

Lesson 24: 1 Corinthians 16

I. Verses 1-4

- A.** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.
- B.** Barclay: "There is nothing more typical of Paul than the abrupt change between chapter 15 and chapter 16. Chapter 15 has been walking in the loftiest realms of thought and theology, and discussing the life of the world to come. Chapter 16 deals with the most practical things in the most practical way and is concerned with the everyday life of this world and the administration of the Church. There is no reach of thought too high for Paul to scale and no practical detail of administration too small for him to remember. He was very far from being one of those visionaries, who are at home in the realms of theological speculation and quite lost in practical matters. There might be times when his head was in the clouds but his feet were always planted firmly on the solid earth."
- C.** For the sixth time in the letter Paul introduces a new section with the phrase *peride* or *now concerning*.
1. If the pattern holds true, this phrase suggests Paul is once again responding to an issue raised by the Corinthians in their letter to him. But what was their question?
 2. Most likely, Paul had previously asked them to participate in this collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and they had simply asked him the best way in which they could do that.
 - a) Paul says very little here about the reason for the collection, which suggests it is something he had already discussed with them. He explained the reason for the collection elsewhere:
 - (1) Romans 15:25-27 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.
 - b) Paul will also return to this subject in his second letter to the Corinthians. We know from that discussion and the discussion in Romans that Paul hoped the gift would cement the bond between the Gentile and the Jewish Christians and that it would show how Christian unity went beyond ethnic

barriers and did not require Gentile Christians to become Jewish proselytes.

3. After the church was established in Jerusalem (according to the prophecy in Isaiah 2), the church in Jerusalem had experienced hard times. A great persecution following the death of Stephen had driven most of the church members away from that city. Those who remained in the city and those who returned faced very difficult economic times. Less than a decade later they endured a protracted period of severe famine. In short, the church in Jerusalem needed help, and Paul wanted the congregations he visited to collect money to send to them.
 4. The churches in Galatia mentioned in verse 1 are those that Paul and Barnabas started during the first missionary journey: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13-14). Luke mentions that Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra accompanied Paul to Jerusalem with their monetary gift.
- D. To the Jews, generosity to the poor was mandated by God. But to the Greeks and Romans, charity toward strangers was not regarded as a virtuous act or something to be divinely rewarded.
1. Giving to others displayed social power. "The most basic premise from which the Romans started was that honor and prestige derived from the power to give to others what they needed or wanted." "In the Greco-Roman world the only non-material return that givers could expect would be the honor the receiver would pay to the giver."
 2. In short, charitable works were done to bring praise to oneself. In that cultural context, people gave to others who were capable of giving them something in return, either through repayment in kind or through the bestowal of honor by lauding them publicly.
 3. There are many parallels between our society and that of ancient Rome, but I think this is one we often overlook. Hollywood and the entertainment industry are seen by some as very charitable, and they do raise money for various causes, but it very often appears that the fund raising events are primarily intended to provide publicity to the stars who participate.
 4. By contrast, Paul expects the Corinthians to do good works for people they have never met so as to bring praise to God and not to themselves.
- E. Paul had earlier directed the Galatians on how to carry out the collection, and here he instructs the Corinthians to follow the same practice.
1. Paul provides five instructions on how they are to give:

a) They must give regularly -- on the first day of every week.

- (1) The first day of the week is Sunday, although Paul avoids using that heathen term.
- (2) They were to give on the Lord's Day when they gathered to worship and partake of the Lord's Supper. Those who desire to follow the divine pattern for proper worship laid out in the New Testament will do the same thing today.
- (3) Acts 20:7 uses the same language to describe the communion, which we also partake of on the first day of the week. It is interesting that even those denominations that reject that part of the pattern by partaking of the communion only once a quarter seem to have no problem following the pattern here in verse 2 -- they all take up the collection on each first day of the week.
- (4) There is also a practical reason to give regularly -- it makes it easier to give a larger amount. The best way to save money is to regularly put away a certain amount, and the same is true for our bank account in heaven.

b) They must give universally -- let each one of you.

- (1) Everyone was to give. If a few wealthy patrons had given all the money, then they would have gained all the honor and the congregation would have been divided even further into the haves and the have nots. Paul wanted all to give, even the slaves and servants.

c) They must give purposefully -- set aside; save up.

