

## XXXIII. Apostolic Planning

April 29/May 1, 2014      1 Corinthians 16:1-12

**Aim:** To support the missionary work and activities of the church through faithful giving and faithful care of God's ministers.

With chapter 16, Paul makes a radical change from the doctrinal to the practical. After discussing the resurrection in great detail (all of chapter 15), he ends the letter with several exhortations in regard to giving, doing the Lord's work, faithful living, and love within the Christian fellowship. He brings us rather abruptly from the future life back to the present life.

In this chapter Paul answers two remaining questions from the Corinthians' letter: one related to arrangements for the 'collection' (v. 1), and the other to Apollos' return to Corinth (v. 12).

### A. Missionary Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

Two great conclusions about mission work are apparent here. The first is that Christians should give systematically to mission causes (16:1-4).

#### 1. Individual Responsibility for Giving (16:1-2)

*a) Information About the Collection (16:1)*

*<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.*

##### (1) 'Now Concerning'

This last chapter begins, as did chapters 7, 8, and 12, with the now familiar phrase: 'Now concerning,' indicating again that Paul is taking up an issue that the church in Corinth had raised with him, in their earlier correspondence. This time it concerns the collection Paul was making 'for the saints,' especially as we know from elsewhere in his writings, for the believers in the Jerusalem church.

This is the fifth occasion Paul introduces a section of his letter with the words, 'Now concerning,' signaling that he is about to reply to a question in a letter from the church in Corinth (7:1, 25; 8:1, 12:1). The subject of their inquiry was 'the collection,' or, more exactly, 'the art of collecting' (*logeia*). Since the Corinthians were seeking clarification about the collection, we must assume that Paul is not raising the matter for the first time. Indeed, strong hints found in his Second Letter suggest that Titus had already been to Corinth to establish 'the collection' (2 Cor. 8:6, 10).

##### (2) 'The Collection for the Saints'

Paul had appealed to the Corinthians to take up a collection for the church in Jerusalem. The believers there were in dire straits. Persecution by unbelieving Jews and periods of famine had combined to produce severe economic distress. Their situation weighed heavily upon Paul's mind and heart, and he made it a priority to appeal to other churches to come to their aid. Paul's appeal for funds created some questions in the minds of the Corinthians. How should they go about receiving this offering? How would they get the money to Jerusalem? These questions

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gave Paul the opportunity to talk specifically about their offering and as it were to think out loud about missions.

So what was this ‘collection’? It was a ‘collecting’ of money from the missionary churches of the Gentiles established by Paul in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia for the mother church, Jerusalem. The famine which began c. AD 46 that affected the eastern Mediterranean lasted for many years and brought great hardship to Judea and its capital, Jerusalem. Paul’s collection from the Gentile churches for the saints in Jerusalem must be understood as an expression of practical compassion in the face of great distress (2 Cor. 8:4, 14, 19-20; 9:12; Rom. 15:25-26, 28; Acts 24:17).

It may be that intense persecution in Jerusalem had reduced many Jewish Christians to abject need, and Paul knew something had to be done. Even so, there was more to sending money to Jewish believers than the relief of poverty, Paul being moved by the awareness that the churches in Gentile lands had a special duty to help those in Judea (cp. Rom. 15:27).

These few verses provide a fascinating insight into the way in which Paul’s itinerant ministry helped to unite together the churches of the Gentile mission, both with one another, and with the original Christian congregation in Jerusalem. Was their poverty caused by the scattering due to persecution, recorded in Acts 8:1, or perhaps by the famine referred to in Acts 11:28-29?

Paul had over the period of a year or more solicited contributions from ‘the churches in Galatia’ as well as from those in ‘Macedonia and Achaia ... for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem’ (Rom. 15:26; cp. 2 Cor. 8:1-5). The collection was made during Paul’s third missionary journey, to be presented to the Jerusalem church when he returned there (Acts 24:17).

In spite of its religious and strategic importance, in New Testament times Jerusalem was a poor city. Its resources were continually strained and it was maintained to a large extent by gifts of wealthy nonresident Jews who lived throughout the Roman world. To make matters worse, some years earlier there had been a severe famine (Acts 11:28), from which the people were still suffering.

Because the Christians in Jerusalem had been persecuted for many years, their economic plight was made even more serious. Many of them were put out of their own homes, stripped of possessions, prevented from getting any but the most menial of jobs, and even imprisoned (Acts 8:1-3; 1 Th. 2:14).

