

Chapter Sixteen

THE PROBLEM OF AIDING CHRISTIAN BRETHREN (16:1-24)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why were the saints to “put something aside” each first day of the week if Paul would not pick it up until 6 months later?
2. What is “prospering”? What percentage of one’s “prosperity” should he give to the Lord’s work?
3. Did Paul expect the Christians at Corinth to help him financially with his missionary work?
4. Is there other aid, besides financial, called for in this chapter? What kind? Is that still relevant for the church today? How accomplished?
5. What is a “holy kiss”? Would it be good to practice that now?

SECTION 1

Endow (16:1-9)

16 Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

⁵ I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, ⁶and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷For I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

16:1-4 Ministering: The Corinthian Christians had a problem with giving. In an earlier communication with them Paul apparently mentioned the need for a contribution to relieve the suffering of their

brethren in Judea. Now he writes to set forth apostolic directions on how to best collect that contribution. Evidently, between this letter (I Corinthians) and the next (II Corinthians) (a period of 4 or 5 months—Spring to Fall of 57 A.D.), the Corinthians had some misunderstandings and misgivings about this collection for the saints in Jerusalem. In I Corinthians 16:1-4 Paul sounds as if he is *ordering* the people to give, whether they want to or not. Someone may have taken offense at his bluntness, so he wrote II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, to explain that all giving must be done willingly, as each man has purposed in his own heart, and not out of coercion. But it is a fact, that both of these are scriptural motives for Christian stewardship. Paul uses the Greek word *logeias* (lit. "something counted, a collection") to describe what he had "*directed*" (Gr. *dietaxa*, given orders for as in the military) to the churches of Galatia. Now he *commands* the church at Corinth (Gr. *poiesate*, 2nd, pl. 1 aor., imperative, "You do!") to take up offerings, and tells them how to do it. They started to do what he ordered (see II Cor. 8:10), but then they stopped. So he wrote later holding before them the example of the Macedonians and telling them they must not give as if it were an *exaction*. Jesus taught his stewardship lessons under the same two principles. First, Jesus is the Master, our King. He has every right to give his servants orders about the conduct of their stewardship. On the other hand, the obedience of the servant is to be done under an attitude of willingness and cheerfulness. If obedience has to be coerced and is resented, the servant of Christ is no better than the "elder brother" who stayed home but hated every minute of it, (see Luke 15:25-32).

This chapter is the crown of all the teaching of the first Corinthian letter. The epistle started with the reminder, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the *fellowship* (Gr. *koinonian*, "communion") of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9). Because of that *fellowship* with Jesus Christ, Christians have been called into partnership or communion with the whole church of Christ everywhere in the world. The Corinthians needed to know that their relationship to Christ also involved brotherhood with the whole world-wide church whether in Corinth, Macedonia, Galatia or Jerusalem. They must be led to *share* in supplying material needs and spiritual needs of all the brethren "called unto" the same fellowship ("communion") as they—no matter where those brethren were. Perhaps Paul is *ordering* this lengthy and regular collection for benevolence as part of the therapy for their self-centeredness. Whoever would save his life shall

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lose it, but whoever would lose his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, shall secure it.

Giving is not optional for the Christian. Every place Paul established a congregation of believers he taught them they must give. Jesus taught that to be his followers a person must be willing to give when one has hardly anything at all (the poor widow with two mites, Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44) and to give all when one has everything (the rich young ruler, Luke 18:18-30; Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22). Giving is the very essence and breath of Christianity.

