

First Corinthians

September 7, 2025

Chapter 16

The Matters of the Collection

“The Final Words to the Church”

Chapter 16:1 - 2

III. The Final Words to the Corinth Church

After addressing all of Chloe's concerns, Paul begins his concluding remarks to the Corinth Church quite abruptly.

A. The Collection of the Saints' Tithes (16:1-4)

1. The Collection (16:1)

The Church needs to gather a collection of the Saints' tithes. In verse 4, Paul tells us that this collection is meant for the Church in Jerusalem. In verse 1, Paul begins by saying,

¹ *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the Churches of Galatia, so do you also.*

When did Paul instruct the Church in Corinth to take this “*collection for the saints*”? We do not know. Any answer to this question is mere speculation. Furthermore, Paul continues to tell the Church to organize the collection in the same manner he had directed the churches of Galatia. Again, we must ask, “When did Paul instruct the churches in Galatia to ‘*collect for the saints*’?” Once more, any answer to this question is mere speculation. Paul had not written the letter to the Galatians at that time. Additionally, nothing in the letter to the Galatians mentions a “*collection for the saints*.” Paul surely provided direction to the churches in Galatia while he was in that area.

Galatia was not just a village or city; it was a province in central modern Turkey. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas, during their first missionary journey, established churches in this province, particularly in the towns of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. On Paul's second missionary journey, he returned to this province (Acts 16). During this second visit to Galatia, Paul mentored Timothy, who became a vital part of Paul's evangelistic team.

2. Systematic Giving (16:2)

What was the instruction to the *churches in Galatia*? Paul does not leave us in the dark. He provides the instruction in verse 2.

² *On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.*

The first day of the week is Sunday. Each Sunday, the Saints were to bring their offerings for collection to the Church. However, Paul wanted the entire collection to be completed before his arrival in Corinth. He didn't want the collection to take place while he was in Corinth. Why? We do not know. It may be that Paul desired the offering to be both voluntary and heartfelt, free from the pressure of his intimidating presence at the Church. Such a thought remains speculative.

Why was the collection gathered on Sunday? It was gathered on Sunday because the collection was an act of worship, and Sunday was the day to give to the LORD. Nothing is new here. Sunday, the first day of the week, has been the day of giving in an act of worship since the Old Testament, under the Mosaic Law. Let me explain.

In many ways, most Jews and Christians today believe that the Sabbath was the day of worship in the Old Testament, but it was not. It was the day of rest. This instruction is found in Exodus.

“See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore, He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day (Exodus 16:29-30).

The instruction is clear: no one should leave their home on the Sabbath (seventh) day. The seventh day is, and has always been, Saturday. Throughout all the Sabbath instructions, it remains the same: the Sabbath is a day of complete rest. No lighting a fire, no cooking, no leaving the house, and so on. How, then, can a worship offering be presented on the Sabbath if people cannot leave their homes? The LORD answers that question with His instructions for presenting offerings in worship. Let’s examine one offering as an example – the offering of the “first fruits.”

We first hear of the offering of “first fruits” in Exodus 23. It marks the beginning of the *Feast of Harvest*. As the name implies, the “first fruits” are the initial ripened fruits of the crop, ready for harvest. The *Feast of Harvest* was celebrated in the spring when the grain crops were ready to be harvested. The first fruit of the grain offering was a sheaf of grain from the ripe field. Leviticus 23:10-11 provides the instruction.

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it’ (Leviticus 23:10-11).

The sheaf of the first fruits was not to be delivered on the Sabbath; rather, it was to be delivered on the “*day after the Sabbath*” – Sunday, the first day of the week. The owner of the grain could not leave his house on the Sabbath. In addition, the harvest of the entire crop took seven weeks. At the end of the seven weeks, after seven Sabbaths had passed, the tithe (10%) of the crop was to be delivered to the LORD. It was not to be delivered to the LORD on the Sabbath; it was to be delivered to the LORD in worship on the day after the Sabbath. Here are the instructions.

“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:15-16).

On Sunday, after presenting the first fruit offering, seven Sabbaths must pass before the *new grain tithe offering* can be presented. Seven Sabbaths equal forty-nine days, with the forty-ninth day falling on the Sabbath. However, the instruction is to deliver the *new grain offering* on the fiftieth day, which is Sunday, the day after the seventh Sabbath. The offering on the fiftieth day is known as Pentecost. In the Old Testament, worship with offerings was consistently observed on the first day of the week, Sunday, rather than on the Sabbath. Sunday has always been a day of worship in both the Old and New Testaments.

