

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-24MONEY MATTERS (V1-4)

Now concerning the collection for the saints . . .

The apostle Paul comes now to another subject raised by the Corinthian believers: *the collection for the saints*. We know this by the use of the formula 'now concerning . . .' (See 7:1, 8:1, 12:1). What is this 'collection for the saints'?

Background: **Acts 11:27-30**

Verse 28 talks about a 'world-wide famine'. We assume therefore that every part of the Roman Empire then (world-wide=Roman world) was affected by the famine. However, the people living in Judea were especially affected (for some reasons). Hence, the believers here in Antioch were determined to help their brothers in Judea/Jerusalem financially.

While this appears to be the first mention of such a famine and the needs of the believers in Judea, it is not the last, as the next three passages will reveal. Apparently, the believers in Judea were the poorer people, compared to other believers in other parts of the Roman Empire. While we could cite various possible reasons why this is so, it is instructive to note that the New Testament does not discuss the reasons why. Instead, we are shown how the other churches respond to the physical needs of the Christians in Judea.

From **1 Corinthians 16:1**, we know that the need to help the believers in Judea has arisen once more. Paul is involved in collecting contributions from Gentile believers to help the Jewish believers. Here, we know that Paul has appealed to the churches in Galatia (those planted in his first missionary journey) and also the church @ Corinth to help. This is around AD 55.

From **2 Corinthians 8:1-4**, we know that the collection is still on-going some 12 months later (cf. **2 Corinthians 9:1-2**)! By now, the churches in Macedonia are involved in the contribution. And from **Romans 15:25-27**, we read that Paul is finally going to Jerusalem with some Christians, carrying the gift there.

→ So this is a special collection from the believers in Corinth to help the Christians in Judea, and not the normal, weekly offering that they are to give to their local church as part of their worship.

→ Churches should be self-sufficient but not self-centered. Each church is to be independent and look after its own affair (independent, autonomous). But that does not mean that each church should be self-centered and not be concerned about other churches. We see here that many churches (those in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia) getting involved, doing what they can, to help the churches in Judea, in particular, the church @ Jerusalem.

Purpose: *for the saints*

'Collection for the saints' today assumes a technical meaning, namely collection to help the poor believers in our midst. During Paul's days, it means collection to help the poor believers living in Judea. The point here is that this collection has a purpose, a clear stated purpose. Why are they collecting this special offering? It is to help the poor believers in Judea. They do not collect money just for the sake of collecting, to accumulate for some unknown, unspecified purposes.

Participants: *let each of you*

Paul expects everyone in the church @ Corinth to be involved. It does not matter if you are rich or poor. [The fact is that there are many poor people in that church then! See **1 Corinthians 1:26-29, 11:21-22**] It does not matter if you are male or female, young or old. Paul says, "Let each of you!" No exceptions!

Place: *storing up*

The word for 'storing up' is *thesaurizo*'. From this Greek word we have our English word 'thesaurus', which is a treasury of words. In other words, Paul is asking them to store up their collections in the treasury. It would appear that in places of religious worship in the 1st century, there would be collection boxes/treasury set up to collect offerings from the worshippers. Hence, it is reasonable to believe that Paul is saying that the believers must bring their collections and place it in the treasury of the church (store up), marked 'for the saints'.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-24

Period: *on the first day of the week . . . no collections when I come*
 Paul wants them to do this systematically and periodically. Every Lord's Day, as you come to worship, come with something to put into the treasury marked 'for the saints'. By saying 'lay something aside', or 'lay by him' as in some other translations, Paul is not saying that we should set aside the money and keep it at home. Rather, he is saying that this is something to be done in private. Quietly, without any publicity, you are to come with your contributions weekly, and put it silently into the treasury.

By saying 'no collections when I come', this confirms what was said above. Each week, believers are to contribute so that when Paul comes, the amount to be given is ready. This phrase also points to the need for sincerity. Failure to give periodically will mean that when they see Paul arriving, they will then be rushing to settle this matter in a last-time manner. Such last-minute work shows a lack of sincerity and love!

In short, Paul wants them to be prepared. Think of how much you can contribute, work at it, give regularly, over a period of time. In this manner of preparedness, you show your love.

Proportions: *as he may prosper*

Cf. **2 Chronicles 31:5-6**

Luke 6:38

Exodus 25:1-2

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

2 Samuel 24:24

Paul did not give a percentage. We know that in the Old Testament, the Jews have to give tithes (10%). Some have said that the tithes they have to give is (in total) more like 23%! And it is a form of taxation, as Israel was a nation as well. An example of the Jews giving tithes resulting in great abundance can be seen in 2 Chronicles 31. From Exodus 25, we see the Jews making free-will offering to the building of the Tabernacle. It is free-will in the sense that they just give as they desired, as the Lord puts it in their hearts, as the Lord has blessed them materially. The attitude to be displayed is that shown by David in 2 Samuel 24, where being so overwhelmed by God's goodness, he is determined to give to the Lord cheerfully and sacrificially!

