

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 11TH - 12TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

GENEROSITY (1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-4)

Paul spent time within his letter of correction **answering some questions** submitted by the church at Corinth.

- As he closes the letter, Paul will answer a question regarding the collection he was taking for the **poor in Jerusalem** (vs. 1-4), he'll inform the **church of his travel plans** (vs. 5-11), and then he'll speak of some of his **associates' plans in ministry** (vs. 12-18).

The financial collection Paul was referring to was for **the saints in Jerusalem**, and it was part of an effort among many different churches to help the poor in that region (Acts 11:27-30, 24:17; Rom. 5:26).

- Generosity and **benevolence have always been hallmarks of the Christian faith**—the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, World Vision, Samaritan's Purse—are all organizations founded out of **Christian convictions**.

CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THAT...

Everything we have been given has **been given to us by God** (1 Chron. 29:12)—we don't really own anything.

- We've been **given resources**—money, opportunities, relationships, etc.—to steward, or **manage for God's glory** (1 Tim. 6:7-8).
- Out of all **36 of Jesus' parables**, 17 are about stewardship.

As **managers (or stewards)** of God's money, we're to make every effort to use it for His glory and for the good of others.

- This is why as Christians, **we're to give faithfully to the work of God in the world**—the ministry of the local church, missions, and to help those who are in need.
- Giving **stretches our faith**, keeps our hearts soft, and protects us from **the love of money** (1 Tim. 6:10).

- Giving is a part of our worship.** "On the first day of the week," the church at Corinth was instructed to give as they gathered for worship. **We attribute worth to God** by giving back to Him a portion of what He's blessed us with.
- Giving should be a consistent and standard part of our budget and lifestyle.** "Each of you is to put something aside and store it up"—it shouldn't be that **we give God leftovers**.
- Giving is to be proportionate and personal.** "As he may prosper," suggests that **believers who are blessed with more should be willing to give more**. Tithing (10%) is a good place to start, but as the Lord gives us more, we should be willing to be even more generous.
- Giving should be entrusted to those who will handle finances honestly and responsibly.** Verses 3-4 speak of appointed delegates that could handle money **honestly and responsibly** along with Paul.

The only way it makes any sense to **trust God with our hard-earned money**, to share what God has given us with those around us, and to invest our resources in the work of the Lord, is if **we believe the gospel!**

- Do you **trust God**? Do you **trust Him with your money** (Matthew 6:24)?
- Are you **managing the resources He's given you** in a way that honors Him?

TRAVEL PLANS (1 CORINTHIANS 16:5-11)

Paul was in **Ephesus** when he wrote this letter.

- His plan was to pass through Macedonia for a **time of ministry** (vs. 5), spend the winter in Corinth (vs. 6), and then go to Judea with the collection for **the poor in Jerusalem**.
- Travel on the Mediterranean was dangerous, and it was **impossible to travel from November to February**.
- Paul ended up having to **revise his plans** at least twice (2 Cor. 1:15-16, 2:12-12, 7:5).

"IF THE LORD PERMITS" (VS. 7)

Paul made his plans, but he understood that **God could change his circumstances** at any time.

- And while he **waited in Ephesus for the right time to visit Corinth** (vs. 8), he recognized the, "wide door for effective work" that God had given him right where he was (vs. 9).
 - Every opportunity and season in life is a **divine assignment** that we're called to steward.
- We use common sense, wisdom, prayer, godly counsel, and Scripture to determine what God's will is for us in the opportunities we're given.**
 - In every decision and choice we make in our lives, we're to seek **God's will and direction**.
 - God gave us minds and wants us to use them, but He doesn't want us to **depend solely on our own understanding** (Prov. 3:5-6). What **motivates the decisions** we make?
 - We make our plans as they "seem right to us and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 15:28), and we adjust as God may lead us to adjust.**
 - We can fall victim to the "**paralysis of analysis**" and be **so afraid of doing the wrong thing** that we do nothing—which isn't pleasing to the Lord.
 - Sometimes we've analyzed enough, and **we just need to act!** God is faithful to adjust our plans if our hearts are **humble, listening, and obedient**.
 - We don't waste time in our seasons of waiting—we steward the opportunities God gives us to serve Him and minister to others.**
 - Paul did some of his **most impactful ministry** while he was in prison.
 - We can always **come up with excuses for why we can't serve the Lord** in the place we are.
 - We don't have tomorrow promised—so **what opportunities is God giving us today?**

The Corinthian church didn't **respect or honor Paul as a spiritual authority**, but Paul asks them to respect his spiritual son Timothy when he comes to Corinth (vs. 10-11).

