

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

“Collecting And Concluding”

The book of 1st Corinthians has been quite a journey. It's my prayer that as we've traveled through it together that God has not only challenged us in several ways, but that He's changed us as well. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. **That we put off, concerning our former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and that we put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.** Or to understand all that another way that we've grown less and less like ourselves and more and more like Christ as we simply take *in*, think *through*, and act *upon* the Word of God. and As we come now to Ch 16 we find ourselves finishing the book this morning.

and Ch 16 breaks down into about 4 little sections real nicely. If you take notes, or would like to pen it in your margin there next to the Vs you might jot it down like this. #1 Vs 1-4 deals *with* and speaks *of*, “The Collection.” #2 Vs 5-12 speaks of, “The Course” that is, the direction that Paul plans on taking, the way his calendar is filling in and filling up. #3 Vs 13-18 speaks of a few of “The Co-laborers” and a correct outlook or having a proper perspective concerning them. and #4 Vs 19-24 is, “The Conclusion.”

We're just going to jump right in here with both feet and get in to this topic that's quite frankly a bit awkward for folks because it deals with our money. and You well know that we don't bring up financial matters around here a whole lot because I realize that there are those out there who in the name of Christ and under the façade of the church want to rip you off and make merchandise of you as a child of God. However we don't avoid the subject when in our Vs by Vs, Ch by Ch, book by book study of God's Word it comes up. Because it's important to know what the Word really says about it. So that you can be aware of what's required, or what's desired, and what's wise regarding it. **Then we can be faithful and wise stewards of what God's entrusted to us and not ripped off and drawn into various scams from people spinning out spiritual platitudes that sound real good but are completely ungodly.**

So let's establish here 1 thing right off the bat when it comes to the money that's in your care. It's *all* God's, He put the ore in the earth, He's created it all, there's nothing that we have but that we didn't receive it. The bible says, “*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*” James 1:16-17 We spoke last week about that little phrase, “Do not be deceived.” and We mentioned that whenever the bible says, “Don't be deceived,” it's generally because that's an area that as mankind we have a tendency to be deceived in. How often we believe that the good things that come into our lives are because *we've worked hard, or we've studied for years, we've somehow earned it or deserve it.* Can I tell you that the only thing we've ever earned or deserve is an eternity in hell apart from God. Anything beyond that is the gift of God's grace, if it's good *for* you, or takes care *of* you, or is even pleasurable *to* you (with in the context of biblical approval) it is a gift that has been given to you by God.

So the money I have, the salary you bring in, however little or however much it may be, God has entrusted that to you. It's His, now what you do with it is another story. But realize that what we're talking about is how we handle God's resources that He's entrusted to us. The resources are His, we're simply the stewards He's entrusted with them and we do well to be wise concerning it. (Matt 25:14:30)

Vs1-4

So several instructions here about *what* we give, *the way* we give it, and the financial integrity of the ministry that's receiving it. He says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints," we've noted as we've studied 1st Cor that there were certain things that Paul addressed out of necessity, other things he addressed because they inquired of them specifically. This is apparently something else they were inquiring of, they wanted to know how to handle the financial matters concerning the offering Paul was collecting for the saints. As you read through the book of Acts and various other epistles that Paul wrote you realize that Paul was collecting an offering from various Gentile churches to help offset some of the struggles of the church in Jerusalem. Not only because it's just right to minister to one another in such ways but he was also hoping that it would help break down some racial barriers so that the Jews would receive and realize the love of God in the Gentiles seeing them as their brothers and sisters in Christ just the same. But because the church in Jerusalem was struggling (we know there was a famine in that day in and around Jerusalem, there was persecution on the rise, believers losing their jobs, from Acts Ch 6 we realize that the church was supporting a significant # of widows,) Paul was hoping to help alleviate some of those things through this collection.

and Again when he mentions "saints" that's simply a generic term for believers in general, it's not something we work hard for and the eventually arrive to the status of a saint as some would have you believe. If you're in Christ you are positionally as holy and righteous as you're ever going to get, you're either a saint or you ain't but there's no in between. Doesn't mean you're with out sin and perfect practically, but the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you *personally*. So Paul is referencing the poor believers there in Jerusalem.