During the Hasmonean Empire of the Jews in 57 BC, the Sanhedrin was established. Once established, the Sanhedrin began creating laws to circumvent the Mosaic Laws. They enacted a law known as “the law of the Sabbath Day’s journey.” This law directly conflicted with the Mosaic Law, which mandated complete rest on the Sabbath and staying at home. The Sanhedrin revisited this law three times, each time permitting a greater distance that a person could travel on the Sabbath. We hear of the Sabbath Day’s journey in Acts 1:12: “*Then they returned to Jerusalem from the*

mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away." This aligns with the first Sanhedrin law, which took about 40 minutes to walk from the center of Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

However, the offerings were to be collected on Sundays, the days of worship, and completed before Paul arrived.

3. Trustworthy Handling of the Gift (16:3)

Paul intends to be careful with the handling of the gifts collected in Corinth. They must be handled in a trustworthy manner. Verse 3.

³ *When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;*

Three things are revealed in verse 3. First, Paul wants the saints in Corinth to determine who within the Church is trustworthy enough to carry the offering to those it is meant to help. Second, Paul plans to send letters along with the offering, which are certainly intended for specific churches as the courier travels to the designated destination. Third, Paul indicates that the offering's destination is Jerusalem.

4. Paul's Possible Accompaniment (16:4):

Now, for the first time, Paul suggests that he may go to Jerusalem with the offering. Verse 4.

⁴ *and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.*

So far in this letter, we have traced Paul's timeline down to Acts Chapter 16. Looking beyond verse 4, Paul will confirm his intent in Acts Chapter 19, where he mentions Achaia. Without rushing ahead, we do not know the future of Paul's travels to Corinth through Macedonia to Achaia.

"Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21).

"Achaia" refers to the mainland of Greece. Traveling overland, Paul must traverse the Achaian mainland before reaching Corinth. In Acts 20:16, we learn that after Paul's visit to Corinth, he intends to go to Jerusalem, aiming to arrive before Pentecost. This suggests that Paul will be making his journey to Jerusalem in the spring. He will bring the offering to the Holy City, which has not yet happened. Additionally, it is noted that Paul will choose not to sail to Jerusalem; instead, he will retrace his route through Macedonia by land.

B. Paul's Future Visit (16:5-9)

Paul remains in Ephesus as he completes this letter. He updates the Corinthian Church about his upcoming visit and the itinerary for his trip to Corinth. Verse 5.

⁵ *But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; ⁶ and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.*

This message from Paul confirms that we are in the timeline of Acts 19–20. Paul will soon travel through Macedonia and arrive in Corinth to spend the winter. After winter, he plans to go to Jerusalem in the spring to arrive before Pentecost. In that part of the Mediterranean Sea, ships do not sail from October through February due to severe weather and sea conditions. Because of these conditions, Paul will not sail to Macedonia, although he will send some of the team ahead to Macedonia by sea. However, at this point in writing this letter, he has not yet sent his team. He will do so with this letter. For now, Paul still has work to do in Ephesus.

1. Flexibility and God's Will (16:7)

However, when Paul arrives in Corinth, he doesn't want to rush his trip. He is open and ready to follow God's will. Verse 7.

⁷ For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.

Once Paul arrives in Corinth, he plans to stay for some time. As we will see in the next sentence, it will be some time before Paul heads to Corinth.

2. Paul's Current Work in Ephesus (16:8-9)

Paul discusses his current work in Ephesus.

⁸ But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; ⁹ for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

We previously mentioned this verse in Chapter 15:32. There, Paul likely regarded these "adversaries" as "wild beasts" he needed to confront. In any case, Paul viewed these "adversaries" as a significant mission field for evangelism. Additionally, Paul outlines the timeline. He will "remain in Ephesus until Pentecost," which indicates he is over a year away from trying to reach Jerusalem by that time. To clarify, it is spring, and Paul will stay in Ephesus until after Pentecost. After that, he will send his team with this letter and then follow himself, arriving in Corinth to spend the winter. Once winter ends, he will decide whether to go to Jerusalem before the next Pentecost.

3. Accept Timothy When He Arrives (16:10-11)

Paul is unsure whether Timothy has arrived in Corinth, but he needs him in Ephesus. Paul conveys the following to the Church in Corinth: Verse 10.

¹⁰ Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. ¹¹ So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

Paul has lost contact with Timothy's current location; however, he suspects that Timothy will head to Corinth after this letter arrives. By stating, "for he is doing the LORD's work, as I also am," Paul is urging the Corinthian Church to trust Timothy as they trust him. He may also be encouraging the Church not to regard Timothy's youth with disdain but to recognize that he is undertaking the LORD's work. If Timothy arrives, Paul requests, "Send him to me! I need him in Ephesus as quickly as possible. I thought he was with the others on the evangelistic team, but he was not." Paul's last indication of Timothy's whereabouts was that he was to be with Erastus in Macedonia. Therefore, if Timothy arrives in Corinth, send him directly to Ephesus.