- (1) Most commentators think that the wording used here suggests that the Corinthians were to set this money aside, but keep it at home until Paul arrived, when it could all be collected and converted into gold coins or the like that could easily and inconspicuously be carried to Jerusalem.
- (2) Our giving must not be haphazard. We should think about it long before we see the plate being passed down the aisle. We should set aside money for God. We should save up money for God.
- (3) 2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

d) They must give proportionally -- as one has been prospered.

- (1) Each person must give as they have been prospered by God. The Greek verb used here means we are to give as we have been "led along a good road" by God. The rich will give more; the poor will give less.
- (2) Proverbs 3:9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of

all thine increase.

- e) They must give freely -- so that no collections might take place when I come.
 - (1) By taking the collection up in advance, they are completely free in what they give, and Paul will not know who contributed what.
 - (2) Also, Paul did not want to rely on a last minute scrambling for funds, and he did not want have to go around begging. He had just told them to do things decently and in order, and this was an opportunity for them to do just that.
 - (3) Paul may have also been aware of an event that made a collection of money for Jerusalem a touchy issue. Josephus reports that a Palestinian Jew and three cohorts induced one of their notable Roman converts, Fulvia, to send valuables for the temple in Jerusalem. Rather than take the goods to Jerusalem, they ran off with them. When their scam was discovered, it created such an uproar that Tiberius ordered all Jews to be banished from Rome. Thus, Paul, no doubt, wanted to avoid having to go around openly seeking funds for Jerusalem.
- F. Verse 3 is the third reference to Paul's anticipation of coming again to Corinth. (See 4:19 and 11:34.)
- G. In verse 3 Paul also tells the congregation that they can choose those who will carry the gift to Jerusalem. This is an indication of their autonomy, but also that they would be in the best position to know who could be trusted on such a mission. It would also keep anyone from accusing Paul of using the funds for himself.
- H. The letters in verse 3 are most likely letters that Paul would write as letters of commendation for those bringing the gift. The other options seem much less likely -- that the Corinthians themselves would send letters to Paul or to Jerusalem commending their choices. Paul would visit Corinth in person, and the Corinthians, as far as we know, did not know anyone in Jerusalem.
- I. By sending messengers from Gentile congregations to Jerusalem, Paul was being deliberately provocative in order to make an important point about unity in the church.
 - 1. It was similar to his decision to bring Titus with him to the Jerusalem conference in Galatians 2:1-5 to confront head-on the Jew/Gentile issue.
 - 2. Paul knew then what we would be wise to remember today -- you rarely get anywhere by beating around the bush. If we have a point to make, the best way to make it is to come right out and say it. And the best way to get people to confront and think about an issue it to raise the issue.

3. Paul wanted the gift to Jerusalem to serve a dual purpose -- relieve their suffering and drive home the point that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile.
- J. The evidence from Romans 15:30-32, Acts 20:22-24, and Acts 21:10-13 suggests that it was very dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem, but something developed that compelled him to go.

II. Verses 5-9

- A. 5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. 6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. 7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.
- B. Paul promises to come to the Corinthians after he passes through Macedonia, the Roman province that includes Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.
 1. Passing through did not mean he wouldn't stop. It simply means he would not linger for an extended visit, as he planned to do in Corinth. Most likely he would remain in Corinth during the winter when sea travel was impossible.
 2. After Paul wrote this epistle, he decided to cross the Aegean Sea for a double visit. First, he would spend some time with the Corinthians and then travel on foot to visit the churches in Macedonia. Afterward he would return to Corinth and depart for Judea. But because his brief visit in Corinth proved to be painful, he changed his mind and returned to Ephesus without visiting Macedonia.
 3. Ever since his departure from Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea on his second missionary journey, Paul had been unable to return to that area for many years. He told the church in Thessalonica that his plan to visit them was blocked by Satan (1 Thess 2:18). Even though Timothy, Silas, and Erastus had visited Macedonia, Paul had only sent them letters.
 4. We will learn more about these events when we study Second Corinthians.
- C. Paul qualifies his plans with the statement "if the Lord permit."
 1. James 4:15 For that ye ought to say, **if the Lord will**, we shall live, and do this, or that.
 2. Acts 18:21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, **if God will**.

And he sailed from Ephesus.

3. We plan in vain when we make our plans apart from God.

D. Verse 8 says that Paul was going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.

1. Pentecost was the feast of harvest that was celebrated seven weeks after Passover. This would be in the second part of May or the first half of June. Exactly a year later, Paul traveled to Jerusalem and arrived in time for Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

2. The reference to Pentecost in verse 8 is likely a reference to the season rather than to the day. Its significance may be because it was favorable time for travel. Paul intended to travel when summer arrived.

