

## 1 Corinthians 16

Well, this is it -would you turn to 1 Corinthians 16 please. For the last 4 months we've studied this incredible epistle by Paul to Christians in Corinth.

Tonight we'll see Paul close out the letter to the church @ Corinth. And although Paul has finished rebuking the Corinthians, he's not yet done instructing them. Chapter 16 addresses three areas of stewardship that we all deal with today: money, opportunities, and people. As Weirsbe said, "these are probably the greatest resources the church has today, and they must not be wasted."

The title of tonight's message is Closing Corinthians

Let's pray

**1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:** Paul had been taking an offering from the Gentile churches to give to the first church in Jerusalem. History tells us the Christians in Jerusalem had fallen on hard times, and the region was suffering a famine that had left many folks hungry.

Paul had encouraged the Gentile Christians to show their brothers in Jerusalem not only love, but gratitude. The Gentiles' spiritual heritage had begun in Jerusalem, and their gifts would go a long way.

One of the biggest challenges I faced as a pastor is that of benevolence distribution, or giving money to those in need. Benevolence distribution can be a powder keg of conflict and division, just look at the events of Acts 6!

It's incredibly difficult, you get a call from a stranger, who tells you their story...

But thankfully, the Bible gives us solid guidelines in regard to helping those in need.

If someone can work to support themselves, they must provide for their own needs **2 Thessalonians 3: 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.**

And

**1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

Since we're talking about giving and benevolence, I want us to take a short detour by looking in 1 Timothy, where we see 8 guiding principles for benevolence. **SHOW PICS**

- 1) Never contribute to someone's irresponsibility. We always want to help but 1st we must investigate. 1 Timothy 5:3 Honor widows who are really widows.
- 2) Church should take care of its own **1 Timothy 5:5 Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.** Pastor Chuck had a policy of only helping those who attended services
- 3) Don't interfere with the character transformation God is doing: **1 Timothy 5:10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.**

4) Give God an opportunity to work through other means: 1 Timothy 5:11 But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry,

5) Make sure your help is not a further temptation. 1 Timothy 5:13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

6) Look for long term solutions to situations, not just the immediate fix for the problem at hand. 1 Timothy 5:14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

7) Encourage families to take care of themselves, gives them an opportunity to get involved. 1 Timothy 5:16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

8) The support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living 1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. **CLOSE PIC**

2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

Notice that the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week is when the Christians met, then and now, on Sundays - the day Jesus rose from the dead.

Paul wanted the Church in Corinth to take care of their part in the collection before his visit. Paul didn't want to give the impression he was trying to manipulate anyone! He wanted giving from the

heart, as each heart heard from God, and not in response to a high-pressure fund-raising program.

3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. Paul wanted a representative from the Christians in Corinth to help deliver the gift to Jerusalem. Of course the Corinthian Christians could choose their own representative. Paul did this to be above reproach so there would be no room for accusations in the financial matters.

Talk about our accountability at CCC...

All this talk of benevolence, and giving, brings up the question? Are Christians mandated to tithe?

Well we know Christians are not under the Mosaic Law **Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

As you study the NT, neither Jesus, nor the apostles commanded tithing.

Some Christians believe that because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:20 and Jacob tithed in Genesis 28, that tithing pre-dates the Mosaic Law and is therefore binding on Christians.

I would argue that in both of those cases, the tithes were an act of worship!

I believe the scriptures suggest that God wants Christians to follow a different method than a simple mandate. The principles that should govern Christians in our giving appear throughout the New Testament but mainly in **2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.**

It's important to give because it helps remind us this world is not our home. But if someone is giving and grimacing the whole time, they should keep their money and go before the Lord.

Paul now transitions to talking about what his upcoming personal plans are.

**5 Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia).** Macedonia was the Roman province north of Corinth, where Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea stood. Paul later changed this plan and instead traveled directly from Ephesus to Corinth, and then returned to Ephesus

**6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.** Paul sensed the need to spend a good long visit in Corinth, and in view of the problems in the church that he mentioned in this letter we can understand why.

Paul clearly has a plan in his mind, but ultimately he leaves all his plans up to the will of the Lord.

It was G Campbell Morgan who said “I know the fascination of having a program, and having everything in order, and knowing where we are going; but let us leave room, at any rate, for the interference of God.”

Haven't you found that God often moves by interrupting our schedule, when it's the least convenient for us?

**8 But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.** Why didn't Paul go to Corinth immediately? Because he sees that God had given opportunity now in Ephesus. Paul wisely relied not only on his own desires, but also on God's open doors.

9 For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. Paul also knew that opposition often accompanies opportunities. Acts 19 speaks of both the opportunities and opposition Paul had in Ephesus at this time.

10 And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11 Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren. We already saw in our previous studies how Paul had trouble with the Corinthian Christians not respecting his authority as an apostle and as a minister of the gospel. So if Paul faced this lack of respect, imagine how the Corinthians might treat a young man like Timothy? So, Paul pleads with the Corinthian Christians to respect Timothy when he comes.

This echoes Paul's later words to Timothy in **1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit,[fn] in faith, in purity.**

Apparently, Timothy suffered from both a lack of confidence and a lack of respect. It was important for God's people to not take advantage of this in Timothy, and it was important for Timothy to never give others reason to despise him.

I became the pastor here when I was 40 years old. And I never once felt like I was looked down upon for my age and lack of experience. I've never felt dismissed, or judged because of my youth. It's a testament to you and your spiritual maturity-thank you!