There were two reasons the Christians in Judea were needing financial help. First, a famine (Acts 11:28) had devastated the area; second, many of the Jews who had become christian in Judea were being persecuted and their "goods were being plundered" (Heb. 10:34) by their Hebrew persecutors. It is instructive to note the different Greek words the apostle uses to describe this "contribution":

- a. *logeias* - "a thing that has been counted, a collection." (I Cor. 16:1)
- b. *charin* - "a gracious gift" (I Cor. 16:3)
- c. *koinonia* - "a taking part, a fellowship, a communion" (II Cor. 8:4; 9:13)
- d. *diakonia* - "a ministry, a deaconship" (II Cor. 8:4)
- e. *hadroteti* - "bountiful, abundance, liberal gift" (II Cor. 8:20)
- f. *eulogian* - "well-counted, blessed-counting" (II Cor. 9:5)
- g. *leitourgia* - "serviceable gift, a gift to serve, a liturgy" (II Cor. 9:12)
- h. *eleemosune* - "alms, gift of mercy, gift for the poor" (Acts 24:17)
- i. *prophora* - "a sacrificial offering" (Acts 24:17)

From all these synonyms we get a picture of Christian giving as systematic, liberal, willing, and purposeful. Stedman (*op. cit.*) notices the following outline in Paul's instructions here:

1. Giving is to be a universal Christian practice - "as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do . . ."
2. Giving is in celebration of Christ's resurrection - "On the first day of the week . . ."
3. Giving is personal - ". . . each of you is to put something aside . . ."
4. Giving should be planned and with regularity - ". . . put something aside and store it up . . ."

5. Giving is not to be measured by amount but by motive - “. . . as he may prosper . . .”
6. Giving should be done without special pressure - “. . . so that contributions need not be made when I come . . .”
7. Giving should be applied faithfully to that for which it has been given - “. . . I will send those whom you accredit by letter . . .”

The Greek syntax of verse 2 is interesting: *kata mian sabbatou hekastos humon par heauto titheto thesaurizon ho ti ean euodotai . . .*, “Upon the first of the week each of you by himself is to deposit the things being stored up however he is prospered . . .” You see, they were storing up their offerings constantly—every day—then on Sunday they took their personal collection and *deposited* it in the congregational offering. In the culture of the first century, most people were paid at the end of every day for their labor (see Matt. 20:8). Every day they “stored up” part of their daily wages, according to how much they were paid, and deposited it on the Lord’s Day (first day of the week). This is clearly an assertion that in the first century church there was a time (first day of the week) and a responsible administering (deposit) for money given by Christians to the Lord’s work. It is also a clear indication that the early Christians met on the first day of the week to worship and share in the Lord’s work.

The Greek word *euodotai* is a combined word from *eu*, meaning “well or good,” and *hodos*, meaning “road or journey or path.” It is translated in verse 2, “prosper.” Christians are to give according to “the goodness of the road” they travel. If God has given a man a “hard row to hoe” (hard times, poverty) he should give whatever he is able to give. He must give something, but it may be very little compared to what others have to give. But that is all right with God. It does not need to be a tithe (10 percent) There is nowhere in the New Testament that tithing is commanded for the Christian. The Christian’s relationship is on a much higher level than tithing. The expectation for a Christian is loving, self-sacrificing, responsible stewardship of 100 percent of all with which he has been entrusted. He will give as he believes the Lord has given to him, and what he retains he will not consider his own but he will use it wisely and frugally to serve Christ in the best manner possible and bring glory to his name. We cannot give more than we have. God knows that (II Cor. 8:12), and accepts it. God is singularly interested in the “readiness” of mind and heart to give. With God, motive is all important (see Matt. 6:2, 3, 4, 19, 20, 21). Great sums of money may be given (see

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Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44) but if the motive is self-righteousness, it is an abomination with God, (see Isa. 1:10-17; Micah 6:6-8).

Paul anxiously guarded against exacting contributions for the Lord's work through special pressures. He said, ". . . so that contributions need not be made when I come . . ." He really said, in Greek, *hina me hotan eltho tote logeiai ginontai*, "lest whenever I come then collections there are." Why this instruction?

Because the apostle knew that when he was personally present he had a tremendous impact on people. He did not want their giving to be because they were moved by his preaching or by his stories of what God had done, or in any other way to be pressured. No professional fund raisers would have been permitted in the early churches. Paul says, in effect, "Do not bring out the thermometer; do not put on a three-ring circus, with people running down the aisle bringing pledges to meet a predetermined goal. I do not want that." Your giving is to come out of a heart that has been moved by the grace of God. God does not want giving on any terms other than those. Giving must be without special pressure.

