

Final Instructions

1 Corinthians 16:1–24

Paul finishes his letter of correction to the Corinthians with a few final instructions. They had failed to grow spiritually because they did not hold to Paul's doctrine. Instead, they had become carnal and were following people they liked with little thought about the doctrine that they were teaching. Paul had been asserting his authority as an apostle who was given a special message by Jesus Christ that superseded any previous teaching (Galatians 1:11–12). He is using this letter to bring them in line with the doctrine he had previously taught them.

Paul covers some miscellaneous topics including the collection of a special offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem, informing them of his plans for future travels, how they are to accept other workmen for the Lord, and some assorted greeting from other saints.

Special offering (verses 1–5)

Paul had directed the churches throughout Galatia (modern southern Turkey) and Macedonia (modern northern Greece) to collect money for the poor saints who were in Jerusalem. He is now telling them to do the same, and they were to do it in a very methodical and purposeful manner. They were to bring their offering on the first day of the week, which was when they were meeting, and give their offering according to how God has provided for them. Those who had much were to give out of their bounty, and those who had little were to give accordingly. The Macedonians were example of a church which had little yet they gave much in relation to how little they had (2 Corinthians 8:1–5). The Corinthians, on the other hand, were most likely a very prosperous church because it was located in a very prosperous port city. The Lord prospered them much and therefore they most likely could afford to give much (2 Corinthians 8:14; Romans 15:26). However, Paul's next letter to them indicates that they were lagging behind in collecting for the saints in Jerusalem and Paul needed to encourage them to have the collection ready on his next visit (2 Corinthians 8:11–12).

These poor saints in Jerusalem (members of the Little Flock or Kingdom believers) were shown to be well off in early Acts. Following what Jesus had taught while on earth (Matthew 13:44; 19:21; Luke 12:33; 18:22), the church of Kingdom believers sold all they had and put their belongings in the hands of the apostles. (There were no needy people among them because the Holy Spirit was ultimately in control of this system of watching over their well-being, and they were miraculously united having one mind. Acts 2:44–46) It was a foretaste of the Millennial Kingdom following the Second Coming (Acts 4:34).

Fifteen years later, these same saints in Jerusalem were destitute. They had sold their possessions in anticipation of the Tribulation and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom, but with Israel's rejection of the offer of the Kingdom, God halted His plans for Israel and began dealing with mankind in a different way. Paul was raised up and instead of God's wrath coming upon mankind, He poured out His grace, allowing all mankind to come directly to Him without going through the nation of Israel (Ephesians 2:13–17). However, God was still watching over these Kingdom saints by having the Body saints (members of the Church, the Body of Christ) supply what they needed to survive.

Paul's helpers

Even though Paul is writing from Ephesus and not wanting to leave because there was much work to accomplish (1 Corinthians 16:8–9), he was still very concerned about what was happening in Corinth. Paul relied on number of other ministers in order to get the Corinthians back on track again. Timothy

had often traveled with Paul and was sent by Paul to churches in need of spiritual guidance and encouragement. It appears that Timothy arrived in Corinth just after the letter of First Corinthians arrived. Paul also encouraged Apollos to visit the Corinthians, although he wasn't able to do so immediately.

Admonitions (verse 13)

Paul leaves the Corinthians with four admonitions using four individual Greek words. They were to be on the alert (gregoreo), stand firm in the faith (steko), act in a manly manner (andrezomi), and to be strong (krataioo). Each of these admonitions were about how they were to act as believers. They were to be alert to those who would subvert the doctrine taught them by Paul. They were to stand firmly in the doctrine they had learned from Paul. In Galatians 5:1 Paul tells them to stand fast in the faith. In Philippians 1:27, they are to stand fast together with one mind for the faith of the gospel (doctrine). 1 Thessalonians 3:8 has Paul telling them to stand fast in the Lord. Once they understand the doctrine, they were not to move from it. Unfortunately, the Corinthians had already left the doctrine taught to them and Paul is telling them to take a hold of what they had been taught and to never back away from it (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

The next admonition is a bit obscure. It is one Greek word (andrezomi) and is the only time this word is used in the Bible. It is usually understood to mean "act like a man," however, that interpretation leaves many questions about what acting like a man actually means. In context, it is probably telling the Corinthians that they were to be brave or courageous and not to waiver. It seems apparent that this word would mesh with the three other admonitions and therefore would be about doctrine.

