

# Chapter Sixteen Notes

## Verses one to four

- Having concluded the section on the resurrection, Paul now rapidly brings the letter to a close. Before finishing the letter, he reminds the Corinthians of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem and gives various salutations and other closing comments.
- As Paul concluded chapter 15, he reminded the Corinthians that whatever service they rendered to God was not in vain. Perhaps his words were intended to prepare them for the instructions about giving to relieve the suffering of the poor. He spoke about the same matter in 2 Corinthians 8-9, Romans 15:25-27, and Acts 24:17. From these passages, we learn that the money was gathered for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.
- Paul uses a standard phrase as a way of introducing a new subject. Perhaps the Corinthians had written to Paul asking him a question about how this was to be handled, even as they wrote him about other matters. At any rate, this passage presupposes that the Corinthians were acquainted with the need and purpose of the collection.
- The word "collection" was used chiefly of religious collections for a god, a temple, etc., just as Paul uses it of his collection of money for the saints at Jerusalem. The usage of this word has a direct bearing on whether Paul is giving a charge for a formal collection at the public services or is instructing his brethren to put aside a little money each week in a jar at home. This word normally refers to a collection in the formal sense; therefore, Paul was not instructing brethren to lay aside some money at home; rather, he was instructing the congregation concerning a formal collection on the first day of the week.
- The collection was for the saints. There is no New Testament evidence of the first day of the week collection being used to relieve the poverty of those who were not Christians. Instead, the church felt responsible to care for its own needy rather than for all of the needy in the world. The mission of the church has always been evangelistic in nature. Its benevolent charge was for those who had already become Christians. Benevolence was not used as an evangelistic tool to win people to Christ. Instead, benevolence was used to relieve the suffering of those who had already been won to Christ. This passage only furnishes us with the example of how churches raised their funds. This passage does not restrict the use of these funds only to the relief of saints (2 Corinthians 11:8;

Philippians 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 5:9).

- Paul had given a command to the churches of Galatia and now to the church at Corinth. Paul had the authority to command the churches of Galatia as well as the Corinthian church. This also shows that the churches had great uniformity in their organization, worship, and work. What one church practiced, all were expected to practice because all were equally under the authority of the Lord. Therefore, we should be able to detect a blueprint or model in the churches of the New Testament for the churches of today to follow. If Corinth was expected to do exactly what the Galatian churches were doing, we are expected to do what Paul commanded of Corinth.
- Paul commands the Corinthians to do this on the first day of the week. The phrase includes the Greek word "kata" which is used distributively (i.e., the use in Acts 14:23 which indicates "every church"). Therefore, Paul's instruction is one that must be followed on the first day of every week. The commanded that the collection be taken on the first day of the week cannot be harmonized with the interpretation that this refers to every member setting aside some money at his own home. If this was to be done in the privacy of one's own home, why designate a special day for doing it?
- Paul also emphasized the personal, individual responsibility of every member to give of his means to the Lord. The word "lay" or "put aside" is a technical term of commercial life meaning "put aside, store up, deposit." Paul is telling them to have a regular public collection on every first day of the week. In this specific instance, they were to save some funds for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The collection is to be set aside for helping the poor saints, although there may have been other legitimate uses for the money. Rather than spending it, they were to store it up for the specific purpose of helping the saints in Jerusalem.
- The basis for the amount they were to give was based upon how much God had prospered them. The verb "prospered" means "to give a prosperous journey." The Christian should not determine how much to give to the Lord on the basis of the law of tithing; rather, the gift should be in proportion to how much he has been prospered with no percentage having been legislated. Therefore, one who makes a large sum is expected to give more than he who makes a little.
- The purpose of the regular first day of the week offering was that Paul would not have to attend to the business of raising money when he came to Corinth. The reason is not that he would lack the time to attend to such affairs since he planned to stay in Corinth for

a while when he came, but that he would have too many other matters to deal with to be concerned about the collection.

- In vs. 3, Paul was stating that he was not sure whether or not he would personally go to Jerusalem. If not, he planned to send letter to certain influential people in Jerusalem who might introduce to the church the ones who would be taking the contribution to the needy saints there. Paul helped to raise the money but would prefer that someone from Corinth be chosen to take the gift to Jerusalem. In that way, there would be no charges made against him for misappropriating the money. Paul called the collection made by the Corinthians a "gift." This word meant "a practical application of goodwill, a sign of favor, gracious deed, gift, or benefaction." Paul looks upon the gift to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem as an act of undeserved favor.
- Paul states in vs. 4 that if circumstances are such that the work demands his journey to Jerusalem, they would go with him. From the book of Acts we know that he took chosen delegates with him to Jerusalem.