We realize and recognize that the church has an obligation to help those who are poor and those who have legitimate needs with in the church. Now we don't have time to develop it fully but suffice it to say that the church also has an obligation to discern to the *truly* needy are. (1 Tim 5:3) If you're capable of work but you just aren't working, you're not needy, you're lazy, you don't need the churches support you need a job (1 Tim 5:8, 1 Thess 4:11, 2Thess 3 10-12). If you're truly needy but you have a family that's able to help, you don't need the churches support, you need your families and they have a responsibility to you as such (1 Tim 5:3-4). If you *are* supported in some way by the church you have an obligation to contribute to the church in some way, be it in service, be it through prayer, or something (1 Tim 5:5). It's also right and proper for the church examine your moral conduct prior to giving you support (1 Tim 5:9-13). and Finally the churches support should be for the most basic necessities of living, (1 Tim 6:8) (having food and clothing with these we shall be content.)

Something else I want to point out is the fact that Paul doesn't use the word "tithe" here. This word "collection" is the word "logia" and it's a reference to an "extra collection." Now it's not a "tax" or something that's compulsory, they were each free to give as their heart directed them. But he's speaking here of an "extra collection" or what we might call a free will offering. An offering is something that goes beyond the tithe. Occasionally someone will ask me the difference between tithes and offerings. (Now we've already resolved that it's all God's) The tithe is the only portion that He requires, and "tithe" means a 10th. People want to instantly engage you on that point and say, "Wait the tithe was OT, the law, it's not brought up in the NT." Well, yes it is we'll get to that in a minute, but tithing was actually not unheard of over 400 yrs before the Law was ever given. In the book of Gen you find Ab tithing, you find Jacob tithing, then you find God "inducting" the tithe (if you will) in the law, and Jesus approving of it in the gospels.

There He was rebuking the scribes and Pharisees for neglecting the weightier matters of the law like justice and mercy but sticking to lighter things as though it made for their righteousness. and He said, "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*" Matt 23:23 What He's saying is that it's right to tithe, "these you ought to have done" that is pay tithes of all your increase, but just because you tithe it doesn't justify leaving other matters (justice, mercy, and faith) undone.

Malachi teaches us that we actually rob God (rip Him off) when we don't tithe, we're taking from Him what's His. He's given us everything, tells us to return 10% of it and makes us accountable for the other 90%. and When we won't even give Him back a 10th the bible teaches us that it's equivalent to robbing God (Mal 3). It's inviting a curse upon our lives and our homes (Look quickly at Malachi 3, Vs 8-11)

Ever feel like you're putting money into pockets with holes in them? How's the area of the tithe in your life? God says that when you trust Him there He'll rebuke the devourer for your sake so that your ground and your vine will bear fruit. So really the tithe isn't a law thing, it's just a God thing period, and it's not God's way of raising cash, He doesn't need our money. But it's part of His way of raising kids. It's not God that has the need, it's us, we need to give, we've spoken of this before. I'm selfish by nature, greedy, I want more. and One thing that happens as I give to God is that I'm learning to die to that, I'm giving away my greediness, my self centeredness, dying to the flesh, and fleshly tendencies. Another thing that God is working in us as we give is His nature, God is a giver, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and He gave us the Holy Spirit, every good and perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights. In giving God is teaching us, forming us and fashioning us to be like Him. A 3rd thing that happens as we give to the Lord is that our heart becomes more and more affixed on the things of the kingdom as opposed to the things of this world. Jesus never said that where your heart is there your treasure will be. But He did say, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" Matt 6:22 If I invest into stocks I'm going to be scouring for those investment opportunities, online, calling my broker, buy low with sell high. If I'm into real-estate I'm looking for those foreclosures, perhaps people in a bind, selling low, so I can turn it around, or put some money into it and double the profit.

My treasure is there, so I'm interested in it, checking on it. Jesus said when we invest into the kingdom same thing happens, my heart turns toward it, tunes in to it. and Beyond all of that it's an aspect of our worship.

