

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians – Chapter 16

Chapter 16 & Conclusion

Offering Collection

“Now, concerning the collection I want you to take for God’s holy believers in Jerusalem who are in need, I want you to follow the same instructions I gave the churches of Galatia. Every Sunday, each of you make a generous offering by taking a portion of whatever God has blessed you with and place it in safekeeping. Then I won’t have to make a special appeal when I come. When I arrive, I will send your gift to the poor in Jerusalem along with a letter of explanation, carried by those whom you approve. If it seems advisable for me to accompany them, I’ll be glad to have them travel with me. (vv1-4 TPT)

Paul had reached the end of this letter to the church in Corinth. He would still write again to them as we all know and call 2 Corinthians however, for this letter, we are at the tail end. In this chapter, he will be exhorting and giving some directions concerning his travel plans, the state of the other brethren, money and final greetings.

In verses 1 to 4, Paul was instructing the church to collect an offering (Sunday after Sunday) until he comes around *“Every Sunday, each of you make a generous offering by taking a portion of whatever God has blessed you with”*. He is particular that he won’t want to make a special appeal (offering) when he comes.

The purpose of the offering in this instance is to gift the poor in Jerusalem. This was a welfare offering and he would send to those in Jerusalem by those whom the church approves and if possible, he would go with them.

Paul Plans to Visit Corinth

“I plan to be traveling through Macedonia, and afterward I will visit you and perhaps stay there for a while, or even spend the winter with you. Afterward you can send me on my journey, wherever I go next, with your financial support. For it’s not my desire to just see you in passing, but I would like to spend some time with you if the Lord permits. Regardless, I will remain in Ephesus until the feast of Pentecost.” (vv5-8 TPT)

It is refreshing to read Paul’s plan which is not concrete, but he has the intention to visit the church in Corinth. Again, Paul was seeking their financial support as he goes about his ministry.

Why Support Ministries Financially!

1. Giving is Compassionate

Paul was commending the church in Philippi in sharing his troubles or distress by their giving:

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress.” (Philippians 4:10-14)

This is the expression of this church in supporting Paul who is labouring in ministry and the challenges that follows that.

2. Giving is Ministry

Giving itself is a ministry. There are those (individuals, peoples etc.) that are into the ministry of giving and this becomes their expression of faith, love and hope in the kingdom of God.

“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.” (Philippians 4:15)

“And you Philippians yourselves well know that in the early days of the Gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church (assembly) entered into partnership with me and opened up [a debit and credit] account in giving and receiving except you only.” (Philippians 4:15 AMPC)

Notice what Paul is saying. In their giving, the Philippians were not merely supporting Paul’s ministry, they were partnering in his ministry. Their financial assistance of Paul’s missionary activity made them a part of that work themselves!

That’s so important for us to understand. Giving is not simply a way to support Christian ministries. Giving makes you a part of the ministry itself!

3. Giving is Wisdom

It is wisdom to invest into the kingdom of God and what God is doing. It is the principle of seedtime and harvest; and giving and receiving. Paul said:

“I mention this not because I’m requesting a gift, but so that the fruit of your generosity may bring you an abundant reward.” (Philippians 4:17 TPT)

“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.” (Philippians 4:17)

Paul says emphatically. “I’m seeking the fruit that increases to your credit.” What does that mean? Well, Paul is simply following a principle laid out by Jesus:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:19-20)

4. Giving is Worship

Giving is worship. The phrase that Paul used here was used in describing the offering of Noah to God. This was the way Noah worshipped God through giving.

“Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18)

Paul uses this language of sweet-smelling offerings and acceptable sacrifices to make a clear point: the gift the Philippians sent him was an act of worship, and it was pleasing to God.

And when he says it was pleasing to God, he does not mean that their giving earned God’s favour and love. It is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that makes us right with God. Faith in him alone is the basis of our forgiveness and eternal life. But sacrifice in the Old Testament was a part of Israel’s worship, and the same can be said of us today.