E. Until that time he would stay in Ephesus because of a great and effectual door that had been opened there.

1. The "open door" image refers to people who hear and are receptive to Paul's proclamation of the gospel.

a) 2 Corinthians 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a **door was opened** unto me of the Lord.

b) Colossians 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would **open unto us a door of utterance**, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.

c) Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had **opened the door of faith** unto the Gentiles.

d) Although we should always pray that God will open doors, the problem today is not really a lack of open doors. Instead, the problem is a lack of people who are willing to look for those open doors and then walk through them.

e) The Internet is today an open door of utterance for spreading the gospel. See this week's handout for a recent example. People are searching for the truth -- literally! When people type "plan of salvation" into Google we should pray that they will find the truth as a result of that search. We often direct our evangelistic efforts to the world at large, without regard to whether the targets are searching for the truth -- and that is something we must continue to do. But the Internet allows us to focus some of our efforts toward people who are actively searching for the truth. Also, we must have missionaries in the field because otherwise we will not be able

to help those who contact us from those foreign locations.

2. But open doors were not the only things Paul found in Ephesus. He also tells us there were many adversaries.
 - a) The gospel always meets with resistance because it topples all persons from their thrones, whether great or small.
 - b) Philippians 1:28-29 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.
 - c) Paul may have had in mind the artisans of the silver shrines of Diana who created an uproar in Acts 19 when they noticed a drop-off in their business.
 - d) But hostility is no hindrance to the spread of the gospel. Instead, it has the opposite effect. Evangelism flourishes under fierce opposition.
 - e) Rome was a perfect example. The church flourished and remained relatively pure during fierce persecution by Rome. Rome was never able to conquer the church, and, in fact, Revelation was written to promise just the opposite -- that the church would be victorious over Rome. But that is not to say that Rome did not damage the church. That damage, however, occurred not when Rome persecuted the church, but when Rome embraced the church and made it fashionable to be a Christian. It was at that time under Constantine that some in the church departed to establish man-made churches, preferring the ways of Rome over the ways of God.

III. Verses 10-11

- A. 10 Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.
- B. Paul mentioned Timothy's trip to Corinth in 4:17, and now he refers to it again.
 1. Some see a contradiction between 4:17 and 16:10 because 4:17 appears to be much more certain.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

- b) But the Greek translated "if Timothy come" in verse 10 is better translated "whenever he comes." Travel in the ancient world was unpredictable, and Paul likely expresses himself this way to indicate that he cannot predict when Timothy will arrive.

C. The real issue with verse 10 is what circumstances would cause Timothy to fear?

- 1. Many commentators assume it refers to the possibility of a negative reception by the Corinthians.

- a) One commentator describes the congregation as "a very unpleasant and threatening" place and notes that Paul spoke about their arrogance in the verses immediately following his first mention of Timothy in 4:17.

- b) Another commentator says that Paul is worried that their negative feelings about him will spill over onto Timothy.

- (1) This letter would likely arrive before Timothy did, and in this letter Paul had sternly castigated powerful members of the congregation and had called for drastic changes in their behavior. Perhaps Paul was worried that, while they might be afraid to confront Paul face to face, they might take out their frustrations on poor Timothy. But wouldn't that suggest that they, rather than Timothy, were the cowards here?

- c) Also, if their contempt is directed toward Paul, how would his assurance that Timothy is engaged in the very same work diminish that contempt?

- 2. Others suggest that Timothy's youthfulness or timidity may have been the cause of his fear.

- a) The RSV translates the phrase as "see that you put him at ease among you."

- b) Paul's statements in 2 Timothy 1:7, 2:1, and 2:3 have been read by some to infer that Timothy was shy, cowardly, or reticent.

- (1) 2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

- (2) 2 Timothy 2:1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

- (3) 2 Timothy 2:3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

- c) But I submit that any presumption that Timothy was timid is baseless.

- (1) Nothing in Paul's letters or in Acts reflects negatively on Timothy's

temperament or suggests that he was anything but a strong, dependable, and self-sacrificing evangelist.

- (2) No one who was timid would hang around with Paul for very long! Timothy's name occurs with that of Paul in the greetings to the churches in Corinth, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica.
- (3) I do not think we should read these verses as a request by Paul that the Corinthians look after sensitive, inexperienced Timothy.
- (4) It is ironic when commentators -- who have never left their study -- portray Timothy as timid, when he was out in the mission field working along side Paul. Timothy may have been timid compared to Paul, but then Napoleon was timid compared to Paul!