So Paul here isn't looking to take from the tithe, he's not wanting that which comes to the storehouse, he's talking about an offering. Something beyond the tithe, 10% is a good place to start, but if you are able to give say 12%, you've tithed and of your own freewill offered 2%. and I'm not belittling that, simply breaking it down. and He's looking to collect an offering for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Now, as I said, the tithe comes to the storehouse (your church home) (this is what I'm persuaded the bible teaches) your offering you're free to direct wherever you feel so led. For them the current need before them was the needy in Jerusalem. You may support various missions, or perhaps throw some change in our "feed the elephant" fund that translates into NT's for gospel for Asia. Every now and then we may make a need know, there's never a problem making a need known. But around here our goal is "information apart from solicitation" I don't mind informing you of what's going on and giving you an opportunity to be apart of it if the Lord leads you that way. But I'm not here to solicit you, there's a difference.

So we've spoken about "what" we give, in Vs 2 Paul brings up "how" we're to give it.

Vs2

So real quick here we see that our giving is to be systematic, it's to be all inclusive, it's to be premeditated, and it's to be proportionate to our personal level of prosperity. 1st of all he says, "On the 1st day of the week" which is what day? Sunday, the early church gathered on Sunday just as we do because that was the day that Jesus rose from the dead, it's also the day that God sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. and Paul says when you gather on the 1st day of the week as a part of your worship service let that be the time when in an orderly fashion you give to the Lord. (Now we realize that there are gifts of service, and those aren't with out worth, obviously, but Paul is speaking specifically here of our finances). and It's not that you can't give on Wednesdays or whatever but he's making a point. It needs to be systematic, something we do regularly, if you only get paid twice a month I'm sure God understands that. Or if you're convicted over it, break it down so that you have something to contribute weekly, it's no doubt a healthy pattern to pick up on.

The next thing he says is that giving is something that should happen in the life of every believer regardless of where we're at financially. "Let *each one* of you." We spoke about robbing God when we don't give, but in certain ways we rip off the body as well. Because on a practical plane it's not inexpensive to grow and facilitate ministry; there are salaries involved, bills, utilities, missions endeavors, facility improvements and all sorts of things that take place that God has ordained our giving to take care of. and When a believer says, "I'm not going to give or contribute but I'm going to reap the benefits of everyone else who does," that's not right, it's basically freeloading off the body. (Now again God knows your situation, and no one would desire that you lose your house because you feel guilty to give to the church, but if you're in a predicament like that you do well to seek out a godly solution to your situation.)

Next our giving should be premeditated, we're to lay something aside, storing up. It's something we should think through and be persuaded of in the Lord before we ever come through those doors. When you've allowed God to form your conviction, perhaps God has said, "Don't be burdened beyond the tithe" then it's clear, perhaps God has really blessed your week and He says, "Today give 20%." The point is that you won't be compelled through guilt, or persuaded to do more or less than what God has placed on your heart after you get here. I shouldn't be sitting here deciding what to give as the time approaches, or feel weird because I've got a \$1 and a \$20 in my wallet and I'm going to feel lame if I give a buck but I really can't afford to give the \$20. If it's worked out in my heart in advance, I'm prepared, I'm persuaded in my heart already and nothing presents a problem.

Finally our giving is to be proportionate, we're give according to the proportion of our personal prosperity, "Storing up as he may prosper." Now in a real respect the tithe works this out for us naturally, but beyond that the same is true. If I make \$18,000 a yr I'll do well if I'm able to contribute that \$1800 as the year goes by, and if I get a little bonus perhaps the offering side of things can kick in as well. (Now if you've discovered you can live on \$12,000 a yr and God has placed it on your heart to do more than the \$1800, go for it, but I'm speaking by way of example.) Let's say I make, \$200,000 a yr, at that point \$20,000 a yr in giving wouldn't really be that big of a deal and I'd do well to give more than that in various ways. The bible says, "*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*" 1 Tim 6:17-19

The more I prosper, the more I should be giving accordingly as the Lord may lead. and He says that he doesn't want any collections received when he comes, he doesn't his presence to compel them or guilt them to give more. He says, "Work it out in advance and when I get there whatever has been collected will be sufficient."