We worship when we give. Giving is not merely about supporting a person or a ministry. Giving is not merely about following a command. More than this, giving is about heartfelt worship to the Lord. You

are acknowledging, “God, you own everything. All that I have is a gift from you. So, I willingly and joyfully release your resources for your work.”

5. **Giving Provokes Release:**

When we give to God and His work, we activate the principles of the kingdom that brings a release of blessing, provision, and other heavenly grace on us.

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

“And my God will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19 AMPC)

Paul’s prayer or declaration here is affirming the kingdom of God principle of seedtime and harvest and also, giving and receiving. Luke 6:38 says:

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Opportunity & Opposition

“There’s an amazing door of opportunity standing wide open for me to minister here, even though there are many who oppose and stand against me.” (v9 TPT)

Paul had an amazing opportunity to minister at Ephesus and I believe he wants to maximise that opportunity, but he had many adversaries i.e. those who opposed and stood against him.

What do you do when confronted with opportunity and opposition?

This mirrors life in many ways. Every opportunity will have its own challenges and mountains to scale over. How you see and who you believe will matter in how you respond. Do you give up the opportunity because of the challenges or do you believe you can overcome the challenges and opposition and thereby, maximise the opportunity?

Body of Christ Honouring Body of Christ

“When Timothy arrives, make sure that he feels at home while he’s with you, for he’s advancing the Lord’s work just as I am. Don’t let anyone disparage or look down on him, but kindly help him on his way with financial support so that he may come back to me, for I am waiting for him and the brothers to return.” (vv10-11 TPT)

“Dear brothers and sisters, I have a request to make of you. Give special recognition to Stephanas and his family, for they were the first converts in Achaia, and they have fully devoted themselves to serve God’s holy people. I urge you to honour and support them, and all those like them who work so diligently for the Lord.” (vv15-16 TPT)

Timothy is a spiritual son to Paul however, he has his own ministry as it were, and Paul is encouraging the church to support him financially and honour him.

It is crucial in the body of Christ that we learn to honour one another whether younger than us or older. We consistently live a life of honour. Many have been made to feel inferior because of their age, status in the society or educational background when they are the anointed of the Lord and should be a blessing to the body.

Paul continues this admonition to honour one another with Stephanas and his family. Stephanas, according to historians is the jailer that got saved with his family in Macedonia. They have no title but are holy and are devoted to serve the body. Nevertheless, honour them.

Let us all learn to honour one-another.

Paul's Final Bidwell:

“Remember to stay alert and hold firmly to all that you believe. Be mighty and full of courage. Let love and kindness be the motivation behind all that you do.” (vv13-14 TPT)

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love. (vv13-14)

Paul's final admonition is listed below:

- Be Watchful (Watch)
- Stand firmly in the faith (know what you believe)
- Be Brave
- Be Strong
- Do all things with Love!

These are qualities that all believers in Christ will have to live by. We must not be careless but watchful and stand firmly in the faith. We must not be tossed around with every wind of doctrine. We must be brave, strong and have the love of God guard our hearts and direct all things that we do.

Other Comments Made by Paul:

“I was delighted when Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived, for they've made up for your absence. They have refreshed my spirit in the same way they've refreshed yours. Be sure to honour people like this.” (vv17-18 TPT)

- *Stephanas* means “crowned.” Some believe that he was the Philippian jailor who, along with his household, became the first believers in Philippi.
- *Fortunatus* means “blessed.” He is recognized in the Orthodox Church as one of the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus as an apostle.
- *Achaicus* means “a native of Achaia.” He is recognized in church history as one of the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus as an apostle.

These three people did delight Paul and he took time to mention them in his letter.

“The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The salutation with my own hand—Paul's.” (vv19-21)

Paul encouraged us all to greet one another with a holy kiss. This is something the church has not fully embraced. It is a balance between what we call holy and godly love and affection towards one-another. Hopefully, the church gets to this point of greeting.

What makes a kiss holy is that it comes from the love of God.

“If anyone doesn't sincerely love the Lord, he deserves to be doomed as an outcast. Our Lord has come! May the grace and favour of our Lord Jesus be with you. I send my love to all who are joined in the life of Jesus, the Anointed One.” (vv22-24 TPT)