D. Another commentator says that Paul is really emphasizing Timothy's fearlessness in verse 10!

1. He translates it as: Whenever Timothy comes, "recognize that he is fearless toward you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am."
2. One point in support of this view is that the same word appears in Philippians to describe the preaching of the word without fear.
 - a) Philippians 1:14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

E. In any event, I think the key phrase is the reminder that Timothy is engaged in the same work of the Lord that Paul is doing.

1. That work requires spiritual fortitude; it requires fearlessness. If Timothy had been timid and cowardly there is no way he could have been doing the same work that Paul was doing.
2. The command that no one disdain him is to say that no one should disdain his message. Timothy was sent by Paul, and his message was Paul's message.
3. By the time of Paul's second letter, Timothy had returned. (2 Cor. 1:1)

IV. Verse 12

- A. 12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

- B.** The final *peri de* in this letter occurs in verse 12 and is also thought by most to be a response to an item raised in the Corinthians' letter to Paul.
- C.** What did they ask? They may have asked when Apollos would return.
1. One commentator believes that the Corinthians were enamored with the rhetoric of Apollos and that his return ranked very high on their agenda, and he finds it significant that Paul saved that question for last and answered it, he says, with a fleeting rebuff.
 2. Some paint imaginative stories that pit Paul against Apollos, but there is no evidence that Paul ever considered Apollos to be anything other than a faithful fellow worker; they were not in competition.
 3. Also, it is possible that the Corinthians asked Paul nothing about Apollos and that Paul uses the phrase *peri de* in verse 12 simply to lead in to this final topic. After all, why wouldn't they have just written to Apollos directly if they wondered about his plans?
- D.** Verse 12 indicates that Paul "strongly" urged Apollos to come to Corinth, but that he was quite unwilling to do so at this time.
1. The "will" that prevented Apollos from returning is not identified. Some argue it was the will of God, while others argue it was the will of Apollos.
 2. There is no lack of guesses as to why Apollos did not go back to Corinth at that time.
 - a) One suggestion is that Apollos realized he had become the unwilling catalyst of division and that he would not return to the city while there was an Apollos party acting in opposition to Paul.
 - b) Others suggest that Apollos simply did not want to abandon Paul during such a moment of evangelistic opportunity and fierce opposition in Ephesus. But the past tense ("he was unwilling to come now") indicates that Apollos is no longer in Paul's presence when this letter was written.
 3. "The bottom line is this: Apollos was unlikely to return in the near future. Paul does not add any greeting from Apollos and does not mention him in the second letter. Since there is so little evidence to go on, caution is advised before giving free rein to the imagination."

V. Verses 13-14

- A.** 13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14 Let all your things be done with charity.

B. A sudden fusillade of commands often appears at the conclusion of Paul's letters.

1. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace. (2 Corinthians 13:11)

C. The first command in verse 13 is Watch.

1. Throughout the letter, Paul has reminded them about the coming judgment that should shape their lives in the present. (1:8, 3:13, 5:5) So this command may be for them to look for the coming of the Lord and to conduct themselves in a way that is appropriate to that hope.
2. Another option, however, is that Paul wanted them to be on guard against worldly threats to the faith, which would fit in nicely with the second command listed here. They must watch out for corrosive, worldly influences that threaten the church from within and from without -- many of which Paul has already discussed in this letter.

D. The second command in verse 13 is Stand Fast in the Faith.

1. This command is shorthand for what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 -- "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
2. The faith in verse 13 is what they had been taught by Paul, either in person or by epistle, and, as we have seen, that includes teaching about Jesus, about the gospel, about proper conduct, about proper worship, about the resurrection, and about many other things.
3. One of their problems, and -- along with a lack of love -- perhaps a root cause of their problems was that they had not held fast to the teachings of Paul after his departure. They had drifted from those teachings, Paul had corrected their errors, and now he is calling them yet again to hold fast to what he has taught them.

E. The final commands in verse 13 are Quit You Like Men, Be Strong.

1. The dual commands to be courageous and strong appear frequently in the Septuagint.
2. Christians are called to be holy, and they must stand against extraordinary pressures from the pagan world that surrounds them. Those who stand fast in the faith must be courageous and strong, otherwise they soon find that they stand for nothing.
3. No soldier in the army of Christ can be fainthearted or cowardly. We must all

be true hearted, whole hearted, faithful and loyal.