The two New Testament passages above confirms the same principles and attitudes we should have today.

*God made the sun that gives.
 God made the moon, it gives.
 God made the stars, they give.
 God made the air, it gives.
 God made the clouds, they give rain.
 God made the earth, it gives.
 God made the trees, they give.
 God made the sea, it gives.
 God made the flowers, they give.
 God made the beast, they give.
 God made man, does he give?
 John MacArthur*

*But drops of grief can ne'er repay
 The debt of love I owe:
 Here, Lord, I give my self away
 'Tis all that I can do.
 Isaac Watts*

We are people, children and worshippers of the God who gives! Does our life reflect that? Does our giving demonstrate that?

Protection: *whomever you approve . . . I will send*
 Paul is careful when it comes to matters of finance. He doesn't want to handle it. If he has to, he wants others to be involved, and the others must be people appointed by the Corinthian Church and not by him. We must not only do what is right, but also be seen to do what is right! Reading Paul's epistles, we know that Paul is very careful with this matter, and he strives always to be above reproach when it comes to money matters!

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-24**MINISTRY MATTERS (V5-12)**

❖ Planning needed

Now I will come to you . . . I will remain . . . even spend . . . I hope to stay . . . I will tarry . . . until Pentecost . . .

We plan because God plans. Being haphazard and chaotic is to live in opposition to the character of God. God in Genesis 1 turns chaos into cosmos, bringing order and blessings to the world. He is also the God who planned our salvation from all eternity.

Drift is always 'away', never 'towards'. We never drift to efficiency, effectiveness, maturity, godliness; rather, we drift away from these into what is bad.

In Money Matters, we saw Paul calling the Corinthian Christians to plan their giving. Here, we see Paul himself planning his schedule, his life, his ministry. We must plan our worship services, our Christian service, our evangelism, our life, rather than just let things happen and react.

Three kinds of people in this world: Those who make things happen, those who see things happen and those who ask, "What happened?"

❖ Submission needed

It may be . . . even spend . . . if the Lord permits . . .

We submit because we are not God! God doesn't have to change His plans, but we often have to! We plan, but we do not insist at all costs that our plans must be executed. This is because we have a Master above us, and He orders things and brings situations into our lives that may be unexpected.

Acts 16:6-10 *Planning and submission in action*

❖ Depth needed

. . . remain . . . spend . . . stay a while . . . tarry . . .

Paul is not a butterfly. He knows that to give real help, time is needed. So he is prepared to invest time, to give of himself to people so that he can know them and give them real help. Paul knows the importance of relationships. He wants to have redemptive relationships. And to have them, one must be prepared to remain, to spend, to stay awhile, to tarry.

❖ Courage needed

V8-9 cf. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10

While Paul desires to spend time with the Corinthian Christians in order to really help them, yet he knows that to be a responsible servant of the Lord, he needs to remain in Ephesus at this time. Why? Because a door has been flung wide open to preach the Gospel there! So he will grasp the opportunity and do what he can in Ephesus at this time.

While the door is open, the enemies are many! In other words, life and ministry in Ephesus is not a bed of roses. In fact, from 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, we know just how bad was the situation then! This opens our eyes to see the heart-motivation of Paul! He doesn't stay or leave based on how good or bad is the situation. He stays or leaves based on how God is directing him, and he knows how God is directing him by seeing how God will give him opportunities to spread the Gospel!

Here is a courageous man who is prepared to remain in the lions' dens, to run the risk of losing his life, if that means preaching the Gospel to the people there.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-24

- ❖ Team-spirit needed

V10-11

By any measure, Paul is a great pastor, preacher, apostle, church-planter. Yet we do not find Paul working alone! He is always with someone, always working alongside someone. Here we find him including Timothy in the ministry to the Corinthians. Paul believes in team-ministry. It is a logical and natural flow from what he himself has taught the Corinthians in Chapter 12! No one can operate alone in the work of the Lord. We need one another. We need to complement each other.

- ❖ Magnanimity needed

V12

The Corinthian Christians could be asking for Apollos to visit them. From Chapter 3, we know that some of them prefer Apollos to Paul. We see Paul's magnanimity in that he has no hint/traces of jealousy or suspicion towards Apollos. He calls Apollos 'our brother'. And he is happy that Apollos should come to Corinth to minister to them. His magnanimity can also be seen in that while he has strongly urged Apollos to go to Corinth, Apollos has declined (for now). Paul was not peeved by his refusal, believing that Apollos has good reasons for his decisions and will go to Corinth in due course.