Vs3-4

Paul was a man of incredible integrity when it came to finances in the ministry. He wasn't going to let it be said, "Sure it's for the poor Paul, when you leave town you'll be driving a new chariot with gold plated rims, you'll be sporting biblical bling in the next town!" He said, "I don't even want to touch it, you decide who's going to handle it, and when I get there they can accompany me so that you're certain of the accountability." Ledgers, receipts, accountability and responsibility are a must for any ministry that you contribute to. If you have a ministry to which people can contribute, but you have no way of showing accountability with those funds, what's coming in, what's going out and where it's going, that's horrible, you're setting yourself up for a huge fall. **There is a major must as it pertains to financial accountability and responsibility. Paul says, "I have nothing to hide, don't even want to touch it personally, you decided who to have take it and if they need to come with me they can."** Now as for his course.

Vs5-7

Should we have plans? You bet, long term and short term goals are a good thing. This is what Paul was planning, but what I want you to see is that even though he was responsible in redeeming the time he was still flexible should the Lord decide to take him a different route.

He says, "I'm going to do this, go there, stay here, and when I get to you I'll be there for a while, *if the Lord permits.*" Translation, "God owns the editing rights to my life." I'm praying and planning, but if God wants to change it He can. James said that our lives are like a vapor, and we don't know what tomorrow may bring so it's only pride that says, "I'm going to do this, and go there and tomorrow do the other thing." He said, "*Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'*" James 4:15 Here we find Paul emulating the same pattern, "If the Lord permits I'll do this." and If you plan on the Lord interrupting your plans, then your plans will never be interrupted, because interruption was part of the plan.

Vs8-9

and You can read in Acts Ch 19 of both the great and effective opened door and the many adversaries. Revival was breaking loose, miracles were happening, people being healed, demons being cast out, people turning to Christ from the occult burning their books of witchcraft and magic to the total value of about 50,000 pieces of silver. But there were also people being put out of business because of it, people who made their living by making little silver idols of Diana, and they threw the city into a riot and as usual Paul's life being placed in jeopardy, he finally left (a couple of yrs having gone by).

But what I want you to see is this; great and effective doors being open before you will always result in many adversaries. Paul didn't view hardship as proof he needed to abandon ship. To the contrary he saw that he must be doing something right if the pot was getting so stirred up. If you're not a threat to the enemy, he'll just leave you alone lest you be motivated to do something for the kingdom. But if you're moving forward in your walk and relationship with the Lord, if God is opening doors before you, effectively using you, watch out the warfare is coming. It's not a matter of "if" it's only "when." Opportunities will always bring opposition, opponents, the Satan will always seek to counter God's work.

and He'll seek to discourage you from continuing on, eliminate you from the roster of people God can use. Remember the encouragement of Ch 15 Vs 58, (read) "...be..."

Vs10-11

Timothy was a younger guy, a little timid, seemed to be unsure of himself. and Paul is thinking, "If these guys will disrespect me like this, they'll eat Timothy alive." and So he says, "Hey, don't be trying to intimidate him, or overshadow him, he does the work of the Lord." and Wouldn't it be great if the apostle Paul could say of you or me, "as I do." He does the Lord's work, "as I do." Wow, what a commendation. So, "Don't despise him, or look condescendingly down upon him." Now Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim 4 to let no one despise his youth, it's 2 fold. Yeah we're not to despise or look down upon anyone who's serving the Lord in this way. But there's also a responsibility on Timothy's end, on my end and your end to not give people a reason to do so, we're to live our lives above reproach, with honesty, and integrity mingled with love. and It doesn't matter if the person is a young person or not. God is in to using young people, Timothy was younger, Joseph was young, David was young, Jeremiah was young, Daniel was young when God began to use their lives. Moses was 80, age is irrelevant, if God is using someone's life, we're to give them proper respect.