(Ray C. Stedman, *op. cit.*, p. 327)

Finally, Paul advises the church at Corinth of its responsibility to insure that the collection for the needy gets to Judea as intended. The apostle offers to *help* deliver the money if he is needed, but he will let the Corinthian congregation decide who the messengers shall be.

These are principles, based on apostolic authority, the church will do well to follow closely in every age. They are never outdated or irrelevant. We have so much in America! We are so prosperous, in comparison with the rest of the world. God has certainly given Americans, considering our liberties as well as our material endowments, an "easier row to hoe" than the majority of the world's people. Of course, we do not expect unbelievers in America to give to the Lord's work as they have been prospered. But it is doubtful that most Christians in America give as they have been prospered. Let us repent, and do it!

16:5-9 Missions: If we did not know the humble nature of Paul, and did not know his passion for being self-supporting by plying his trade of tent-making, we would think him a bit presumptuous

to invite himself to be the guest of the Corinthians. Paul undoubtedly has another motive for inviting the Corinthians to support him in his intended missionary work. He would want to allow them the privilege of sharing in the fruits of his labors (see Phil. 4:17; II Cor. 11:7-11; 12:13).

Paul established the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1ff.) in A.D. 51 on his 2nd missionary journey. He remained there a year, and returned to Palestine via Syria (Acts 18:18-22). He began his third missionary journey in A.D. 54 going first through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), then to Ephesus (Acts 18:24). During a three-year stay at Ephesus (Acts 18:24—19:41) he wrote I Corinthians. Leaving Asia Minor (Acts 20:1-4) he went to Macedonia. From Macedonia he wrote II Corinthians. Then he went on down into Greece where he spent three months, visiting Corinth again after about a six-year absence. While at Corinth, in 57 A.D., he wrote the epistle to the Romans. In our text here (I Cor. 16:5) Paul writes from Ephesus of his plan to visit Corinth "after passing through Macedonia."

Paul *intended* to stay with the Corinthians. He was "passing through" Macedonia *toward* (Gr. *pros*, preposition denoting direction) Corinth. He intended to stay at Corinth *in order that* (Gr. *hina*, conjunction denoting purpose, aim or goal) they might *speed him on his journey*, (Gr. *propempsete*, aorist imperative active verb, meaning, "you will furnish me with things necessary for a journey"—see Titus 3:13; III John 6). He did not want to see them "just in passing." He intended to spend some time with them, "if the Lord permits." He would need to be housed, fed, perhaps even given financial assistance (even though he usually earned his own living—Acts 20:33-35; I Cor. 4:9-18; II Cor. 11:7-12; 12:14-18; I Thess. 2:5-9; and he taught other Christians to do the same—I Thess. 4:9-12; II Thess. 3:6-15). There were certainly times when Paul did take financial aid (Phil. 4:15-19) and he said he had a right to take such aid in his ministry (I Cor. 9:1ff.). Some preachers, evangelists and missionaries, in this affluent twentieth century, are forced to surrender full-time ministries because of lack of financial support. Perhaps the major reason for insufficient financial pay to ministers of the gospel is that many Christian people do not believe a minister works hard enough to deserve pay equal to those who do manual labor, or equal to those professionals who have invested in years of training and apprenticeship. Most ministers of the gospel today are being paid a salary about equal to janitors and public school teachers—most of whom

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must take a "second job to make ends meet." Ministers with families have difficulty staying out of debt and conducting a full-time ministry on that kind of pay. Most preachers and missionaries never complain. They go right on struggling, feeling the psychological pressures of living each day on the edge of insolvency. They do it because they have a servant's heart. But even the ox (let alone the human servant) is worthy of his hire (I Cor. 9:8-12).