### (3) ‘The Churches in Galatia’

We cannot be certain of the cause, but we do know that Paul made it something of a crusade among the Gentile churches of Galatia and Macedonia to remember their Jewish brothers and sisters in their need, since he had agreed with the Jerusalem leaders ‘to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do’ (Gal. 2:10). That same obligation he now presses upon the Corinthian church.

Good examples encourage and provoke. Here, the Corinthians are instructed to imitate the Galatians. Elsewhere, the former are proposed as models for the Macedonians, and the Corinthians and Macedonians together for the Romans (2 Cor. 9:2; Rom. 15:26). Paul, a wily pastor, was never reluctant to let the churches know when others were ahead of them.

The ‘collecting’ was for a special gift co-ordinate by Paul to be sent once by appointed delegates from these churches who were to travel together to Jerusalem as a group (verse 3; 2 Cor. 8:19;

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Acts 20:3-4). For some time Paul had been hoping to move to Rome for ministry but had been prevented from doing so due to the Emperor Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome in 48 AD (Acts 18:2). Claudius' death in 54 AD, however, opened a door of opportunity for Paul the Jew to go to Rome. Paul saw this as closing the chapter of ministry in the provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia where he had been establishing churches for the past six years (Rom. 15:19). But he would not go directly to Rome but instead pay a final visit to Jerusalem to bring the fruits of the collection (Rom. 15:22-25, 31).

The rationale behind this collection is dealt with in 2 Corinthians 8-9 (cp. Romans 15:25-32), the apostle expressing his desire that the Gentiles identify with their Jewish brethren by helping them financially. Besides meeting the economic needs of the Jerusalem believers, Paul also wanted the collection to express the spiritual oneness of the church. The believers in Jerusalem were predominantly Jews, and most of the believers in the churches contributing to the collection were Gentiles. 'Salvation is from the Jews' (Jn. 4:22), being first given to and through the Jewish people. The Gentiles, therefore, had a special indebtedness to the Jews (cp. Rom. 15:27).

So what was Paul's purpose in establishing and administering this complex 'collecting' in these Christian assemblies across four Roman provinces? First, it was to be a confirmation of the genuineness of their acceptance of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 9:13). Faith in Christ is to be expressed in love towards others, especially to those in deep need. Second, since the Gentile churches had received spiritual blessings from the saints in Jerusalem, it was right to repay this debt by sending in return their material blessings (Rom. 15:27). Third, the bonds of fellowship between congregations expressed in practical compassion are to be upheld regardless of geographical remoteness. Fourth, as a consequence, those who receive are knit together in fellowship with those who have given as they offer thanks to God and pray for brothers and sisters who have cared for them (2 Cor. 9:12, 14-15).

The arrangements Paul laid down for the Corinthians' collecting was to be the same as in the churches of southern Galatia, that is, in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Paul had established these churches in c. 47 AD and revisited them in c. 52 AD as he traveled overland from Jerusalem to Ephesus (Acts 18:23). Most likely he set in place the details for collecting at the time of that visit.

### *b) Instructions Concerning the Collection (16:2)*

*<sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.*

#### (1) When – First Day of the Week

Individual church members were to bring what they were able to save up to the church 'on the first day of the week.' Here we have evidence that Christians met on Sunday as a commemoration of Jesus' resurrection. Other Scriptures indicate the same (John 20:19, 26; Acts 20:7).

'The first day of the week' translates *kata mian sabbatou*, literally, 'according to one [day] from the Sabbath.' It seems from Acts 20:7 and Revelation 1:10 that the early churches honored the Sabbath day plus one as the day of the week when they would assemble for worship. Here, not only does Paul indicate that the collection for Jerusalem is an act of worship, but immediately after his exposition of the resurrection in chapter 15 he introduces the first day as the appropriate occasion for a financial response to the Lord's triumph.

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The most appropriate period for giving is weekly, ‘on the first day of every week.’ This not only convinces us that the church met on Sunday, but that its worship included regular giving of money. Giving should not be spasmodic, done only when we feel generous or ‘as the Spirit leads.’ The point is that giving is part of worship and fellowship, and, even when we have nothing to give on a particular Sunday, we should be sensitive to the needs of the church and to our part in meeting them. Our giving should not be passed on periodic emotional appeals or feelings, or on bonus income, but on regular, willing, and grateful commitment of our possessions to the Lord, to His people, and to His work.