### **Verses five to nine**

- Vs. 5 announces a change in Paul's plans and was the basis for the charge of fickleness that the Corinthians leveled against Paul in 2 Corinthians 1. Paul had previously planned to go to Corinth, go to Macedonia, and then return to Corinth from which port he would sail for Jerusalem. These plans meant that he would have seen them "in passing." However, he changed his plans because he did not want to come to them during a time when they were facing so many problems and to deal harshly with them (2 Corinthians 1:23-24). He went to Macedonia first and spent a short time with the brethren there before proceeding to Corinth.
- Paul had hoped to be able to stay with the Corinthians long enough to spend the winter with them. He planned to leave Ephesus sometime after Pentecost. He would spend the summer visiting the various churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) in order to gather their collection. He would arrive in Corinth sometime during the late summer or fall with the intention of staying there all winter. Ships usually quit sailing in late fall because of the weather. Knowing that he could not travel during that period, he wanted to spend his time with Corinth. Paul also mentioned that the brethren there could help him on his next journey with food, money, companions, means of travel, etc.
- Paul was going to bypass them on the way to Macedonia and come back through and spend an extended period of time with them. All

of Paul's plans were contingent upon the Lord's will (James 4:13-15).

- The sentence in vs. 8 implies that Paul was at Ephesus when he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians. It also implies that he was writing shortly before Pentecost, probably in the period between the Passover and Pentecost. By the time Pentecost came, navigation, which ceased in the fall, began again.
- The gospel was having such great success at Ephesus that he could not leave. There was a great opportunity but there were also many adversaries (2 Corinthians 1:8). When God opens a great door for preaching the gospel, Satan will provide great adversaries. The true servant of the Lord will stand and fight rather than flee for his life.

### **Verses ten to twelve**

- While in Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (4:17). According to the book of Acts, Timothy and Erastus, who is described as the city treasurer of Corinth (Romans 16:23), were sent through Macedonia on this trip (Acts 19:22). Hence, Timothy had already departed toward Corinth prior to the writing of 1 Corinthians. Apparently, he had a limited amount of time and possibly might not make it to Corinth. In the meantime, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived in Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter and sent them back with it. Since Timothy was going through Macedonia, and they would be returning directly to Corinth by sea, the letter would arrive ahead of Timothy. In 2 Corinthians, no mention is made of Timothy's trip to Corinth though Paul does mention Titus' trip. Timothy was in Macedonia with Paul when 2 Corinthians was written (1:1), but he may not have made it to Corinth yet.
- Paul exhorted the Corinthians to treat Timothy in such a way that he would not be in fear while among them. Timothy would have to contend with some very bad situations and anyone who opposed Timothy and made his work more difficult would be opposing God. The basis of respect is not for the person, but for the work in which they are involved.
- Therefore, no one should despise him. This word means "to make light of, condemn, treat with contempt and scorn." If the Corinthians treated Timothy properly in deference to his work, they could send him on his way in peace. Paul was expecting Timothy to return to him with some of the brethren with a report of the conditions in Corinth .
- In vs. 12, Paul mentions that he urged Apollos to go to Corinth. Paul had no fear that Apollos was a ring leader in their party strife;

he had no animosity toward him. The two worked closely together. Therefore, Paul urged Apollos and a group of brethren with him to go to Corinth and help get things straightened out there. However, Apollos decided not to go at that time but when he had the opportunity to go, he would.

### **Verses thirteen to fourteen**

- Verses 13-14 contain a summary list of five exhortation urging the Corinthians to maintain their allegiance to Christ. The first four have military connotations. "Watch" means to "give strict attention, to be cautious -- to take heed lest through remissness and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one." Christians should always be watchful. Rather than fleeing from battle, a good soldier stands firm, holding his ground. A good soldier of Christ stands firm in the faith. He does not vacillate between belief and unbelief, morality and immorality, etc. He has taken his stand for Christ and will not move. Christians should also "act like men" or conduct oneself in a courageous way. The Christian should lay aside childish bickering and petty strife and demonstrate manly courage. Paul then encourages them to be "strong." The strong man is the one who conquers and wins the victory. Christians are to be victorious over the devil. We become strong by putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).
- The overruling principle in all of one's conduct is to be love (spiritual gifts, sacrifice of personal liberties, lawsuits, etc.). All of a Christian's affairs must be governed by love for God and for one's fellowman.

