

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXXIX: The Church that Gives

Text: 1 Corinthians 16

1 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

10 If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. 11 No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

12 Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

Introduction

Chapter 16 opens with the words “now about...” Paul uses this phrase several times (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 8:1, 12:1; 16:1, 12, 17) as a way of responding to the questions the Corinthians had sent him in an earlier letter (cf. 7:1). In this chapter, the apostle turns his attention to a pair of practical inquiries:

“Now about the collection for God’s people” (vs. 1)

“Now about our brother Apollos” (vs. 12)

Don’t skim over these verses too quickly. There is buried treasure here not to be missed! Dynamic spiritual insights are straight ahead...

Questions for Discussion

1. What pressing needs in the church at Jerusalem required Paul to travel from church to church collecting funds? (see Acts 8:1; 11:28; 24:17; Romans 15:25-26)
2. What procedure did Paul put into place in the Corinthian and Galatian congregations to ensure that adequate funds were raised for the cause? (vs. 2-3)
3. How much was each individual to give? (vs. 2)
4. Based on this example, should churches today take up collections on the same day, with the same frequency, and with the same intention in mind?
5. How do verses 3-4 reinforce the concept of accountability in the management and distribution of church funds?
6. What can we learn about the culture and community of the early church from verses 5-12?