12 Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time. Even though Apollos had a fan club in Corinth, Paul was

eager for him to come. Paul didn't view Apollos as a rival or a competitor—which is further evidence of Paul's maturity.

The rest of the chapter is Paul's final exhortations, and we're gonna spend some time breaking down verse 13.

**13 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.** What are we to watch for? I think we can summarize it by saying watch for the lions.

We're to watch out for the traps set for us by the roaring lion **1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.** We have to be aware we have a very real adversary, and resist his temptations.

But there's another lion we're to keep watch for, the much greater lion- the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is coming back for us.

**Revelation 5:5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."**

So we're to watch- we watch what's going on around us, and we also watch for Jesus' return for us.

V 13 continues... **Stand fast-SHOW PIC** when you stand and stare at a massive oak tree, it's shocking when we realize it wasn't massive initially. An oak tree is nothing more than just a little nut that refused to give ground. **CLOSE PIC** Hey that describes many of us too, -just little nuts who refuse to give ground.

How do we refuse to give ground? By staying consistent in our time of worship; by being committed to the study of the Scripture; by being faithful in prayer. We can refuse to give ground by loving others.

People who are successful in any endeavor have one thing in common: They're part of the small population who finish what they begin. Most people have great ideas and start well. But they don't finish. They give up. They give ground.

Whatever God has called you or I to do, we need to stay with it until He leads in a different direction. Has He called you to have a time of morning devotion? Then do so. Has He spoken to you about spending time discipling your kids? Then do it. Remember **Matthew 11:30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

The only question is, will we give ground—or will we stand fast? Verse 13 continues...

**Be brave**-This is the only place in the New Testament where the word translated **be brave** is used (andrizomai). Literally, it means, "to act like a man."

Finally v 13 ends with:

**Be strong**- Christians are told to be strong in several verses **Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

The Lord told **Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."**

The people echoed **Joshua 1:18 Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."**

Now I read verse 13, I get pumped up! I'm ready to go tackle whatever the Lord has for me...

**14 Let all that you do be done with love.** All the watching, all the standing fast, all the bravery, and all the strength the Corinthian



Christians were to show meant nothing without love. They were called to do all those things in a meek, humble spirit of love.

And by the way, this word for love is that Greek agape.

How can we watch out and stand fast, be brave and be strong—and at the same time be loving? We can't.

This can only happen as the HS empowers us day by day. Whenever we try to do these things apart from His power, we'll mess it up and it won't be done with love.

15-16

15 I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints— 16 that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. If you remember earlier in Paul's letter he had rebuked the Corinthians for rallying around celebrity pastors. Folks were saying, "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Cephas." Paul encourages the believers to appreciate some less flashy servants of the Lord

The Corinthians also had a special problem with submission to authority, as we have seen. Many in the church wanted to do their own thing. Here Paul instructs the church to submit to their local leadership.

17 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. This was the trio who came to Paul with Corinthian support. It's likely they had also reported to Paul the problems in Corinth. Paul knows these guys could be branded tattle-tails, so he urges everyone to show them respect.

19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Remember, the early church met in houses, because they had few meeting places of their own until the third century.

When Paul first went to Corinth, he lodged with fellow tentmakers, Aquila and his wife, Priscilla. Not only were Aquila and Priscilla believers, but they became so strong in the faith that when Paul went to Ephesus, he brought them with him. After ministering in Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla joined Paul in Rome, where a church met in their house.

Later on Aquila and Priscilla returned to Ephesus to help Timothy, who would eventually become the pastor at Ephesus. This dynamic duo had once lived in Corinth. Through Paul they now send their greetings to their friends

Everywhere you find them in Scripture there's a church meeting in their house. They opened both their hearts and home to the Lord.

Aquila and Priscilla were a couple who were on the move, flexible, determined to serve the Lord in any way possible—wonderful models for you and me.

20 All the brethren greet you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

21 The salutation with my own hand—Paul's. Here, Paul takes the pen out of the hand of the secretary to whom, perhaps due to an eye disease, he had been dictating his words.

Paul had a secretary write the letters as he dictated them. Often he added a personal note at the end in his own handwriting - which seemed to be poor, according to **Galatians 6:11 See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!**

22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.[fn] O Lord, come![fn] The word accursed is “Anathema” - it means If you’re not allied to God’s Son you’re not part of God’s family...it simply means excommunicated.

Is Paul being harsh here? I don’t think so. Paul took pen in hand to plead with the Corinthians, saying, “If you don’t love the One who died for you, the One who cares about you, the One who gave everything that He might be with you in this life and in the ages to come; if you don’t love this One who is all-wise and all-knowing yet all-loving and all-forgiving, then you curse yourself.

Paul adds an Aramaic phrase, “Maranatha.” In English it’s “O Lord, come!” His constant longing was to be caught up with Jesus!

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. There could have been those in Corinth who read this letter and said “Paul, if you care so much about us, Paul, why did you point out our carnality and rebuke us for our immorality? Why were you so rough on us?”

**Proverbs 27:5 Open rebuke is better**

**Than love carefully concealed.**

It’s much more comfortable for us to ignore a prickly situation or issue. But that’s not love. Love says, “I care more about your well-being than about what you think of me.”

**Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend,**

**But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.**

But of course we must make sure our correction is done in love....

Paul had told the Corinthians the truth. And yet he had a deep love for them and encouraged them—even through their doctrinal differences—to love one another. The world is in desperate need of love and truth.