

### Closing Messages and Benediction

#### 1 Corinthians 16

1 Corinthians 16: *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. 5 Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). 6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. 10 And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11 Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren. 12 Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time. 13 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done with love. 15 I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints— 16 that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. 17 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. 19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla 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. 21 The salutation with my own hand—Paul's. 22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed [anathema]. O Lord, come [maranatha]! 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."*

#### Background Notes

In the last verse of 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to "abound in the work of the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:58 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible, and it's a great verse to memorize: *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

If ever there was a Christian servant who practiced what he preached, it was the apostle Paul. He *abounded* in the work of the Lord! If you don't believe that, read 1 Corinthians 16. In this closing chapter of the letter, it's hard to miss the fact that Paul was very much occupied with the work of the Lord. What was true of his church involvement in Corinth was also true for the rest of the churches that he founded and visited. So Paul was certainly abounding in the work of the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 16 there are seven areas in which Paul was involved as he diligently served the Lord. All servants of the Lord (and that includes every committed Christian) should be involved in these same areas – it's the way to abound in the work of the Lord.

## Doctrinal Point

### The Lord's servants should abound in the work of the Lord.

Under this one doctrinal point there are seven areas of Christian service in which we all should be involved.

#### 1. *Set aside, as the Lord prospers (v1-4).*

If you're abounding in the work of the Lord, you'll be giving money to the Lord, and you'll be encouraging others to give. In his travels, Paul was taking up a collection for the needy believers in Jerusalem, and he intended to have several brethren take the money to them. (By the way, when handling money it's wise to have more than one believer involved - for accountability.)

How much should you give? You should give proportionately, according to your income (v2). And I would say, from what the rest of the Bible indicates, you should be giving *at least* a tithe (10%) of your gross income. How often? Regularly. Here the Christians were told to give weekly, when they met together on the first day of the week. Set aside, as the Lord prospers you.

#### 2. *Plan ahead as the Lord wills (v5-9).*

Verses 5-9: *"Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). <sup>6</sup>And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup>For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup>But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. <sup>9</sup>For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."*

It's not wrong for committed Christians to plan ahead. In fact, in the work of the Lord goal setting is Scriptural. However, all plans should be subject to the Lord's will, and therefore flexible. In 2 Corinthians Paul revealed that he had to change the plans he intended because of the Lord's direction. But it wasn't wrong for Paul to plan ahead.

Paul didn't just sit around waiting for a special sign from Heaven. He made plans using his common sense. He planned out his future itinerary in view of the need and situations of the churches - subject to the Lord's will. We, too, should plan ahead as the Lord wills.

#### 3. *Pave the way for other servants (v10-12).*

Verses 10-12: *"And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. <sup>11</sup>Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren. <sup>12</sup>Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time."*

Paul not only mentioned that Timothy and Apollos were coming to Corinth, but he paved the way for them by commending them. As we study the character of Timothy in the New Testament, we find that Timothy was not the upfront, go-get-'em,

bold type of personality like the apostle Paul. He tended to be timid and unassuming, and that's why Paul paved the way for Timothy by telling the Corinthians not to let Timothy be afraid (v10) and not to despise his unassuming attitude (v11).

In reference to Apollos, the eloquent preacher, notice how even the apostle Paul did not dictate what Apollos should or should not do. He just paved the way for Apollos with a commendation. We should do the same. What a blessing it is for me to preach to a group of believers who have received me heartily, because the way has been paved for me by the commendation of other believers! Pave the way for other servants.

#### **4. Prepare the saints for battle (v13-14).**

Verses 13-14: *"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. <sup>14</sup> Let all that you do be done with love."* We're not playing games. We're involved in spiritual warfare! There's always a danger of false teaching arising from within, and attack coming from without. We need to encourage each other to be alert. Don't give up one inch of the truth! As Jude 3 says, we must *contend earnestly for the faith!*

Did you realize that love is part of our armor for spiritual battle? *"Let all that you do be done with love"*(v14). **Love** is part of our armor for spiritual battle! 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says, *"Put on the breastplate of faith and love. Prepare the saints for battle."*

#### **5. Praise the good works of others (v15-18).**

Verses 15-18: *"I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints— 16 that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. 17 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men."*

Intrinsic to abounding in the work of the Lord is recognizing and commending fellow believers who are also working for the Lord. Here Paul commended the work of three men: Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. It seems that these men were elders in the church at Corinth, because Paul told the Corinthians to be subject to them (v16). Stephanas, his family, and the servants of his household were the first Christians in Achaia, the region of Greece where Athens and Corinth were located.

These three men were commended for their labors, and for their concern for the care of other believers - including Paul, who praised these good works. We should do the same. When fellow believers are doing a good job for the Lord, tell them so - and tell others about them, too! Praise the good works of others.

#### **6. Pass on the greetings of the family (v19-21).**

Verses 19-21: *"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla 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. 21 The salutation with my own hand— Paul's."*

Priscilla and Aquila were well known to the Corinthian Christians, because Paul had met them at Corinth on his second missionary journey. Paul joined them in making tents, because they were all of the same trade. Later Priscilla and Aquila moved on to Ephesus, and Paul wrote this letter, 1 Corinthians, from Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla sent their greetings back to the Christians at Corinth, along with the greetings from the church that was meeting in their home in Ephesus. (By the way, there were no church buildings in those days. Church buildings didn't come until the 4th century.)

*"All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss"(v20).* The Church is not only the Body of Christ - it is the **family** of God! We are all brothers and sisters in the Lord, and in this context we can greet one another with a holy kiss. As you would greet your own family with a gesture of love and affection, so it should be in God's family.

In verse 21 Paul sent his own personal greeting to the Corinthians. He wrote it himself rather than dictating it, as he did for the rest of the letter. As Paul was a channel for the flow of greetings to fellow believers, so too we should be "greeting channels." Pass on the greetings of the family!

## **7. Pray in line with Scripture (v22-24).**

Verses 22-24: *"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."*

In this closing benediction, Paul sent his love in Christ and his prayers that the grace of God would be with the Corinthians. However, in addition he prayed in some pretty strong language in reference to unbelievers. *"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed [damned]."* Did you ever pray a prayer like that? That kind of prayer is right line with the cursing or imprecatory psalms in the Old Testament. "Maranatha" or "O Lord, come!"

The point of verse 22 is *not* that we don't want unbelievers to be saved. No! Of course we want them to be saved! However, we desire the righteousness of God to be upheld and vindicated by the judgment of those who refuse to turn to the Lord and who hate God's standards. Let's pray in line with Scripture.

So in this last chapter of 1 Corinthians, we have seen seven areas where the Lord's servants should "abound in the work of the Lord."

## **Practical Application**

### **When the door opens wide, expect opposition inside.**

*"For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries"(v9).* You can read about that open door for ministry at Ephesus in Acts 19. There we also read about many forms of opposition, both human and demonic, that Paul encountered.

We, too, can expect opposition when God opens doors of opportunity. The enemy gets active when he sees believers taking advantage of open doors for Christian service. When the door opens wide, expect opposition inside!