The apostle intended to stay at Corinth. He needed assistance. He was going to be put to the test in Ephesus. He would be run through the "psychological grinder" there. As he was writing he could see a "wide door for effective work" opening for him but there were many adversaries. It would be *hard work*, taxing every mental and emotional fiber of his being. The financial aid he might expect from Corinth would boost his spirit. But he would also be looking for some spiritual encouragement through his stay in Corinth. Even the greatest of the apostles needed human comfort. Some of the most pathos-filled words in all the Bible are those of Paul in the Roman prison awaiting death when he asked Timothy to "do your best to come to me soon" (II Tim. 4:9-18). Paul may have also had in mind the same reason he took financial aid from Philippi. He may have wanted Corinth to have the blessing of participating in the future "fruits" of his ministry (see Phil. 4:17). Whatever his reasoning, it appears he *did not* receive financial aid from Corinth. He apologizes (II Cor. 11:7-11; 12:13) for having done them a disservice for not having demanded it! Any group of Christians that *does not pay* its preacher sufficient wages to relieve him of financial anxiety, does not help him prepare for retirement, and does not encourage him by understanding how hard he labors, is *doing itself a disservice!* Such a church could never realize the satisfaction of sharing in the fruits of his labor.

SECTION 2

Endorse (16:10-18)

10 When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. 11 So let no one despise him. Speed him on his way in peace, that he may return to me; for I am expecting him with the brethren.

12 As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

13 Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love.

15 Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; 16 I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. 17 I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; 18 for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men.

16:10-12 With Reassurance: Paul sent Timothy (and Erastus) from Ephesus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22) and thence to Corinth. After these two helpers had departed on their journey, news came from Corinth that was very disturbing. People from Chloe's household brought a letter and news by word of mouth that the church was struggling in the throes of schismatism, immorality, indifference, disorderliness, and false teaching. Paul knew how easy it would be for such behavior to *ruin* a young preacher by making him discouraged and cynical. The apostle charges the Corinthian church (Gr. *blepete*, imperative mood), "See that you. . . ." give Timothy every reassurance possible for his ministry among you. Paul says, in Greek, *blepete hina aphobos genetai pros humas*, or, "See that you aim to make him be without fear among you." They are not to just let Timothy "shift for himself" in this matter of finding strength and assurance for his work. They are to make it their purpose to relieve him of all that would dishearten and depress him.

The Greek word *aphobos* is translated in RSV as "put him at ease" but is literally, "without fear or phobia." What would Timothy have to fear in Corinth? Pretended sophistication, intellectualism, Gentile cultural differences (shocking enough in themselves to a Jew), all in addition to the problems within the church itself. Paul hopes the Corinthians will conduct themselves toward Timothy according to the principles he has enumerated in chapters 8 through 10. Paul said, "Let no one despise him. . . ." The Greek word *exouthenese* means, literally, "to erase from an account-ledger," or, "to make of no account." Timothy was young, and a Jew. Timothy had no training in Greek literature as Paul had. Sophisticates from the great cities of Greece might tend to show contempt for a young Jewish lad like Timothy. But Timothy was "doing the work of the Lord" and he was important to Paul, so he directed the Corinthians not only to

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support him while he was there, but also to speed him on his way back to him.

Old and young can become close and intimate companions in the work of the gospel. The young person should be respectful and heedful of wise guidance (I Tim. 5:1-22; II Tim. 2:24-26), and the older person is not to think of youth as "of no account." Young people need to feel secure through being encouraged, strengthened, and built up.

Evidently, the Corinthians had requested Paul to insist that Apollos, an eloquent man, and a favorite teacher of the Corinthians, return for a visit. It is apparent the Corinthians thought Paul had not transmitted their request to Apollos. What did the Corinthians think—that Paul, out of jealousy of Apollos' superior oratorical ability and his popularity at Corinth, spitefully ignored their request? Paul replies, "I strongly urged (Gr. *parekalesa*, exhorted, encouraged) him to visit with the other brethren." But the more Paul urged, the more Apollos declined. The Greek would literally say, "And *altogether* it was not his will to come now." Apollos was spiritually-minded and loving enough to reject even something he most probably would have enjoyed rather than give any occasion, or appearance, of "competition" among Christian co-workers. Apollos did not wish his name or his abilities to be abused in support of schismatism or any of the other aberrations of the Corinthian church. He told Paul he would visit Corinth later, when a good opportunity offered itself to him. Whether he did or not, we do not know. His and Paul's actions in these circumstances are exemplary. Let all Christians "doing the work of the Lord" reassure one another in the same kind of conduct.

