

## ***IT'S A WRAP!***

### **1 Corinthians 16**

**Intro:** When you visit Barcelona in Spain, one thing you cannot miss is the Basílica de la Sagrada Família, which I think, in my rough translation, is something like The Basilica of the Sacred Family. Construction on this cathedral, which was designed by architect and artist, Antoni Gaudi, began in 1882. The amazing thing is, nearly 140 years later, it is still under construction, and only slated for completion, maybe by 2032. So, if you think our nine month adventure (actually we took a month off in December) through 1 Corinthians took a while, we could be building a cathedral.

Seriously though, can you believe it?! We have come to the end of 1 Corinthians. And while I didn't take 150 years to do it, I wanted to make sure we took our time and learned what Paul is teaching us about Being the Church in Challenging Times. It's been amazing how many parallels there are from the years around 50 AD, when Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth, to these years around 2020 when we are reading it. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Today is a wrap as I take us on a rather swift run through Paul's concluding words to the Church in Corinth. He began with tough and almost defensive words in the first chapters; he continued with hard hitting teaching throughout the letter until he launched into sublime heights in his discussion of love in Chapter 13. Then he became infinitely practical as he directed the Corinthians toward good worship and on into his soaring discussion of the resurrection which we wrapped up last week on Easter Sunday. Here he says goodbye even as he injects just a little more teaching.

I'm going to take it section by section and unpack it as I go. The first being his discussion of . . .

#### **Thoughtful and Consistent Giving (Read Corinthians 16:1-4)**

- One of Paul's jobs as he traveled through Greece and Asia (present day Turkey) on his way back to Jerusalem, was the gathering of a collection for the poor, famine ridden, and financial spent church in Judea. Here, like any good pastor, he is not missing a chance to lead his people into the act of worship and obedience that is giving. He has already briefly referred to it earlier in the letter, and, and he will be addressing it more specifically for a couple chapters in the 2 Corinthians – specifically in chapters 8 and 9. Here he is asking these relatively new believers who owe their very existence, in so many ways, to the faithfulness and selflessness of the established church in Jerusalem, to in-turn contribute to their great financial need.
- F. B. Meyer writes, *"It is remarkable the way the apostle can turn from one of his sublimest displays of sacred eloquence to deal with so ordinary matter as the collection. But, after all there is no incongruity. The thoughts to which he has given expression should surely lead to some tangible responsive Christian duty and activity, or they would injure rather than help. Nothing is more injurious to the Christian conscience than trumpet sounding which leads to no response and action. If the foregoing chapter does not stimulate Christian generosity, nothing will."* In other words, having been so gloriously given the promise of eternal life, start living it by giving it. We have the gift of salvation, you can't outgive that!
- Notice the practicality of it – Paul is saying make it a habit, *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up* (v. 2a).
  - By the way. A quick aside here: note the time – *"the first day of every week"*. Jesus rose on the first day of the week, Sunday, and by 50 AD Sunday worship had moved from the Jewish, seventh day, Sabbath, to its own Lord's Day as a remembrance of resurrection where we celebrate a little Easter each week. It's not a hill to die on, because we can worship on whatever day we wish and because we *should* worship EVERY day; but if anyone wants to make a big deal to you about Seventh Day vs. first day worship (like the big billboard I've seen on the way into Mansfield on Main St.) here's just an example of how the early church changed things. Just sayin . . .
- So Paul notes a time to have your offering ready, and then he gives a method. He suggests the definite appropriation for God's work of a certain proportion of the Christ Follower's income. It's a proportion that is between the giver and his God. Paul puts it this way, you give as you have been prospered. This is what I call *"thoughtful, consistent giving"*. I have taught it for 30 years and I have practiced it for 25 years (yes, for a number of years I did not practice what I preached) and I have never looked back. God *WILL* take care of you!

- Paul was not pushy with his collection appeals and neither am I. Give thoughtfully, consistently, and never impulsively. Meyer puts it this way. *“Remember it is God who opens great and effectual doors before his servants. It is of no use to force them.”* Let the Lord open the doors and then look at how the floodgates of Kingdom ministry burst open.
- Next Paul moves to . . .