4. Apollos May Come to You (16:12)

Paul has already introduced Apollos in this letter. Since Apollos left Corinth, Paul has spoken with him. Verse 12.

¹² But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

Paul is simply telling the Corinthian Church that he has encouraged Apollos to visit again sometime. Doubtless, the purpose will be for Apollos to motivate his ardent followers to become fervent followers of Jesus Christ instead. By doing so, Apollos will help unite the divisive factions among the immature saints in the Church.

C. Stand Alert, Firm, Mature, and Love in the Faith (16:13)

Paul says,

¹³ Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.

In these four words, Paul summarizes what the Corinthian Church lacks.

To be “*alert*” means to awaken from the current state of confusion within the Church. To “*stand firm*” signifies being established in the Gospel that Paul taught to the Saints of Corinth. To be “*like men, be strong*” indicates maturing in the LORD and moving away from immaturity. Finally, to do everything in “*love*” involves interacting selflessly, sacrificially, and unconditionally with the Saints—not in romantic love (eros), nor in brotherly love (philia), but in true love (agape), devoid of emotions or feelings, representing an act of the will committed to the well-being of other Saints.

D. Follow Your Church Leaders (16:15-16)

Paul instructs the saints in Corinth to follow their church leaders. Verse 15.

¹⁵ Now I urge you, brethren ~~(you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints)~~, ¹⁶ that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.

The section of verse 15 has been omitted because it is not found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of 1 Corinthians. Nevertheless, Paul will mention Stephanas and those with him who brought the news from Chloe, which led to the writing of this letter in verse 17 of this chapter below.

By coupling verses 13 through 16, Paul returns to his instruction from Chapter 15, verse 58.

¹⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

The labor of the saints is not in vain; it will be rewarded. Therefore, Paul instructs the saints of Corinth to submit to the men who work alongside him and all the apostles in the service of the Lord.

E. Paul's Gratefulness for the Visitors and Supplies (16:17-18)

The letter is approaching its conclusion. Paul expresses his gratitude for the visitors from Corinth and recognizes what the Corinthians were lacking. Verse 17.

¹⁷ I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. ¹⁸ For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

These three are the men Chloe sent with news of disturbing matters in the Corinth Church. We must not overlook that these men also brought knowledge that Paul needed to address the problems in Corinth. Through their behavior and conversations with Paul, he knows they have tried to refresh the lives of the Saints in Corinth. Consequently, their efforts to uplift the Corinth Saints have also refreshed Paul.

Paul views Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as deserving of recognition as leaders of the LORD's work in Corinth.

F. Greetings from Those with Paul in Asia (16:19-20)

Paul then sends greetings from those with him in Asia. Verse 19.

¹⁹ The Churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the Church that is in their house. ²⁰ All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Every village in Asia had a church of some size. Most were home churches. However, it won't be long before there will be leading churches in Asia. They will be Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Sardis, and Laodicea, the seven churches of the Revelation. That will be thirty-eight years after Paul writes this letter. For now, almost all the churches in Asia are meeting in the homes of the saints in each village and town. From all the churches in Asia, Paul sends their greetings.

Paul also says, "*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*" What is a "*holy kiss*"? Paul mentions it here in 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and Romans 16:16. Peter refers to it as "*the kiss of love*" in 1 Peter 5:14. Regarding this "*Holy Kiss*," the *Benson Commentary* states,

"The Jews considered the kiss as an expression of friendship. Thus Joab, pretending great friendship to Amasa, took him by the beard to kiss him, when he slew him, 2 Samuel 20:9. Our Lord says to Simon, Luke 7:45, 'Thou gavest me no kiss; meaning, that he had not expressed such affection to him as the woman had done who kissed his feet. Judas also kissed our Lord, pretending friendship to him, at the time he betrayed him. This manner of expressing friendship to each other the disciples of Christ adopted and practiced in their religious assemblies. So Justin Martyr informs us, in his account of the religious assemblies of the Christians, Apolog. Prayers being ended, we salute one another with a kiss, and then the bread and cup is brought to the president, &c. This was called the holy kiss, to distinguish it from the lustful kiss; and the kiss of charity, 1 Peter 5:14, to distinguish it from the treacherous kiss of Joab and Judas; being given as an expression of that sincere, chaste, and spiritual love, which Christians owed to one another. On the occasions mentioned by Justin, the men and women did not kiss each other promiscuously: the men saluted the men only [cheek to cheek], and the women kissed none but their own sex [cheek to cheek]; ... Then, after a long description of the worship, the author adds, 'Then let the men salute one another, and the women one another, giving the kiss in the Lord. Through length of time, and difference of manner, this method of sitting in public assemblies hath been changed. But that it was the ancient method cannot be doubted, being derived from the synagogue.'"