16:13-14 With Righteousness: All Christians should endorse the gospel and give aid to those who labor full-time in its proclamation by living righteously. That is the best endorsement and aid that may be given to those who work so hard and with little reward in this life. Paul said of the Christians at Thessalonica, "For you are our glory and joy" (I Thess. 2:17-20). He wanted these Corinthians to be "epistles of his, to be known and read by all men" (II Cor. 3:1-3).

He exhorts them to be *watchful* (Gr. *gregoreite*). It is in the imperative mood, thus a command. The male name, *Gregory*, is from this Greek word, and means "vigilant, alert, awake, on guard." The Christian cannot afford to be inept, unaware, careless, unmindful, mesmerized, hypnotized, manipulated and seduced! Paul was afraid for the Corinthians that "as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, their thoughts would be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion

to Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). What was happening to the church with all its problems (especially the false teaching about the resurrection) was not amusing or insignificant. It was evil, destructive, spiritual-insanity.

Next, Paul says, "Be standing in the faith." The Greek verb, *stekete*, is present tense, imperative mood. Once again, it is a command for them to continue their posture before the world in the faith. Paul used the definite article (Gr. *ἡ*, "the" faith), so he is not talking here about personal subjective faith as a virtue, but *the* faith as a body of doctrine. He wanted the Corinthians to take a constant stance upon a knowledge and practice of *the* revealed faith (the teachings and writings of the apostles). Standing fast in *the* faith or in the Lord is something which can be determined in an objective way. We can know whether we are keeping *the* faith if we are keeping Christ's (and the apostle's) word (I John 2:3-6; 2:24; 3:24, etc.). Standing in *the* faith gives unimaginable aid and encouragement to teachers of *the* faith. It is the kind of aid and reward that will never pass away.

Third, Paul says the Corinthians will give aid and comfort to their Christian allies (brethren) by being *courageous*. Actually, the Greek word is *andrizesthe*, and literally means, "act like a man." They are exhorted (the Greek verb is present tense, imperative mood) to continue maturing, growing up, behaving like adults who learn from experience. All marks of mature adulthood (self-control, caution, sensibility, courtesy, firmness, cool-headedness, consideration for another's opinions and trials, tenderness) is what Paul says will contribute to strengthening their fellow Christians. Mature men do not let peer-pressures or vanities of the world seduce them away from the truth. Mature men are able to endure persecution and tribulation without giving in to falsehood. Some of the Corinthians had behaved like immature babies (see I Cor. 3:1ff.). It goes without saying that the church today needs members who "act like men."

Fourth, they are ordered to *be strong* (Gr. *krataiousthe*, again, present imperative). The Greek word is from a root word which means "to be forceful, dominating, mighty." There is no place for any kind of weakness in the Christian life—neither intellectual, moral or spiritual. To be a Christian one must "swim against the tide" of human opinion and worldly lifestyle. To be a Christian one must endure a constant war between his flesh and the things of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:13-25). All the world is on the side of the evil one. The Christian will get no help from the worldly-minded

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people in this world! Do not expect any. What may seem like help from the world is only deception and seduction. To be a Christian demands the best, the strongest, and the most mature. And the Christian who wishes to aid his brother must be forceful (not overbearing) in his support of the gospel.

Finally, Paul says, "Let all that you do be done in love." Love is the supreme virtue (see comments on ch. 13). Without it everything else is wrong. With it (true, agape-love) everything is right. It is that virtue which validates every other professed virtue. Love is the power that sculpts all talents, circumstances, and characteristics of the human personality into a monument reflecting and praising the glory of the Son of God. When all is done in love there is no problem with aiding Christian brethren, (see I Peter 4:8).

16:15-18 With Respect: When Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome he said, "Pay . . . respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7). He said the same to the Christians at Philippi (see Phil. 2:29) and Thessalonica (see I Thess. 5:12).