4. The big problem with cowardice is that it tends to be contagious.

a) **Deuteronomy 20:8** And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.'

5. "The Corinthians have been tolerant when they should have been strict, and intolerant or unloving when they should have been manly enough to make allowances for those who were less robust."

F. Earlier Paul told us that all things must be done decently and in order. In Verse 14 he reminds us that all things must also be done in love.

1. Love was the remedy for the ills that afflicted the Corinthian congregation such as their divisions, their lawsuits, their immorality, and their mistreatment of the have-nots at the Lord's Supper.

2. But who is Paul to tell them to be loving? Hasn't he been raking them over the coals for 16 chapters? Hasn't he been intolerant? Hasn't he made them unhappy? Hasn't he pointed out their sins and their faults? Is that loving? Yes!

a) **2 Corinthians 2:4** For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

3. R. L. Whiteside: "Much is said about preaching the truth in love and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even one unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people."

VI. Verses 15-18

A. 15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. 17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. 18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

B. Paul briefly mentioned the house of Stephanas and their baptisms in 1:16, and here he further identifies them as the firstfruits of Achaia.

1. Their conversion marked the starting point of the church in that area. Romans 16:5 also describes Epaenetus as a member of this group ("who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.")
 2. Achaia was the name given to the Roman province in Greece, and the name commemorated the Roman defeat of the Achaean Confederacy in 146 BC. Paul may have used the name to refer to a more limited area around Corinth rather than the whole province comprising the southern half of Greece because Acts 17:34 mentions that some became Christians in Athens before Paul traveled to Corinth.
 3. The term "firstfruits" attached particular honor to them because Paul had just used the term in 15:20 to refer to Christ as the "firstfruits of the dead" and because it was used in the Old Testament to apply to what is the best. It also suggests that Paul saw them as offerings to God
 - a) Romans 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.
- C. It is probable that Stephanas, Achaicus, and Fortunatus delivered the Corinthians' letter to Paul and then delivered Paul's letter to the Corinthians.
1. That we still have this letter 2000 years later tells us much about the providence of God and about how carefully and reverently the Corinthians treated this letter from Paul. They received a single letter, but they must have made copies almost immediately, first for the various "house churches" in Corinth, and then for other congregations in that area and elsewhere. They must have known that this was no ordinary letter (as was their own letter to Paul) but that Paul by inspiration was writing the commands of the Lord. Otherwise under what theory would we still have a copy of this letter today?
 2. It was not uncommon for Paul to include a note of commendation for the carriers of his letters because they would verify that the letter was from Paul, deliver oral messages from Paul, and perhaps even answer questions about the content of the letter.
 3. Verse 16 is not saying that these three are to receive a special status or special authority in the church because it also includes all who help and labor like they do. What is notable about them is their selfless service, and Paul hopes the others in Corinth will imitate them in that service.
 - a) "Where participation in pagan cults was largely self-seeking in motivation, Paul's language here draws attention to what is distinctive in this new religion -- all of one's actions should be directed to the benefit of others."
 - b) This idea of service turned the idea of patronage and its ranking system

upside down. The Stephanas household was there to serve others -- others were not there for them. Many of the factions and power struggles in the Corinthian church were caused by those who wanted to be served rather than serve.

- c) **Mark 10:45** "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
- d) **1 Corinthians 13:5** Love "does not seek its own."
- e) **1 Corinthians 9:19** "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more."

D. Verse 17 says that Paul rejoiced over the arrival of Stephanas and the others because, literally, "these filled up your lack."

1. The English translation may give the false impression that Paul imputes some failing to the Corinthians with this language. But the statement really expresses his affection for them because what he regards as lacking is their physical presence. He is saying that he was glad to see these men because they make up for his inability to see all of the Corinthians, which is clearly something that he wanted to do.
2. Paul loved the converts in Corinth, and many no doubt loved him. But others, we know, did not -- grumbling against Paul and undercutting his authority and his teaching. These ungrateful grumblers must have been very distressing to Paul as we have seen in this letter and will see in the next. But he nevertheless loved the Corinthians and wanted to see them all again. Their absence had left a gap in his life.

E. Stephanas is a Greek name meaning "the one who bears a crown," and the mention of his household suggests he was a man of means.

1. Achaicus and Fortunatas may have been slaves. They have Latin names, the first being a nickname for someone from Achaia and the second meaning lucky. The second name in particular was not uncommon for a slave, but these two could nevertheless have simply been fellow businessmen of Stephanas, or even his brothers or sons.