The *Bengel's Gnomen Commentary* tells us that the abuses of this holy kiss became common in the Church, and the Holy Kiss tradition was abandoned. This abuse involved men in the Church enjoying lip-to-lip Holy Kisses with women who were not their wives.

However, at this time, Paul advocates for the Holy Kiss as a sign that the divisive issues have been resolved.

G. Paul's Signature (16:21)

We now turn to Paul's signature: verse 21.

²¹ *The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.*

Paul was essentially blind. One of his ministry team members wrote most of Paul's letters. Many believe that Sosthenes wrote this particular letter because Paul mentions him in Chapter 1:1. That may be the case; however, Luke was Paul's constant, silent traveling companion and the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Regardless of who penned the letter

for Paul, the words are still his, directed to him from the LORD. Paul took the pen and inscribed his name in large letters – Paul.

H. The Curse of Not Loving the LORD (16:22)

Looking back over the entire letter, Paul's main point is this. No matter what disturbing matters are in the Corinth Church, they can all be settled with the right kind of love. Paul speaks a curse for not loving the LORD. Verse 22.

²² *If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.*

Paul challenges the saints of Corinth to examine their love for the LORD. Do they love the LORD Jesus Christ, or do they love someone else more? Do they have a personal devotion to the LORD, or do they lack one? The immature among the Corinthians have demonstrated that they do not. Paul urges them to mature and love the LORD. If they do not love the LORD, that person is "accursed." "Accursed" means destined for destruction. Then, Paul uses the term "Maranatha." It means "Our Lord, come!" or "O LORD, come!" "Maranatha" is derived from two Syriac words: "Maran" and "atha." "Maran" signifies *our LORD is coming*, while "atha" indicates *He will judge*. In other words, Paul is saying, "If you do not love the LORD, watch out because the LORD is coming to judge you."

I. Paul's Logo in His Letters (16:23)

Here is Paul's logo represented in twelve of his letters. Verse 23.

²³ *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.*

This logo is Paul's trademark, ensuring that anyone who receives a letter from him knows it is authentic and genuinely from Paul. We find it in Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10 and 16:23; Ephesians 6:24; Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 2 Timothy 2:1; Titus 3:7; and Philemon 25. It is also mentioned in Hebrews 13:25, a book that many Bible scholars believe was written by Paul. This is Paul's Apostolic benediction.

J. Paul's Love for the Corinth Church Expressed (16:24)

In his final words, Paul expresses his love for the Corinthian Church.

²⁴ *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

I appreciate what the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* says about verse 24.

After having administered some severe rebukes, he closes with expressions of "love": his very rebukes were prompted by love, and therefore are altogether in harmony with the profession of love here made: it was love in Christ Jesus, and therefore embraced "all" who loved Him.

The *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* mentions the following regarding this verse.

This affectionate commendation of the Corinthians to the favor of Christ, coupled with the assurance of his own unchanging affection, must have sounded very striking in the ears of a community accustomed to Gentile modes of thought.

However, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* states,

Like a river which, after rushing, foaming over many a rock and through many a gorge, at last emerges into a broad calm amid sunlit meadows, so this Epistle, after chapters of trenchant logic and fervid rebuke, closes in peaceful words of tenderness and love.

I say this about verse 24: Paul loves the Church because he loves Christ Jesus. Therefore, Paul loves the saints in Corinth, however immature they may be. Out of love, Paul has written to the Corinthian Church in an effort to encourage the saints to grow in maturity. In the letter, Paul urged the Corinthian saints to be devoted to Christ Jesus and no one else; similarly, Paul's love for the saints in Corinth is rooted in Christ Jesus. "*In Christ Jesus*" represents Paul's love for all saints without exception. Through *Christ Jesus*, Paul loves for the sake of "*Christ Jesus*."

With that, Paul concludes with the word "Amen." It signifies "truly" or "so let it be." This term is used to affirm the truth of what has been expressed throughout the entire letter. Despite all of Paul's efforts, including his letters and visits to the church in Corinth, it seems the church never truly learned its lesson. It appears to have continued as a church plagued by troubling issues. For that reason, another letter will be necessary from Paul's pen. We call it Second Corinthians.