### (2) Who – Each of You

Each member of the congregation was to store the money at home according to good financial circumstances (*eudomai*, literally, ‘to travel well’).

Each member of the congregation is to calculate intelligently what he can give. ‘Each one of you’ is all-inclusive. No Christian is excepted or excused. We are stewards of whatever the Lord has given us, no matter how little it may be in economic terms.

### (3) What – Put Something Aside

‘Putting something aside’ renders *par’ eautou tithetō*, meaning that each man’s contribution is to be reserved bit by bit every Sunday.

The truth is that this command wasn’t any easier for the Corinthians to follow than it is for us. They were far from being prosperous. Earlier in this letter Paul acknowledged as much when he noted there were ‘not many mighty, not many noble’ (1:26) in the church. But knowing all this didn’t dissuade Paul from urging each one to contribute to this mission cause of providing help for the believers in Jerusalem.

### (4) How Much – As He May Prosper

The individual Christian is to give ‘as God prospers him.’ Paul knew some wouldn’t be able to give very much at all, but they must give what they could. Remember, Paul is talking here about a special collection. He is not dealing with the Christian’s regular giving to his own church. For that, Scripture teaches us to give a definite proportion: the tithe. But for this missions offering, they were to give what they could.

The delicate ‘as he may be prospered’ (*ho tie an euodōtai*) indicates that the sole measure for a gift is how much an individual considers he has been given by the Lord during the previous six days, material income being viewed as divine blessing.

Interestingly, Paul does not expand on the phrase, ‘as he may prosper,’ in any sort of detail, and so does not lay down a prescribed proportion or figure. This is not a matter of legislation, but of the individual conscience before God, and there are numerous incentives to sow generously in order to reap a generous harvest (e.g., 2 Cor. 9:6).

Paul gave no guidance as to the amount to be set aside. There is no hint that it was to be a ‘tithe’ or tenth of income. Presumably the collecting was to occur over a considerable period of time to enlarge the ultimate amount sent to Jerusalem.

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### (5) Where – Store It Up, No Collecting When I Come

The Corinthians are to put aside a suitable amount of money and ‘store it up,’ so that when the apostle comes funds will be collected and readily available. This is a mark of continuous commitment, not haphazard concern.

Just as giving is primarily *for* the church, it is also primarily *to* and *through* the church. That Paul shows giving to be a part of worship seems clear from ‘the first day of every week.’ In the New Testament church the regular day for worship was Sunday, the first day of the week.’

A more literal translation of ‘each one of you put aside and save’ would be ‘each one of you by himself lay up, or store up.’ The noun form of *thēsauroizō* (from which we get ‘thesaurus,’ a collection, or treasury, of words), rendered here as ‘put aside and save,’ represents a storehouse, treasury, chest, or the like where valuables are stored. In both the pagan and Jewish cultures of New Testament times, treasuries were associated with religious temples. The treasuries in many Greek temples not only were repositories of gifts to the temple itself but also served as banks in which citizens kept their personal money and other valuables for safekeeping. Paul’s use of a verb form of this term for treasury suggests that the putting aside was to be in the church, in some sort of repository designated for the offerings. It was to be put there by ‘each one,’ on his own initiative. The church had a treasury, a place for safekeeping and dispensing the offerings.

If Paul were here referring to Christians’ storing their offerings privately at home, what he says at the end of the verse, ‘that no collections be made when I come,’ would not make sense. If the gifts were stored at home, the first thing to be done when Paul arrived would have been to have a collection in order to bring the funds together.

## 2. Corporate Administration of Giving (16:3-4)

### a) *Responsibility (16:3)*

<sup>3</sup>*And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.*

What is the church’s role in systematic giving? It is to ensure the money is handled with integrity. Paul says he wouldn’t take the money to Jerusalem himself. Instead, he wanted them to designate certain representatives to take it. Paul anticipated the possibility that he might accompany these representatives (v. 4), but he removed all possibility of creating a scandal by refusing to bear the money alone.

It is also important that the money contributed should be properly administered, and that those who have given it should have every confidence that it has been used for the original purpose for which it was given. Verse 3 explains how Paul intends this to happen. He will not take it to Jerusalem himself, but he will provide a letter of introduction to the leaders of the church there, to be carried by the delegates from the church in Corinth, approved by the sending congregation. Clearly, they will choose men whom they can trust to carry the mission through faithfully and an added benefit will be the personal contact between individuals within the two churches.