Paul deals first with the motive for respecting fellow-workers. The household of Stephanas, first converts in Achaia (Gr. *aparche*, lit. "firstfruit"), *devoted* (Gr. *etaxan* "addicted" KJV) themselves to the *service* (Gr. *diakonian*, deaconship) of the saints. Respectful attention to and emulation of such people is a strong Biblical theme (see Heb. 11:1—12:2; I Peter 5:1-5; II Tim. 1:13; 2:1-2; 3:10-17; Heb. 13:7, etc.). Respect in the service of the Lord is earned, not inherited.

Next, Paul says, "be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. . . ." The Greek word is *hupotassesthe*. This comes from the same root word (*tasso*) as the word *etaxan*, translated "addicted" or "devoted" in 16:15. The prepositional prefix, *hupo*, means "under." Thus, the word *hupotassesthe* means, literally, "be addicted or devoted under," or, "subjected to, subordinated to." It is the same word used by Paul in Ephesians 5:21 to deal with attitudes and behavior of husband and wife toward one another. The most practical spiritual help we can give to a Christian ally or brother is to subordinate ourselves in service to him. You will note that "subordination" is not just to a select few, but "to every fellow worker and laborer" (16:16). This substantiates Jesus' example and apostolic teaching throughout the New Testament (see Matt. 20:25-28; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:1-20; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3; I Peter 5:5). There is no "ruling class" in the kingdom of God. Christ is the only King—everyone else is a servant who is to subordinate himself to his brethren. We are to "outdo

one another in showing honor" (Rom. 12:10). It is interesting that Paul uses the Greek conjunction, *hina* ("in order that") to connect the *devotion* of Stephanas' ministry with the *subordination* of the Corinthians to emulate his example. In other words, Stephanas devoted himself to ministry *in order that* the Corinthians might surrender to his guidance in living the Christian life! That is the way it must be with all "leaders" in the Church—wherever they wish others to follow, they must lead! They will never bring others to submit to their leadership unless they devote themselves ("become addicted to") ministering!

Finally, Paul directs, "give recognition to such men." The Greek word *epiginoskete* does *not* mean what we usually think of as "recognition" (applause, flattery, hero-worship). *Epiginoskete* means, "to know thoroughly; to recognize a thing to be what it really is, to be perceptive." The element of expressing gratitude and encouragement is involved, but not braggadocio or adulation. All that is very dangerous to a person's relationship to God. It was said of Jesus, ". . . you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men" (Matt. 22:16). Jesus said of himself, "I do not receive glory from men" (John 5:41). We must be careful to be sincerely grateful for every brother in Christ, expressing it without setting any Christian above another by bragging about him or fawning over him. When Paul wrote this about his fellow laborers, he did not intend the Corinthians to call these fellows before the congregation and give them plaques or put their names in periodicals as if they were the *only* co-laborers who ever helped him. He simply wanted the Corinthian church to be hospitable, kind, *perceptive*, and appreciative. Christians should get acquainted with and *get to know thoroughly* such men as Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; their devotion in service to Christ and his Church might "rub off on" those who get to know them.

SECTION 4

Embrace (16:19-23)

19 The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. 20 All the brethren send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

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21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. 22 If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

16:19-20 Dearly: Paul wanted Christians in every nation, culture, race and language to acknowledge their common citizenship in the eternal kingdom of God. Wherever he went, whenever he wrote, he promoted Christian unity and fellowship. Christians *are* united. The fellowship or communion of believers is an accomplished work which took place in the redemption Christ finished. Unity *is* the Christian calling because Christ “created in himself one new man in place of the two. . . .” Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility and reconciled all who will accept this reconciliation as *one* body, (Eph. 2:11-22). Now, it is the responsibility of Christians to “give diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . .” (Eph. 4:1-16).

The oneness of the universal brotherhood in Christ was not dependent on material things. The first century church did not have church buildings but usually met in people’s houses for congregational worship. Aquila and Prisca had a church in their house. This does not mean, of course, that church buildings are not good. Anything in God’s creation which can be used to honestly and faithfully further the preaching of the Gospel should be used to its best advantage. But we must never think we have to have “things” to follow Christ. We must never think that one culture and people has to use the same methods or tools another one uses to follow Jesus.