Vs12

Considering Apollos had a fan club there that probably didn't fly to well for the Corinthians. But we see here that there wasn't a hierarchy among the apostles or church leaders. Paul didn't try to lord over him, he recognized him as a contemporary and said, "Ok, I think it would be good, but if the Lord isn't leading you then go when He is." It doesn't matter if you pastor a church of thousands, or if 10 showing up is a good Sunday, before the Lord those 2 Pastors share equal authority.

Vs13

Paul rifles out a few last minute exhortations, "Be alert, don't be ignorant of your enemies devices, wage wise warfare. Stand firm, or fast in the faith, don't give ground, finish what you start, don't be one who just begins well but then loses heart and gives up. Stand firm, take ground for the kingdom, don't give it up. Be brave, or literally "act like men," don't be wimping out in the face of adversity, hold the line, and be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Vs14

Underline it, memorize it, take it to heart, there's nothing really to add to that, it pretty much sums up the entirety of the letter. Let all that you do be done with love, and all means what it says, all.

Vs 15-18

A correct perspective of his co-laborers. We he mentions the "1st fruits" of Achaia he means that they were among the 1st to be saved in that region. and This family was blessed with the gift of helps, it says that they "devoted" or more literally "addicted" themselves to the ministry of the saints. They didn't wait to be asked, they saw a need, and they met it. Paul says, "That's right on, you see people like that, who serve the Lord, have devoted and addicted themselves to the ministry like that, get behind them, be supportive, be submissive. Don't be burdensome to them, come alongside and bless them in whatever way you can."

Vs19-21

In our day and in our culture a "holy-handshake" will do. Sometimes we might offer a "holy-hug" the main thing is that we mean it, you shake someone's hand, then turn around and roll your eyes, there's nothing holy about that, it was hollow, not holy.

Vs22

If you have a KJV it's left un-translated and simply says, "If any man not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maranatha." Anathema meaning "devoted to destruction into the lowest depths of hell." and Maranatha means, "O Lord come," or "Our Lord is come." So that basically Paul is saying, "If anyone doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ let him be devoted to destruction at the coming of our Lord." and That was probably aimed as a warning at the corrupt company that was mingling with them that we spoke of last week. But you guys this is the reality for each and every person who's ever drew breath upon this earth, destined for Heaven, or devoted to destruction, it's up to us, we have the choice. Accept Jesus Christ or reject Him, our eternal destiny weighs in the balance and hinges on that decision.

Vs23-24

Although this letter has been corrective in nature, and incredibly confrontational, Paul qualifies it *all*, in love. The wounds of a friend are faithful. and Love will confront out of line issues. It's not fun, it's not comfortable, but the one who truly cares will do it. The bible says, *“Open rebuke is better Than love carefully concealed.”* Prov 27:5 and Again, *“He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward Than he who flatters with the tongue.”* Prov 28:23

So a lot packed away in this Ch, from what we give and how we're to give it, of course we didn't touch on the humility that's to be involved, not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing, not making a big deal or show of it, just as unto the Lord. But insight into plotting our course, being flexible open and yielded to the Lord, proper perception of those serving the Lord and devoted to the ministry of the saints, the imperative need to know and love the Lord, and winding it all down, and wrapping it all up in love.

Prayer Points:

Lord, may all that we do, be done in love. Even if it's not fun, or comfortable, but at times confrontational, but that we would be instruments of your love, speaking the truth in love. We thank You for Your word and pray that You'd help us to glean and get from it those things that we need individually and corporately as a body. *That we'd see each other through Your eyes, support those who serve You, that we'd be flexible and yielded to You moving when and however You desire in and through us. and God that as we give to You, that it would be out of love for You, we want to be pleasing to You, seeking 1st Your kingdom and Your righteousness trusting that You'll meet our needs and take care of our lives.*

I want to encourage you that if you've not submitted Your life to Christ, you've not opened Your heart to Him, or surrendered before Him, you don't have to be an object of God's wrath, you can be an object and recipient of His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, of everlasting life. *But only in Christ, apart from Christ devoted to destruction, but God didn't send His Son to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Just open Your heart to Jesus, trust in Him, ask Him into Your heart and into Your life, repenting of your sin and you'll be saved.*