Those who give to the Lord’s work have a right to expect that their gifts are used legitimately and wisely. It is incumbent on every church to entrust its property and funds into the hands of godly and responsible men. The gifts of the early Christians were first entrusted to the apostles (Acts 4:35). As their responsibilities grew, however, the apostles needed to be relieved of the job of disbursing funds for such things as feeding the poor widows, so deacons were selected (Acts 6:2-3). The qualifications were not financial or commercial but moral and spiritual. God’s

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funds should only be put in the hands of a church's most godly men, who will prayerfully and in the energy of the Holy Spirit supervise its use, as priests who present the offerings to the people of God.

Responsible giving is to be handled by responsible stewards, including Paul, when he arrives in Corinth. Because money for the Lord's people remains the Lord's property, it must be treated with respect by all concerned. Therefore, the church is to appoint men to transfer the collection to Jerusalem. Determined to remain above suspicion, Paul flatly refuses to deal with the matter by himself (cp. 2 Cor. 8:19-21). Further, he will send letters to the church in that city, along with the messengers, possibly to clarify for whom and why the money is being sent.

We should note carefully Paul's practical concern for the proper administration of the money (cp. 2 Cor. 8:20-21). Again we see Paul insisting on his leadership in Corinth: *he* will accredit them. At the same time the church had the prior responsibility to choose its delegates.

### *b) Authority (16:4)*

<sup>4</sup>*If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.*

Paul may accompany them if the time and circumstances seem appropriate, but his main concern seems to be to establish brotherly fellowship between the congregations.

Before setting out and when writing 1 Corinthians, his mind was not made up about whether or not to travel along with the gift and the representatives of the donor churches. In a sense, he is challenging his readers to give responsibly. It will not be 'fitting' for the apostle to the Gentiles to make an arduous journey to the metropolitan church to hand over a paltry amount. Let the Corinthians, then, do their duty or be put to shame. Paul, who loves these people, throws down the gauntlet.

Paul's point here is that he would accompany the gift to Jerusalem only if it turned out to be an offering that would indicate true generosity and that he would not be embarrassed to be associated with. He was encouraging the Corinthians to give freely from their hearts in an outpouring of love and concern.

## **B. Missionary Planning (1 Corinthians 16:5-12)**

There is a second part to Paul's mission emphasis. It is that Christians are to think sympathetically about individual missionaries (16:5-12). In addition to talking about his own ministry (vv. 5-9), Paul mentions the work of both Timothy (vv. 10-11) and Apollos (v. 12). It is interesting to note that each of these men had his own particular burden or problem. Paul himself was experiencing the trauma of having many opportunities and much opposition in his mission work. Read the accounts in Acts and you will find the details about the adversaries Paul encountered in Ephesus. A false cult, the thoroughgoing secularists and materialists and the religious establishment all opposed him. But with so much error around, Paul saw a marvelous opportunity for the truth of the gospel to prosper (Acts 19).

### **1. Paul, Who Plans to Come in the Future (16:5-9)**

This little paragraph provides a significant window on the way the apostle thought about his ministry and the plans he had in mind. There is an outline scheme in view, dictated partly by the comparative difficulty of travel in winter and partly by the needs and circumstances of the congregations for whom he felt a special responsibility and care.

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This short passage is highly informative about Paul's passion for Christ, but also his sense of missionary strategy. His reference to 'Pentecost' (v. 8) and 'winter' (v. 6) allow us to establish a rough time frame but also to notice his carefully laid plans. Now writing from Ephesus, he reveals that he is about to tour the Macedonian churches before coming to Corinth, a journey he eventually made (cp. Acts 19:21; 20:1).

Verse 8	Ephesus until Pentecost	Spring: April
Verse 5	Travel through Macedonia	Summer-Autumn: April-November
Verse 6	Corinth	Winter: November-January

### a) *Paul Will Travel Through Macedonia (16:5-7)*

<sup>5</sup>*I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, <sup>6</sup>and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup>For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.*

### (1) Paul's Plans

Paul was aware of the need to spend a lengthy period in Macedonia (v. 5), where his initial visits to Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica four to five years earlier had been cut short by local opposition (Acts 16:39; 17:10, 14). Timothy and Silas were able to remain in Macedonia after Paul was forced out. It made good sense for Paul to send Timothy on ahead of him to Macedonia, which he did on Timothy's return from Corinth (v. 11; cp. Acts 19:21; 2 Cor. 1:1).