- Timothy might have suffered from a **lack of confidence and a lack of respect**, which is why Paul commanded Timothy not to let anyone despise him (1 Tim. 4:12), and the Corinthians not to despise him either (vs. 11).

FELLOW WORKERS & LABORERS (1 CORINTHIANS 16:12-24)

Apollos was an **eloquent minister** who brought the gospel to Priscilla & Aquila (Acts 18:24-28).

- Even though there were those in Corinth who seemed to **prefer Apollos over Paul** (1 Cor. 1:12), **Paul didn't hesitate to encourage Apollos** to visit Corinth (vs. 12).
- Paul didn't have a **competitive or jealous bone** in his body! He was just happy God was using others to minister and **preach the gospel**.

"BE WATCHFUL..."

Jesus commanded us to **be watchful as we await His return** (Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:37).

- We're also told to, "watch and pray, so we don't enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:41).
- "Stand firm in the faith..."**
- We're to have **mature stability** in our faith and in a lifestyle of discipleship—not allowing culture, trials, or challenges to **knock us off** our foundation.

"Act like men, be strong..."

- This is a call to **courageous maturity** in our faith, instead of to immature cowardice.
- We can very much act like children in the church when we **bicker, argue**, or act self-centered.
- We're to be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10).
- "Let all you do be done in love" (vs. 14).**
- Without love, all of the "**bravery**" and "**strength**" mean nothing (1 Cor. 13).

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus were probably **leaders in the church at Corinth** who brought the **questions of the Corinthian Christians** to Paul.

- As **Paul sends them back with this letter**, he asks that they be received as servants of the Lord (vs. 15, 18).
- He wants **the Corinthian church to recognize them** and be "subject" to those in the church **like them who are "fellow workers and laborers"** (vs. 16).

"FOR THEY REFRESHED MY SPIRIT AS WELL AS YOURS..."

When these three men came to Ephesus to see Paul, it was a **life-giving and restorative** time they had together.

- You and I need Christian friends who can **encourage, strengthen, refresh, and uphold** us.
- To make a Christian friend like this, we must first learn how to **be a friend like this**.
- In your friendships, are you a **life-giver** or a life-sucker? How are you stewarding your relationships?

In verses 19-20, **Paul sends greetings from the churches** in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey and Greece).

- Finally, Paul **adds his own greeting and signature to the letter as he closes** (vs. 21).
- The importance of love is stressed as Paul closes this letter—if anyone doesn't **truly love the Lord**, they're to **be accursed, "anathema"** (vs. 22).

There are a lot of people participating in organized Christian religion that don't have **any true love in their hearts for the Lord** or for people.

- They may talk of **their commitment to the church or to Christian ideals**, but the truth is, they're in it for other reasons. "**Our Lord come!**"—Paul longs to see Jesus at His return, and **his love for the Lord** is reflected also by his love for the church (vs. 23-24).

LETTING ALL WE DO BE DONE IN LOVE (VS. 14)

- Wholehearted, exclusive, obedient, and committed **love of God** is the key to just about everything in the Christian life (Matt. 22:37).
- Love is **always the basis for obedience**—if we love Him, we will be committed to **obeying Him**.
- Love for God **will always cause us** to love other people.
- When we're in love, **we're willing to sacrifice**.
- It's possible to be "**right**" and yet fail to **truly love God and love people**.
- It's possible to genuinely believe that we're doing God's work, believing God's Word, and accomplishing God's will, and **yet genuinely miss God's heart**.
- It's possible to **believe in the concept of Jesus intellectually**, but not truly surrender our hearts and lives to Him.
- As Christians, it's not **guilt, compulsion, or manipulation that controls our money**—it's our love for God and for people that guides how we manage our finances (vs. 1-4).
- Are you **honoring God** with your finances?
- Are you **acknowledging Him** as your provider, or is money your practical god?
- Why **aren't you generous**?
- As Christians, every relationship and friendship we have is to be **guided by our love** for that person as we seek for others to be "**refreshed**" by our interactions with them every day (vs. 15-18).
- Do you **notice** the people God puts in your path?
- Are you looking for ways to **pray for, serve, and encourage others**? Or do you just **look for them to do that for you**?

HOW CAN I LOVE GOD MORE?

- 1 John 4:19**
The secret to **growing in love for God and in love for others is to grow** in our understanding of God's love for us.
- Look to the cross—do you know how much you're **loved**?