

1 Corinthians 16:1–24

Faithful Giving, Flexible Plans, and Living in Light of the Lord's Coming

Introduction: A Pastoral Close with Eternal Perspective

As Paul concludes his first letter to the Corinthians, he turns from correction and doctrine to very practical matters—giving, travel plans, ministry relationships, encouragement, and final exhortations. Far from being miscellaneous details, this chapter reveals Paul's heart as a shepherd who lived generously, planned humbly, served courageously, and waited expectantly for the return of Jesus Christ.

Giving as an Act of Worship and Love (1 Corinthians 16:1–4)

Paul begins with instructions about a collection for the believers in Jerusalem:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also.”

The church in Jerusalem was suffering severe hardship, and Gentile churches were given the opportunity to participate in meeting their needs. Paul instructs:

“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.”

This implies that believers gathered on the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection. Giving was to be regular, personal, and proportionate—each believer giving as God had prospered them. Paul wanted their generosity to be thoughtful and prepared, not pressured or emotional.

He adds that the gift would be carried by approved representatives, emphasizing integrity and accountability in handling money. Paul models transparency and trustworthiness in ministry.

Making Plans While Remaining Yielded to God (1 Corinthians 16:5–9)

Paul shares his travel intentions:

“Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia... and it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you... if the Lord permits.”

Paul planned carefully, yet he held those plans loosely. He understood that walking with the Lord requires flexibility. Life is not controlled by schedules alone, but by God's sovereign guidance.

This reflects the wisdom echoed elsewhere in Scripture—that we should say, “If the Lord wills.” Planning is not wrong; presumption is. Paul expected God to redirect him when necessary.

He explains why he was remaining in Ephesus:

“For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

Opposition did not discourage Paul—it confirmed opportunity. Where resistance was strong, Paul recognized that God was at work. Difficulty was not a signal to retreat, but a call to perseverance.

Encouraging Faithful Servants (1 Corinthians 16:10–12)

Paul urges the Corinthians to receive Timothy warmly:

“Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.”

Timothy was young and easily intimidated. Paul instructs the church not to despise him, but to support and encourage him. God often uses servants who lack worldly impressiveness but possess genuine faithfulness.

Paul also addresses Apollos:

“Now concerning our brother Apollos... he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however he will come when he has a convenient time.”

This shows healthy cooperation, not rivalry, among leaders. Apollos was not under Paul’s control, and Paul respected his discernment. Unity in ministry does not require uniformity of decisions.

Final Exhortations for Christian Living (1 Corinthians 16:13–14)

Paul closes with short, urgent commands:

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.”

Believers are called to spiritual alertness, doctrinal stability, courage, and strength. Yet strength without love becomes harsh. Love must govern every action. Truth and courage are never meant to replace love, but to serve it.

Honoring Those Who Serve Faithfully (1 Corinthians 16:15–18)

Paul commends the household of Stephanas:

“That they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”

What a holy devotion—to willingly give oneself to serving God’s people. Paul urges the church to submit to such servants and to all who labor faithfully.

He expresses gratitude for Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who refreshed his spirit and supplied what was lacking. Faithful service strengthens both those who give and those who receive.

The Warmth of Christian Fellowship (1 Corinthians 16:19–21)

Paul sends greetings from the churches of Asia and specifically from Aquila and Priscilla:

“Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”

The early church often met in homes. Buildings were not essential; devotion to Christ was. Where believers gathered in His name, the church existed.

Paul notes that he writes the final greeting with his own hand, likely as a mark of authenticity and personal affection.

A Solemn Warning and a Living Hope (1 Corinthians 16:22)

Paul includes a sobering statement:

“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!”

To reject Jesus Christ is to remain under judgment. This is not harshness—it is truth. Salvation is found only in the One who shed His blood for sin and rose again in victory.

The word “O Lord, come!” expresses the church’s expectant hope. This is the mindset believers are to live with—engaged in the world, but not entangled by it; faithful in the present, while longing for Christ’s return.

Grace, Love, and Final Blessing (1 Corinthians 16:23–24)

Paul ends tenderly:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.”

Grace sustains us. Love binds us together. Christ remains the center.

Practical Application for Believers

- Give regularly and generously as an act of worship.
- Make plans humbly, remaining open to God’s redirection.
- View opposition as potential opportunity for gospel work.
- Encourage and honor faithful servants of Christ.
- Live daily in light of the Lord’s return.

A Challenge to the Church

The church must resist being consumed by the temporary. Programs, possessions, and schedules must never replace devotion to Christ. We are called to live alert, generous, courageous lives—motivated by love and shaped by eternity.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to forgive your sins. He rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He is coming again.

If you do not yet love Him, today you can. Turn from sin. Trust in His finished work. Receive His grace. He will forgive you, give you new life, and anchor your hope beyond this world.

Maranatha—our Lord is coming.

Come to Jesus Christ today.