VII. **Verses 19-20**

- A. 19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.
- B. This is the only place in Paul's letters where he sends greetings from all the churches in a province. This greeting may be a final reminder that the

Corinthians are part of a larger family of Christians.

- C.** Aquila and Priscilla make one of their many cameo appearances in verse 19.
1. Their other mentions in Acts 18:2, 18, 26, Romans 16:3, and 2 Timothy 4:19 indicate that they were well traveled.
 2. Their Latin names may indicate they were freed slaves. They were forced to leave Rome when Claudius expelled all the Jews in AD 49 (Acts 18:2). They settled in Corinth, where they worked as tentmakers.
 3. The couple had since moved to Ephesus (since that is where Paul is now writing), they presumably will later return to Rome (Romans 16:3), and then back to Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:19).
 4. One commentator suggests they may have relocated to Ephesus solely for the purpose of helping Paul in his missionary efforts, disregarding the financial loss such a move must have caused.
- D.** The holy kiss in verse 20 was an outward act that affirmed a common bond among the Christians.
1. Such an act was particularly important at a time when wealthy, leading citizens were worshiping with servants and slaves.
 2. It was a distinctive practice that served as a sign of mutual fellowship among persons of mixed social background, nationality, race, and gender who had been joined together as a new family in Christ. It was more than just an extension of a social custom, because it is identified as holy.
 3. Paul also mentions it in Romans 16:16, 2 Corinthians 13:12, and 1 Thessalonians 5:26. Peter calls it the kiss of love in 1 Peter 5:14.

VIII. Verses 21-24

- A.** 21 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. 22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.
- B.** Paul picks up the pen to sign the letter. This, of course, suggests that Paul dictated the letter itself while someone else copied it down. One such secretary even inserted his own greeting in Romans 16:22.
1. He may have signed the letter personally as a reaction to the false letter in his name that he mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.
- C.** With pen in hand, immediately following his signature, Paul apparently feels

impelled to take one last shot at his Corinthian opponents, in the form of a curse in verse 22.

1. Verse 22 is better translated: "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!"
2. Paul does not use the Greek word agape, which denotes a genuine spiritual love and which he uses everywhere in his epistles. Instead, he used the verb phileo, which signifies affection. The only other place he uses that word is Titus 3:15. The people Paul is addressing are those that even lacked any affection for Christ.
3. The people Paul has in mind most likely thought they were the most loving people on the planet, but Paul had a different opinion. Their attitudes toward Paul and toward others showed that they had no love or even any affection for the Lord.
4. **John 14:21** He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.
5. Paul expressed a similar sentiment in Galatians and Titus, and a less harsh sentiment in 2 Thessalonians.
 - a) Galatians 1:8-9 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
 - (1) And the gospel is more than just a series of facts about Christ. It includes commands. The gospel is something that must be obeyed. (1 Peter 4:17)
 - b) Titus 3:10-11 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.
 - c) 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.
6. Rejecting God's word is a very serious offense, and we must treat it as such. If, for example, someone among us rejects the word of God regarding the gospel (as many today do), we need to admonish him and if necessary withdraw from him. We must not tolerate his false views because to do so suggests to others either that we agree with him or that the disagreement is

not important.

D. The Aramaic word *Maranatha* occurs only here in the Bible.

1. Barclay: "It is strange to meet with an Aramaic phrase in a Greek letter to a Greek church. The explanation is that the phrase had become a watchword and a password. It summed up the vital hope of the early church, and Christians identified each other by it, in a language the heathen could not understand."
2. The phrase has three possible renderings: (1) Our Lord has come!, (2) Our Lord is coming!, or (3) Our Lord, come! The phrase may have been intentionally ambiguous so as to carry any of these meanings.

a) Our Lord has come!

- (1) 1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that **Christ Jesus came into the world** to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

b) Our Lord is coming!

- (1) 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, **at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** with all his saints.

c) Our Lord, come!

- (1) Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 **Looking for that blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

E. The letter ends in verse 24 with Paul's expression of love for the Corinthians.

1. The final words "in Christ Jesus" bring to mind the opening words in 1:2, "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus."
2. Their experience of God's grace (1:4), their present life (1:30), and the hope of the resurrection (15:22) all spring from their relationship in Christ Jesus.

F. This letter opened with the grace of God and now closes with the grace of God. And no one knew more about the grace of God than the Apostle Paul and the Corinthians. The Corinthians had been mired in the depths of depravity, but

because of the grace of God, Paul was able to say to them in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."