Paul has some future plans to re-visit Corinth, not by the most direct sea-route across the Aegean, but by the land-route, calling in on the churches of Macedonia (Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica) on the way. His estimate is that this will take him all the summer, so that he may need to 'spend the winter' with them in Corinth.

Paul had spent a year and a half establishing and pastoring the church at Corinth. He knew that the letter he now was writing would only begin to help solve the serious problems the Corinthians were having. If possible, he wanted at least to 'spend the winter' with them before he went on to Jerusalem.

'Perhaps' might suggest hesitations about the perils of travel or, ominously, trepidation about how the church will receive him when he does arrive. In the event, he stayed for three months as against eighteen months for the first visit (Acts 18:11; 20:3). His plans after staying at Corinth are indefinite.

Corinth was to be the final stage of Paul's withdrawal from the churches of the Aegean provinces. Although such a visit may not have been for the best part of a year, Paul earlier made it painfully clear that he would come sooner if the usurpers in Corinth continued in their rebellious ways (see 4:18-21). [As it happened, Timothy's report was so alarming that Paul went immediately to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:23-2:1)]. After his arrival the Corinthians were to 'send him on his way' to Jerusalem. Here the word *propempein* was a term for a congregation providing temporary hospitality, food and money for the Christian worker passing through. Paul, however, envisaged an extended stay beforehand, perhaps for the winter, which appears to have happened. The book of Acts mentions that after leaving Macedonia Paul spent 'three months in Greece' before departing for Syria (Acts 20:3).

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Clearly, the further destination beyond Corinth is unknown at this stage, but Paul has had to come to a judgment that a shorter, earlier visit would not be appropriate for the Corinthians, which is probably the reason why he had written such a detailed letter. The letter prepares the way for a longer visit when he will be able to deal in greater depth with these issues about which he has been so concerned.

### (2) God's Sovereignty

One is struck both by the flexibility of these plans and also by the apostle's deep dependence on God's sovereign overruling and direction. Here is a man who is aware of his own responsibility to use his time for the maximum effectiveness in the work of the Lord, but recognizes also that he is simply a tool in the Master's hands, and that it is the Lord's work, not his. His plans are being formulated, but they are all put at God's disposal, since he is clearly dependent on God opening doors for ministry and wants only to work where God directs him.

Paul considered his work to be God's will, even to the point of his most minute movements. But although he planned his movements carefully, he makes it clear that it will only happen 'if the Lord permits.' This phrase expresses Paul's concern that his own plans and thinking not become presumptuous and inflexible, usurping the Lord's prerogative to change them as He saw fit (cp. Pr. 16:9). The apostle was not fickle or indecisive, as the Corinthians later accused him of being, but realistic and humble.

According to 4:19, an impending visit to Corinth will occur only 'if the Lord wills.' The apostle reaffirms this, but employs a slightly different expression: 'if the Lord permits.' Having thought out his schedule, Paul now shares his hopes, aware that heaven might have other plans (cp. Acts 16:6-10).

Although Paul made these plans yet he adds, 'If the Lord permits' (v. 7; cp. 4:19). It is interesting to reflect on the circumstances the Lord did permit to eventuate. Yes, Paul did leave Ephesus for Macedonia, but not voluntarily or when he planned to do so; the silversmiths' riot brought Paul face to face with death and forced his premature departure. Nor did Paul return to Corinth by the smooth and easy road as indicated in these verses. In fact, his relationship with the Corinthians deteriorated dramatically. Paul was forced to make an unscheduled visit to Corinth on hearing Timothy's report, a visit which proved to be a bruising experience (2 Cor. 2:1, 5; 7:12; 12:20-13:2). His follow-up letter from Ephesus (now lost) was misunderstood and brought even more grief (2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8; 10:10). Meanwhile, some Judaizing preachers had arrived in Corinth further undermining Paul's fragile relationships with the church (2 Cor. 2:17-3:1; 10:12-11:6, 13-15, 22-23). Paul's co-worker Titus must engage of many weeks of 'shuttle diplomacy' between Paul and the church before it will be possible for Paul eventually to return. The actual course of events, as opposed to Paul's plans, proved infinitely more complex and painful than he could have imagined. That he stuck to them demonstrates how determined he was to obey the Lord Jesus. It proved to be the Lord's will for Paul to come back to Corinth, but as things often transpire, in very different circumstances.

