

II. I Corinthians 16



1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Now concerning the **collection for the saints**: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. On the first day of every week [Sunday Assembly; Acts 20:7], each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come. And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift [χαρις] to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

This is the fourth of the questions addressed to Paul in the letter that was delivered to him (see 7:1; 8:1; 12:1).

The Christian community in Jerusalem was poor. Paul had promised to help them (see Galatians 2:10). He mentions the churches of Galatia here, probably as a way of reminding the Corinthians that he is asking them to be part of a wider community project.

1 Corinthians 16:5-9

I will visit you after passing through Macedonia – for I intend to pass through Macedonia – and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter [Paul was delayed, but did spend the winter of 56-57 there], so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go. I do not want to see you now just in passing, for I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

At this stage Paul is not yet sure whether or not he will go on to Jerusalem with the collection. It is possible that the idea of going to Rome is already in his mind. However, he did eventually get to spend a winter with them (56-57AD), during which he composed his Letter to the Romans. When he left Corinth, for the last time, it was to take the collection to Jerusalem. Luke gives a list of those who accompanied him (Acts 20:4).

1 Corinthians 16:10-11

If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord just as I am; therefore let no one despise him. Send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I am expecting him with the brothers.

Paul has already mentioned that he has sent Timothy 'my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church' (4:17). These verses function as a brief letter of recommendation. Obviously Paul expects the letter to reach them first. It will be going back by ship with the delegation, whereas Timothy must be travelling via Macedonia.

1 Corinthians 16:12

Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but he was not at all willing to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith.

In these concluding remarks, Paul picks up some of the central themes of the letter. **‘Keep alert’** is a reminder to the Corinthians to keep their eyes upon their Lord, to long for his coming and be prepared to meet him.

‘Stand firm in your faith’ is an appeal to them to stay close to Jesus. It is also an appeal for them to base their behaviour on the traditions that they have been taught, the kinds of traditions that Paul has been insisting on in this letter. They have been impressed by the gifts of the Spirit that they see themselves as possessing, but they have tended to forget the traditions of the other churches.

1 Corinthians 16:13

be courageous, be strong

The expression ‘**be courageous**’ (literally, ‘be manly’), occurs only here in the New Testament. This itself is interesting when we consider the important role this virtue played in Greek and especially in Roman ethical philosophy, where the accent is on self-reliance. Paul’s understanding is quite different. His use of the expression here, followed by ‘**be strong**’, appears to be a reference to Psalm 27:14 where the same two verbs are used in the Greek: ‘Put your hope in the Lord, be courageous, let your heart be strong, put your hope in the Lord’. Their courage and their strength is to be in reliance on God and on the love which God has revealed to them in the ‘weakness’ of the cross.

1 Corinthians 16:14

Let all that you do be done in love.

How better to sum up all that he has written in this letter than to appeal to the Christians in Corinth: ‘let all that you do be done in love’. They know that the love to which he is referring is the love given them by God and demonstrated for them in the way in which Jesus gave himself for them. If they live in this love and if it is this love that motivates everything that they do, they will know what it is to be disciples of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:15-18

Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas (1:16) were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them. I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such persons.

I Corinthians 16:18

Paul says how much the delegation had ‘**refreshed my spirit.**’

In spite of the problems that Paul has had to address, they must have given him a quite positive report of the community. This would account for the positive things that Paul has said throughout his letter and also for the many expressions of affection. It is also a reminder to us not to overstate the problems that have taken up so much of the letter. Paul is sure that the Corinthians will be relieved to know this, as they may have heard reports that Paul was very distressed because of the news that was reaching him about how things were in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 16:19-24

The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca (see Acts 18:18-19, 26-27), together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

Let anyone be accursed [αναθεμα] who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come! [Μαρανα θα] [= ἔρχου κυριε Ιησου, Revelation 22:20]

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

My love be with you all in the Messiah Jesus.

Μαραν ἄθα = cry of recognition and joy: 'The Lord is coming!' (see Didache).