### **Quality Time (Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-9)**

- He is putting the finishing touches on a lengthy letter where he has touched on a variety of subjects. He has been strident in his terminology, and in many cases the reader can only look up and say, *“Them’s fightin’ words!”* And after all that, Paul adds, *“Hey by the way, I’m coming by for a visit! Get ready.”* Paul wasn’t into hit and run. Instead he confronted and came on. These were his spiritual children, so he wanted to see them, hug them, teach them and have some real quality time. You can NEVER have a good dialogue in a text or an email. Even a phone call does not suffice in comparison to really quality face time.
- Kenneth Foreman points out Paul’s tough love when he writes, *“Note in verse 9 that the fact that Paul had enemies in Ephesus strikes him as a good reason for staying and not leaving. Just think about that!”* Paul didn’t run away from conflict. He dealt with it. Did he always do it right? Nope! Know how I know that? Paul was a human being! But what he did right was staying there till he worked it out with his brothers and sisters in Christ. That’s what Christ Followers do. It takes time and it takes quality time.
- That leads into . . .

### **A few words about Timothy and Apollos (Read 1 Corinthians 16:10-12)**

- Timothy was Paul’s son in the faith. Timothy had had little or no leadership from a father figure and Paul disciple him even from afar. Here in verses 10-11 he is being the protective dad even from a distance with a *“You be nice to your brother and don’t make me come over there!”*. But notice that even though he was very protective, he was not preventive. He could have sheltered Timothy and kept him close, but he did the right thing and sent him out, knowing God was much better protection than himself. Send your kids out in faith. God will take care of them.
- Apollos was a great preacher, but he was apparently a reluctant one. If you remember back in the opening chapters there had been some comparing of Paul and others, and Apollos was one of those against whom Paul was measured. I always got the idea that Paul came up wanting. Maybe he wasn’t as eloquent or good looking, but, in any case, Apollos won out. The point Paul is making is Apollos was effective and he wanted him to go minister in Corinth. Here is the take away: jealousy and comparison is a tool of Satan. What is important is the Gospel is preached. That was Paul’s greatest desire.
- And then . . .

### **Be Jesus and be a blessing (Read 1 Corinthians 16:13-18)**

- I love this here. Foreman writes, *“Paul holds up love as a guide of life. It is not a soft, easygoing love; he connects it with strength, with the qualities of a soldier in verse 13. Indeed verse 13 and 14 could be taken as a summary of the ideal Christian character.”* The entire letter has been a love letter. Even the tough spots. Look at it again — *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.* (vv. 13-14). This is muscular agape. Jesus was not a wimp and neither are his followers. Be on your guard. Stand firm on what the Bible says, and be like Jesus. Better yet, BE Jesus!
- And be a blessing like the people listed in verses 15-18. These people here are named, but through Holy History thousands have gone unnamed and are the often unsung heroes of the faith. These are the saints who have opened their homes to missionaries and evangelists. They are the human angels who take meals to hurting people. Their blessing lives on. Don’t think that being a blessing doesn’t have its benefits, it does. The people who came through my home when I was a kid enriched my life. My daughters and even my grandkids have friends all over the world because they sat at the table with guests from around the world. Be a blessing.
- And finally . . .

### **Last words are lasting words (Read 1 Corinthians 16:19-24)**

- Paul sends greetings from the ones who are with him. Once again, this one who had such harsh words tells them to greet one another with holy affection (a holy kiss) and then he throws in one more harsh

commandment about those who those who don't love the Lord being cursed. Let me just jump in here to tell you he was not cursing the one who does not love the Lord. The truth is, the one who does not love the Lord is already cursed. They have made the choice for that themselves. The curse can be reversed by turning to Jesus. It's as easy as that.

- The benediction is powerful and it will be how I send you out at bit later, *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.* (v. 23). There is little better than those last words in the ears of a loved one.
- And then those closing words – listen to them again, *My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.* (v. 24). Kenneth Foreman asks: "*Is this conceited? The grace of the Lord Jesus and my love be with you!*" He answers himself, "*On the contrary, it is a good way to end. It is easy to love our fellow men and fellow Christians, sitting in church, before the benediction, but it is love after the benediction that counts.*" OHHHH! That's the truth. We have got to love like Jesus 24/7, and that is where the rubber meets the road ABC. It's also the love a pastor, worth his salt, has for church family. And I love you! And I know you love me. And that's a good way to end. On the theme of love. The kind of love that is only possible because of the infinite love of a God who is ἀγάπη. That is, finally, a wrap. Amen.