#### *b) Paul Is Now in Ephesus (16:8-9)*

<sup>8</sup>*But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup>for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

Paul is writing the current letter from Ephesus, probably during the winter or early spring, since he plans to stay there until Pentecost. We know from Acts 19 that this was his longest period of

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settled ministry in any one place, and a time during which the word of Lord spread from Ephesus throughout the whole province of Asia Minor. Luke's account also tells us of the opposition he frequently encountered, but the two experiences of great opportunities matched by fierce opposition are the common experience of gospel workers down through the centuries. The opponents could not stop Paul, and they should not stop us, as we stand in the only valid apostolic succession, that of gospel proclamation.

Paul intended to remain in Ephesus 'until Pentecost,' when the weather may be good enough for him to set out on the long journey. And there is, he discloses, a further excellent reason for persevering in Asia (16:9): because 'a great and effective door' has 'opened,' opportunities for preaching the gospel must be exploited. When Paul finally left Ephesus, he found another door opened for him at Troas on the European side of the Dardanelles (2 Cor. 2:12). As ever, the Lord led him on.

Paul was not intimidated by opposition. He seemed even to flourish on it, perhaps because he realized that the devil's greatest opposition is to the Lord's greatest work. The fact that there were 'many adversaries' of the gospel in Ephesus (cp. Eph. 6:12) simply meant that 'a wide door for effective service had opened.' He was not quite ready to leave Ephesus, however, because new opportunities had developed. He was still needed for a while, and would not leave until he was sure that it was the Lord's will for him to minister somewhere else. He had made a great investment there and wanted to secure it.

At the time of writing this letter, Paul was in Ephesus. As far as the Corinthians were concerned, he was laboring on a foreign field. In regard to their own home field, Paul says Timothy was coming to work with them (v. 10). Both fields of labor, home and foreign, were equal. They were both the work of God, and one could not be ranked about another in terms of importance. Is there a tendency among American churches to neglect the foreign field and to consume all our resources upon the home field? Isn't this tendency the result of failing to understand that both fields are the work of God? If you find your interest waning when the topic of foreign missions comes up, please reflect on what Paul has said about it being God's work.

It is evident that Paul planned to leave the region in an orderly way, making the most of his ministry wherever he was. Although he had a great opportunity for ministry in Ephesus, he adds darkly, 'there are many opponents.' The riot of the silversmiths and Paul's narrow escape from death was to prove the accuracy of Paul's assessment of the danger (2 Cor. 1:8-10; Acts 19:23-20:1).

### 2. Timothy, Who Is Coming Already (16:10-11)

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

According to Acts 19:22, Erastus and Timothy had been sent ahead of Paul to Macedonia, the plan apparently being that Timothy would go on to Corinth (cp. 4:17). Here Paul refers to the welcome the young man ought to receive. In that the autograph of 1 Corinthians was sent from Ephesus following Timothy's departure [note that Timothy is *not* mentioned in 1:1; cp. 2 Cor. 2:1], Paul indicates that uncertainties, perhaps travel hazards, will abound, possibly leading to his assistant's delayed arrival or even non-arrival. Hence, 'if Timothy arrives.' Although the Corinthians knew him because he had worked with Paul in their city for over a year (Acts 18:5),

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the apostle was aware that if some had challenged his own authority (cp. 4:1), they would probably give his colleague a difficult time.

[DSB Note: if Timothy left Ephesus for Macedonia / Corinth before Stephanas arrived with the letter and news of Corinth, perhaps Paul hadn't realized how difficult the situation in Corinth had become. Thus, Timothy had no idea of the trouble he was walking into, and Paul thus is trying to soften up the Corinthians to receive Timothy well. If Timothy had not already been sent, perhaps Paul would have made a different plan with respect to Timothy's travels to Corinth in light of the new information he received from Stephanas.]

That Timothy did return to Paul is indicated by 2 Corinthians 1:1, which ascribes authorship of the second letter to the two men. But since 2 Corinthians has nothing to say about the visit mentioned in 16:10-11, and in that Titus was sent by Paul prior to a third apostolic visit (cp. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6; 12:14; 13:1), it may be that because Timothy was roughly handled, Paul took him out of the firing line.

