Paul (vv.21-24)

- a. A scribe has been writing the letter up to this point. Now Paul writes in his own handwriting.
  - i. Common in letters from antiquity
  - ii. Paul’s eyesight may have been poor, or his handwriting may not have been very good
  - iii. Paul wants to make sure that the letter is very legible to its recipients (no computer printing!)
  - iv. We’ve seen how carefully Paul has constructed every part of this letter. He has probably gone through multiple drafts. On this final copy he as a scribe come in to write out his letter.<sup>9</sup>
- b. An *anathema* (curse)
  - i. For a Christian, there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ
  - ii. There are parameters for anyone who calls themselves a Christian

The Christian community as a community of love is not infinitely inclusive: those who reject Jesus are not and cannot be a part of it.<sup>10</sup>

- iii. Paul does not provide specifics on how to resolve every conflict that might arise between opposing views of Christians and non-Christians. Some examples from this epistle:

(1) The first is in 4:9-13 where Paul records a list of hardships and wrongs that he suffered. Then in 13:5 he writes love “keeps no account of wrongs.” (2) The second occurs in 10:19-22 when Paul states bluntly that idols do not exist and that those who worship them are *worshiping demons*. He sternly warns all Christians against such practice. A mere ten verses later he states, “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God...” (3) ... In 16:14 he writes, “Let all that you do be done in love.” Six verses later he adds, “If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed” (16:22).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hoppin, Ruth. *Priscilla’s Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Lost Coast Press, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, location 5814.

<sup>9</sup> Bailey, locations 5820-5835.

<sup>10</sup> Bailey, location 5846, quoting Richard Hays.

<sup>11</sup> Bailey, location 5849.

c. Maranatha!

- i. *Maran atha* (our Lord has come), or *marana tha* (Our Lord—come!)?
- ii. Literary consideration point to *maran atha* as the best option<sup>12</sup>

... The centuries-old Middle Eastern Christian understanding of this text must surely be given serious consideration. Our Lord is here!<sup>13</sup>

d. The epistle begins and ends with grace

Thus <sup>14</sup>the letter begins with the salutation "Grace to you" and concludes the same way. Grace is the beginning and the end of the Christian gospel; it is the single word that most fully expresses what God has done and will do for his people in Christ Jesus.

e. Paul loves the Corinthians

- i. In spite of all the problems found there
- ii. No power can break the bond of love

After all the struggles he had come through with them—Paul's love still remained. It was permanent; they could not break that bond, and he wanted them to remember its strength. They were quarreling among themselves and had taken offense at the cross. Immorality had broken out and some were offending others over idol meat. Celebrations of Holy Communion had become a disgrace, and there were disagreements over women leadership and spiritual gifts. Some had denied the resurrection, ignoring the creed. Yet in Christ Jesus—*he loved them all!*<sup>15</sup>

iii. The Christian life in this world is a life of loving relationships in community

What makes all of this possible are the final words of the letter, "in Christ Jesus." Just as he began in 1:1–3, so he concludes, by reminding them that their common life together, and thus his love for them, takes place as they are together "in Christ Jesus."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bailey, locations 5869-5905.

<sup>13</sup> Bailey, location 5905.

<sup>14</sup> *NICNT*, entry for 16:23b-24.

<sup>15</sup> Bailey, location 5909.

<sup>16</sup> *NICNT*, entry for 16:23b-24.