Paul wanted the Corinthian church to know that the churches (Christians) of Asia Minor (“foreigners”) sent them *hearty* (Gr. *polla*, “much”) greetings in the Lord. Politically and socially, the people of Asia Minor and Greece were enemies, and had been for centuries. But Paul expects the power of Christ’s love to make them brothers, eager to love one another and eager to be “one body” in the Lord.

He orders them, “*You greet*” (Gr. *aspasasthe*, imperative mood, meaning, “salute, embrace”) one another with a *holy kiss* (Gr. *philemati hagio*). This is the kind of warm embrace brothers and sisters in the flesh often give one another. It is not the kiss of passionate lovers. It is an exhortation for Christians to break down the walls of formality and hypocrisy, to free themselves of prejudice and partiality, and *embrace* one another as brothers. We are to *receive*

one another as Christ has received us (Rom. 15:7); we are to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgives us (Eph. 4:32); we are to have a *sincere* love of the brethren, loving one another from the heart, *fervently* (I Peter 1:22); we are to do good to all men, and *especially* to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). And a *proper* display of emotions toward Christian brethren is always in order! Telling and showing our love aids our Christian brethren.

16:21-24 Discreetly: This is an ominous way to close a letter! He writes, "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed." The Greek word is *anathema*, literally, "let him not stand"; the word came to mean, "let him be cursed or damned," (see Gal. 1:8-9; I Cor. 12:3; Acts 23:14; Mark 14:71; Acts 23:12, 21). Christians are to give aid to all men, especially the brotherhood, but with *discretion*. Paul does not pronounce this curse upon unbelievers, but upon those who *profess* to be Christians. It is interesting that Paul uses the Greek word *philei*, "affection, friendship" here instead of *agape* for *love*. *Phileo* is the word Jesus used to challenge Peter's profession of love for his Master (John 21:15ff.). It is the word to denote a love involving personal, emotional affection. Paul is challenging the reality of love professed but not expressed. Christianity is not merely a series of philosophies or doctrines to be taught and learned—it is a Person to know and love. If anyone knowing Christ, has not developed an affection for him, something is seriously wrong in his life. He is, in fact, on his way to being "damned." This was the damnation of the Pharisees. They professed a love for God but did not have it (cf. John 5:42; 8:39-47). Christian love is discerning. It will not aid hypocrisy or anti-christs. It will not condone apostasy or immorality. Christian love *will* give aid to honest seekers and those making honest errors, because that is what Christians, themselves, are.

In what appears to be a play on words, Paul follows the Greek word *anathema* with the Aramaic word *marana tha*. *Marana tha*, according to the *Didache* ("Teaching of the Twelve," written between 80 and 120 A.D., not written by the apostles, but held in high regard by the early church), was a word used in the early Christian observance of the Lord's Supper and meant, "Our Lord has come!" Thus, it would refer to the Lord's first advent, not his second coming. Anyone who has no affectionate love for Jesus Christ is damned because there is no other redemption to be offered. Redemption has already come in the person of Jesus Christ. Love him or be damned!

FIRST CORINTHIANS

And that is how Paul concludes this letter to Corinth. That is how he sums up all he has taught them. This is what he desires they remember above all else. "If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be damned!" It may seem rather an ugly tone with which to finish a letter, but how else can you interpret the impact of the Christian gospel? The unique feature of the Christian faith is that it requires a resolute adherence and a constant devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Merely to use a title, to call him "the Lord" and yet have no personal love or devotion, to show no regard for him in one's life, is the worst form of hypocrisy. When a man truly loves the Lord Jesus, his emotional attachment is always matched by readiness to obey Christ's revealed word. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). Why do men call him "Lord, Lord," and do not the things which he says? (Luke 6:46).

So this is what Paul would underline: the secret of a happy life, a holy life, a victorious life, a Christian life, is a personal, real devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not have that, you have nothing, and you will stand condemned on the Judgment Day.