It looks as though Timothy will be visiting Corinth, as Paul's agent, before the apostle himself arrives (cp. 4:17). Paul seems to be quite apprehensive about the treatment Timothy may receive at the hands of his Corinthian detractors, and it seems that Timothy may also have had his misgivings about entering the lions' dens. Paul's point is that to refuse to receive Timothy will be to oppose themselves to the Lord's work carried on through their apostle and his 'son,' and so to put themselves at variance with the ongoing progress of the gospel. Paul's expectation therefore is that Timothy will be well received and listened to. This will have to be how their problems are dealt with for the time being, and Paul's personal visit will follow within the year.

Timothy had a struggle with a different kind of problem than Paul. He seems to have been the type who was given to fear, shyness and timidity. While Paul was as bold as a lion, Timothy was oftentimes intimidated. So Paul urges the Corinthians to refrain from doing anything to upset or disturb him.

Timothy had labored alongside Paul in preaching the gospel not long after Paul first arrived in Corinth (2 Cor. 1:19; Acts 18:5). Had Timothy sustained some bad experience in Corinth during his previous visit there? Was Paul concerned that the troublemakers in the church would make life difficult for him (cp. 4:18-21)? When Timothy reported back to Paul in Ephesus, the apostle himself came immediately to Corinth while he sent Timothy to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Subsequently Paul sent Titus as his envoy to Corinth.

### 3. Apollos, Who Cannot Come Now (16:12)

*<sup>12</sup>Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.*

The letter's final 'now concerning' suggest that the Corinthians had requested that Apollos might return to them, assuming that he would listen to Paul. Nor had the apostle been unsympathetic, urging his friend to make the journey, possibly with Timothy and others, or with the three-man delegation returning to Corinth from Paul at Ephesus (16:17).

The formulaic 'Now concerning...' points to another answer by Paul to a question – the sixth – in a letter from them (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Evidently they inquired when Apollos might be returning to Corinth. It appears they hoped he would accompany those who brought Paul's letter of reply to them. Apollos was a formidable figure whose ministry had made a great impact in

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Corinth (Acts 18:27-28). Although a party had formed around Apollos in Corinth, Paul betrays no hostility towards this eloquent Alexandrian Jew who had become a Christian (1:12; 3:4, 5, 6, 22; 4:6; cp. Titus 3:13). Perhaps Apollos recognized that his arrive in Corinth at this time might not help Paul's relationship with the church.

It now turns out that Apollos had 'no desire at all' to return, considering himself under no obligation to do so, and apparently not being under Paul's authority. It appears that, for his part, the latter had been unable to insist that Apollos make the journey. Although it is understandable that Apollos might have been reluctant to return (in light of the problems addressed by 1:10-4:21), it may be surprising that Paul sided with the church in urging him to do so. Yet there could have been needs at Ephesus keeping Apollos there, which might explain Paul's promise on the word of his friend that he will come 'when he has an opportunity.'

Apollos is, however, quite a different matter. We recall from the opening chapters how some in Corinth seem to have been setting Apollos up in opposition to Paul. The apostle is concerned always to destroy this perception. He views himself and Apollos as planter and waterer in the same field (3:6-8) and here he affirms his brotherhood with him. But Apollos is his own man. For whatever reason 'it was not at all his will' to accede to Paul's urgent request that he should join the Timothy delegation to Corinth. 'He will come when he has opportunity,' but the time is not yet ripe.

Part of Paul's concern may be to point out that he is not in any way trying to prevent Apollos from re-visiting Corinth in some forlorn attempt to interpret Apollos' non-appearance in that way and the Apollos 'party' may be disappointed, or even offended, but that is not the truth of the situation. The rivalry between Paul and Apollos is the product of the Corinthian factions, not of the two men themselves. Even though they have disagreed about their travel plans, they are still united in the work of the Lord.

Finally, Apollos seems to have been struggling with that old problem of too many demands and not enough times. Paul had wanted him to go to Corinth, but his schedule was such that he simply couldn't do it.

Opposition, fear, shortness of time – these were the special concerns of the three missionaries mentioned in this passage. What should this mean to us? It should help us to understand that our responsibility to missionaries is not discharged when we bring an offering and throw it in the plate. Yes, by all means do that. But as you do it, remember it goes to real people with real problems.

For next time: Read 1 Corinthians 16:13-24.