### **Verses fifteen to eighteen**

- Stephanus is only mentioned here and in 1:16 where he is mentioned as having been personally baptized by Paul. Inasmuch as Paul worked in Athens before going to Corinth, Stephanus must have been converted there. The household of Stephanus had devoted itself to the ministry of the saints (Matthew 23:1). Perhaps they opened their house for a place to conduct worship. Stephanus, along with Fortunatus and Achaicus, brought the Corinthian's correspondence to Paul, thus inconveniencing himself to benefit the church at Corinth.
- In vs. 16, Paul demands that Christians always submit to men who devote themselves to the service of other saints. Paul does not refer to submission given because of some office held by Stephanus; rather, he appealed to the voluntary yielding of love as in Ephesians 5:21, which we owe to each other, but especially to

those who have devoted themselves to the service of other saints. The subjection that Corinth owes to Stephanus is due to every other person who similarly devotes himself to the service of the saints. The word "work" means "working together" and "labors" describes extremely hard work that produces great weariness. Many help, but few really labor.

- Apparently, the men mentioned in vs. 17 bore the letter from the church at Corinth to Paul and returned (perhaps with Titus) to Corinth bearing his letter to them. The word "coming" referred to an official visit of a ruler or a high official. Perhaps its significance here is that these three men were an official delegation from the church at Corinth. Paul rejoiced at the coming of the brethren from Corinth. The thing which was lacking was the presence of the Corinthians and not money or supplies. Paul was far removed from those whom he dearly loved. The arrival in Ephesus of these three representatives from Corinth supplies or filled the void that he felt because of his absence from them. Someone in direct fellowship with Paul filled a lack for his community.
- The presence of these men refreshed Paul's spirit. The mere fact that the church still thought highly enough of Paul to write to him for his advice and to send three messengers to him proved that they still loved and respected him. Paul then tells the Corinthian church to acknowledge what these men had done. In the interest of the brethren at Corinth, these three men had taken a long journey, probably at their own expense, and had faced certain hazards. Upon their return, the church should formerly acknowledge the service that these men had been to the Lord's church at Corinth.

### **Verses nineteen to twenty-four**

- As Paul concludes the letter, he sends a salutation in the name of the Asian brethren to the Corinthians. Through our relationship with Christ, love and concern should flow toward one another. Paul first met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. They had been forced to leave Rome when Claudius issued a decree demanding that all Jews leave Rome. Paul worked with them as a tent maker and possibly converted them. When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla went with him (Acts 18:18). They were still with him when this letter was written. Later, they made their way back to Rome (Romans 16:3-4). They even risked their lives for Paul on one occasion.
- Paul then gives a special salutation from the brethren at Ephesus. They were no doubt aware that brethren from Corinth had come to see Paul and that he was writing to them. Hence, they specifically

asked that greetings be sent to the church at Corinth. One of the methods of greeting someone was through the kiss. This practice shows the intimacy of early Christians toward each other and reflects the Eastern manner of salutation. Paul is merely commanding a warm salutation, whether by a warm handshake, bowing to each other, or through a kiss. We should greet one another warmly, regardless of what our natural customs may be.

- Paul had dictated all of the letter up to this point to an amanuensis. At this point, Paul took the pen in his own hand and wrote these final words. The signature of his own name was an authenticating mark of the letter; it guaranteed that it was indeed written by Paul (2 Thessalonians 3:17). There were some letters in circulation which were not from Paul although they claimed to be (2 Thessalonians 2:2).
- The word for "love" in vs. 22 is "phileo." The sentence is saying that the person who shows no affection for Jesus is anathema. The person who is not stirred to have affection for Christ by the story of His life, crucifixion, and resurrection as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, is beyond reach and anathema. "Anathema" is a word which means to deliver one up to the judicial wrath of God. Plainly, the man who has no love for Jesus will end up in hell. "Maranatha" is an Aramaic term which means "Our Lord, come!" The statement looks anxiously toward the second coming of Jesus at which time He will deal out retribution to those who do not love the Lord.
- Paul now closes with good wishes for the Corinthians. The "grace" is the unmerited favor of Jesus that comes to us every day in the forgiveness of sins, His loving care for us, and other gifts too numerous to mention. Paul reassured the Corinthians that everything which he had written had come from a heart of love. He loved them as long as they are in Christ.