Finally, Paul says that they are to be strong, or be strengthened. Not only are they to stand in the doctrine, but they are to strengthen themselves in the doctrine. They (and we) are to do this by studying the doctrine given to us. Ephesians 3:14–19 seems to be a parallel passage to 1 Corinthians 16:13. Our strengthening comes from the interplay of our intake of the doctrine and the work of the Holy Spirit. I find it interesting that for believers, according to Romans 8:9–11, the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us, yet Ephesians 3:17 says that there is a condition for Christ to dwell in us. There are actually two different, but closely related, Greek words used for the word *dwell*. I believe Romans is viewing God's work upon the believer. He has given us His Holy Spirit as a seal which relates to our justification. Ephesians is using this in the sense of our sanctification when we allow the Holy Spirit to have control of our lives. This change in us is a result of us renewing our minds by getting into the word and the Holy Spirit changing us through God's word. 2 Timothy 1:14 speaks of the word of God. We allow Christ to dwell in us when we dwell on the word of Christ (Colossians 3:16). When we do this we are operating according to the Spirit. Unfortunately, instead of dwelling on Scripture, we allow sin to take hold of us and, as Paul says in Romans 7:17–20, our old nature is in play, and sin dwells in us. The fight is over who is in control. If we consider ourselves (our old nature) dead, then we are allowing Christ to dwell in us (Romans 6:11). If we allow sin to rule our lives, then we are living by the old nature and Christ is not dwelling (controlling) us. Again, this is about sanctification, not justification. Christ dwelling in us seems to be about who we allow to be in control, not about how we become a believers.

The overriding principle in Paul's admonitions is that they be done in love (agape). Anything done in love is done thinking about what is best for the other person. This was a big problem for the Corinthians who were only thinking about themselves instead of others.

Importance of Christian fellowship (verse 15–18)

Occasionally you will hear a believer say that having “church” out in nature alone with God is all that is needed. However, God has created us to interact with other believers. Not only can we be encouraged by others, we are also called to refresh and edify each other (1 Thessalonians 5:11). A search for the phrase “one another” in Scripture shows how important God deems our interaction with each other. Paul cherished the encouragement he received from fellow believers. He mentions the household of Stephanas by name as the first believers in that area, and they were also devoted their lives to minister to the saints. Paul relished Stephanas and Fortunatus coming to visit and encourage him during the toughest time of his ministry. Contrariwise, to their shame, the Corinthians assembly failed to support and encourage Paul.

We all play an important roll of encouragement and edification within the Body of Christ. If we don’t interact with other believers then it will be impossible for us to help, or be helped by the Body. Paul depended upon the encouragement of believers and acknowledged that this came from the Lord (Romans 15:32; 2 Corinthians 1:3–5; 7:6–7, 13; Colossians 4:10–11; 2 Timothy 1:16; Philemon 1:7).

Holy kiss (verse 20)

Four times in his writings, Paul instructs assemblies to greet each other with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). This was a customary greeting among those with sincere affection toward each other at that time. Paul calls this a kiss holy to distinguish it from one that is sexual or hypocritical. The kiss Judas gave to Jesus was a hypocritical kiss. Some countries still use a kiss to greet one another, but this is not a custom we have in the United States. Paul is not commanding us to greet one another with a kiss, but rather that we are to show genuine love and affection with each other. Today we can show affection and friendship for each other with a warm handshake or hug.

Personal greeting

Paul often had someone else write out the letters he sent to churches. Romans was hand written by Tertius (Romans 16:22). Other books do not name a specific scribe, but there are strong indications that Paul only wrote a final personal greeting at the end of his letters, perhaps to show them that he truly was the author (1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; Philemon 19; 2 Thessalonians 3:17). Putting this together with Galatians 6:11 (see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand) may indicate that Paul had eye problems. Some people relate this to the thorn in the flesh of 2 Corinthians 12:7, but that is complete speculation with no firm biblical support.

In 1 Corinthians 1:7–8. Paul mentions those who were waiting for the coming of the Lord at the Rapture, but then at the end of his letter, he gives a warning to unbelievers. He characterizes unbelievers as those who do not love the Lord. There was a group of unbelievers in the church who were stirring up trouble. Paul told them that the man who destroys the temple of God (a believer) then God will destroy that person (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Paul basically repeats this warning when he tells them that the man who does not love the Lord is to be anathema (accursed—see Galatians 1:8–9). This is followed by the Aramaic words transliterated into Greek as *maranatha*. This word is usually interpreted in a positive sense as “Come, Lord,” said by someone who is looking forward to His coming. However, in context, Paul seems to use this saying as a warning, looking to Christ coming in judgment against those who do not love the Lord. They will fall under His condemnation at the Second Coming (James 5:8–9).

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