Not to love the Lord Jesus means that in one's heart he is in rebellion against the highest throne in all the universe. Not to love the Lord Jesus is to reject the loveliest character of all history. In Christ is every possible beauty; there is nothing lacking in him. Not to love the Lord Jesus is a refusal of the greatest Lover of one's soul. Not to love Jesus is to curse oneself and be under the curse of Almighty God.

There was another church, working hard, patiently enduring persecution, orthodox in doctrine, bearing up for Christ's name-sake, and not complaining. But it had abandoned the *love* it had at the first. It was threatened that its "lampstand" would be removed unless it repented (Rev. 2:1-7). That was Paul's warning also to the church at Corinth.

The apostle's last words of this letter to the saints in Corinth are "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. So be it!" The KJV italicizes the word *be*, to show it is supplied by the translators. In both sentences, the Greek preposition *meta* would literally be translated simply, "with." Could Paul not be inferring, "The grace of the Lord Jesus *is* with you; My love *is* with you all in Christ Jesus," instead of inferring he is wishing it to be so? The Christians at Corinth were having some serious problems; they had made serious errors; but they were mostly honest errors (not with a high-hand). Some of them were wanting apostolic guidance in

order to repent and correct their sins. So Paul addresses them as “the church of God . . . those sanctified . . . called to be saints” (I Cor. 1:2). The grace of the Lord Jesus *was* with them even when they were in error, so long as they did not deliberately continue in the error after the apostle gave them divine direction. The love of Paul *was* with them even though their immaturity, jealousy, ignorance, and indifference to immorality troubled his soul.

So closes the immortal letter of the apostle Paul to the church of God at Corinth. It analyzes most of the problems that plague the saints. Times and cultures may differ through the centuries, but human nature never does. Problems that plague the saints remain essentially the same; causes of the problems and manifestations of the problems remain practically the same. And, because this apostolic letter, sanctioned by the Holy Spirit, is the revealed word of God as to the source and implementation of principles which will resolve the problems, it is forever relevant. It is imperative that today’s church regularly study this epistle in its entirety. Christians must read this letter; preachers must feed their congregations through expository sermons from this book; congregations must put into practice the divine directions, because I Corinthians is a book in the imperative mood.

APPLICATIONS:

1. Do you “store up” *constantly*, either literally or mentally, what you intend to give to the Lord’s work?
2. Do you “deposit” regularly (weekly or monthly) what you have “stored up”?
3. What are the reasons for regular or systematic giving?
4. Does your congregation try to get contributions by pressure tactics? What tactics does it use?
5. Does it make any difference what methods are used to get offerings just so long as the church’s needs are met? Why?
6. Should the church be concerned about the administering of collections? How?
7. What does your congregation think about the preacher’s salary? How much should it be? Does he really work hard enough for it?
8. What other ways may a congregation support those who are doing the work of the Lord (elders, deacons, Sunday School teachers, communion preparers, janitors, etc.)? Does your congregation? What can you do about it?

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9. Have you ever considered righteous living as being an aid to those who labor in the Lord's work?
10. Do you think members of your church "act like men"? Why?
11. Do the "leaders" in your congregation "addict" themselves to ministering to the members? Do they have difficulty getting people to follow their lead? Why?
12. Do you agree with Paul, "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be damned"? Why?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What is a "contribution"?
2. How much should a Christian contribute?
3. Why did Paul say to deposit their contributions on the "first day of the week"?
4. Why were they sending the contribution to Jerusalem?
5. Why did Paul invite himself to spend the winter in Corinth?
6. Why did he insist they "speed him on his journey"?
7. What were the Christians at Corinth to do for Timothy?
8. What is "standing firm in the faith"?
9. What is "being courageous"?
10. Why should Christians be subject to men like Stephanas?
11. How should we give recognition to such men?
12. What is "greeting one another with a holy kiss"?
13. Do the problems of Corinth still exist in the church today? Are the solutions Paul directed to Corinth workable in today's technological age? Why?