

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Week #19 – Adult Bible Study
Study Notes

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

February 18 &19 2025

1. With the grand conclusion of chapter 15, Paul has finished responding to the various contested issues in Corinth.
2. The final chapter deals with some practical loose ends,
 - Gives the Corinthians information about Paul’s travel plans
 - And closes, like all Paul’s letters, with a few admonitions and greetings.
3. These brief comments and directives seek to cement Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian community and to shape the members’ attitudes about Paul’s associates Timothy and Apollos.
4. Furthermore, Paul’s directions about the collection (16:1-4) and about the role of Stephanas in the community (16:15-17) touch upon matters that would have been of vital concern to the original readers of the letter. It is not surprising that these specific issues are not of direct concern to us.
 - This concluding chapter reminds us once again that 1 Corinthians really is a letter, not a theological treatise
 - And that we are after all reading someone else’s mail.
5. One of the most important functions of this closing chapter is to remind the Corinthians that their church belongs to a wider network of communities (not the references to Galatia, Jerusalem, Macedonia, Ephesus, and “the churches of Asia”) And that their life in Christ necessarily involves them in a mission that links them with the wider world.
6. The content of chapter 16 may be broken neatly in half.
 - In the first part (vv. 1-12), Paul gives directions about the collection and discusses his future itinerary.
 - In the second part (vv. 13-24), Paul brings the letter to a close with words of farewell.
7. Several areas in this letter are worth our consideration
 - Money and trust
 - Political dynamics and leadership in the church
 - The Church as a network for mission.
 - Watching for the coming of the Lord
 - Love as the final word

9. Paul's remarks about the collection suggest that there may have been some distrust within the Corinthian church about the administration of this offering for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

10. Even though Paul does not explain the purpose of the collection here, his other discussion of it (Romans and 2 Corinthians) make it clear that the collection was for the poor and that Paul saw it as a way of sharing resources within the community of faith.

11. Chapter 16 as a whole shows Paul hard at work to repair and cultivate relationships

- And to solicit support for certain people. Timothy and Stephanas as leaders of the community.

12. A crucial question is how authority is to be recognized and used with the community of faith.

- The model that Paul commends to the Corinthians, exemplified by Stephanas, is leadership through service.

14. One effect of Paul's discussion of his travel plans is to draw the Corinthians into a vision of the church as a fellowship that transcends human borders. To be in Christ is to be affiliated with other Christians in faraway communities, who are brothers and sisters committed to the same task of proclaiming the gospel to the world – whether in Corinth, Ephesus, Macedonia or Jerusalem.

15. Despite the focused attention given to the local community of Corinth throughout the letter, Paul does not want his readers to lose this larger ecumenical perspective.

16. Throughout the letter we have seen the strong and consistent eschatological (*end-times*) bent of Paul's thought.

- The most obvious expressions of this motif in chapter 16 are the call to *end-time* watchfulness in verse 13 and the prayer for the coming of the Lord in verse 22.
- Paul's metaphorical description of the household of Stephanas as the "first fruit of Asia: (v. 15) suggests the image of the *end-time* harvest in which the entire Gentile world will come to offer obedience to the Lord.
- The collection itself may be intended to symbolize this end time fulfillment of the purposes of God.

17. As the letter concludes, we are reminded again that Paul's gospel interprets the world comprehensively with an apocalyptic narrative that moves from the cross to the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead.

18. The last sentence of the letter, written in Paul's own hand, reaffirms his love for all the Corinthians

19. Paul has been called along with his Corinthian readers into the *koinonia* of Jesus Christ (fellowship, sharing in common or communion).

20. Paul's love for them in Jesus Christ means that he is willing to suffer for them and with them as he seeks to call them back to faithfulness and reconciliation. Love under the sign of Jesus Christ crucified can mean nothing less.

REFLECTIONS

1. Paul's directives about the collection invite us to consider how we are using our money. What do our financial practices say about our relationship to God and our relationships with one another?

2. How do we recognize authority within our communities. Is it conferred by institutional mechanisms or earned through service to the saints?

3. How do our churches participate in the international network of the people of God and what are we doing to sustain those servants who undertake the risk of carrying the gospel to a sometimes-hostile world.

4. How might we live differently if we were convinced Jesus was coming tomorrow?

5. How might the world be different if all Christians from all churches affirmed and loved one another as Paul affirms and loves the Corinthians?

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RESOURCES

1. First Corinthians, Interpretation, Richard B. Hays
2. First Corinthians, New Covenant Commentary, B. J. Oropeza
3. First Letter to the Corinthians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner
4. Feasting on the Word, David Bartlett, Barbara Brown Taylor Editors
5. Unveiling Paul's Women, Lucy Peppia