- ❖ Clarity needed

V10 cf. 3:5-9

Whether it is Paul or Timothy or Apollos, whether they are in Corinth or Ephesus or somewhere else, Paul is clear that they are doing God's work! Like what he has said in 3:5-9, they are but the Lord's servants! This is the clarity that is needed. As we serve the Lord, we can lose sight of this truth so that the work becomes our work and we get uptight when things do not go the way we want! We need to be clear that we are doing God's work, not ours; building God's kingdom, not our empire; aiming at God's glory, not our honour.

Only then will we see the need to be big-hearted, to emphasize team-ministry, to be submissive and yet give our all, risk our all and plan our work!

FIVE COMMANDS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (V13-14)

- Watch -- it means to be awake instead of being asleep. When we are asleep, we are not aware of what is happening around us. The word 'watch' can also be translated as 'be alert'. It is actually a military term, implying that we are actually currently engaged in warfare!

Watch what? 1 Peter 5:8 - watch out for the devil and his cunning devices! Mark 14:38 - watch out for temptations. Revelation 3:2 - watch out for apathy and indifference, for formality - a name you are alive but are dead! 2 Timothy 4:5 - watch out for false teaching, false doctrines!

Our enemy has many ways to get us down. We must not be complacent. We must not be asleep. Instead, we must watch! Who? Paul addresses all the Corinthian believers here!!

- Stand fast in the faith - drive a stake into the ground! Do not move, do not compromise. Be firm. Know what you believe and why you believe. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58, Ephesians 4:14.
- Be brave - can also be translated as 'act like men' or 'be mature, grow up'. Children tend to be attracted to the sensational, tend to be easily swayed and quickly bored, tend to be self-centered and lacking self-control. Reviewing 1 Corinthians, we know that these are all the problems these believers had.

It is well known that these people here are immature - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 14:20.

- Be strong - It is in the passive: Be strengthened. We cannot be strong in ourselves and by ourselves. We need to be strengthened by the Lord and in the Lord. Hence, Paul is here calling them to cast themselves on the Lord and seek His strength to be what they ought to be and to do what they ought to do!

We should be fighting the world, not flirting with it. We must swim against the tide, not go with the flow.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-24

- All things be done in love – Not some things, not most things but all things! All things are to be done in love. Love as depicted in 1 Corinthians 13. The apostle Peter gives the same counsel in 1 Peter 4:8.

All things be done in love – the ‘in’ can be seen as the scope and atmosphere. We are to do nothing outside of love. Love is more than just the accompaniment of what we do. It is the very atmosphere we are to live and move and have our being.

THREE SLICES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE THEN (V15-21)

V15-16: Household of Stephanas – firstfruits of Achaia; baptized by Paul (1:16). They are known for their ‘devotion to the ministry of the saints’. The word ‘devoted’ is ‘tosso’, which can be translated as ‘addicted’. The ‘ministry’ is ‘service’. So these people are addicted to serving other believers!

Paul holds them up as examples and calls the believers to submit to them. In other words, their way of life is the way to live the Christian Life, and they could be calling you to do this, live like that. Submit to them! Heed their call! Follow their example!!

V17-18: Assuming that the Stephanas here is the same person mentioned in verses 15-16, we see one instance of how he is devoted to serving the saints. Together with two others, he is prepared to travel all that distance from Corinth to Ephesus to refresh Paul! His addiction to serving the saints is not words only!!

See also the joy Paul has to see these believers in person, and how he says this refreshes his spirit. Christian fellowship is not just in the spirit. Paul rejoices to see the physical presence of other believers, and in seeing them, his soul is refreshed!

V19-21: Greetings matter! It is the custom of the early churches to be greeting each other, sending greetings! And it is not to be just a formal, official thing. Paul says, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” It is their custom then to greet one another with a kiss. Paul says, “Make sure it is holy kiss!” A kiss is an expression of love. In other words, greet one another as an expression of our joy in seeing each other and our love for one another. Even Paul doesn’t exempt himself from this – see verse 21!

Do you greet one other?

In Conclusion . . .

A curse: So central and important is our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says that if anyone does not love Him, then let him be accursed! (Anathema).

A desire: As for Paul, he longs for the return of Jesus, for the day when he will see Jesus face-face. Maranatha.

A prayer: He wishes them grace from the Lord as they respond to what is said in this epistle.

A pledge: He assures them of his love for them.

As Paul closes his epistle, we see him assuring them of his love, wishing them what is best for them spiritually, calling them to join him in longing for the return of the Lord and making sure that our love for Him remains vibrant. Let these 4 things continue to sound in our ears, as we leave 1 Corinthians.