

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## 1CORINTHIANS 15-16

I want to talk to you tonight about *the greatest day of your life...* I'm not talking about your wedding day... or graduation... or retirement date... or the day you make your last mortgage payment... or your probation ends... or the day the Falcons finally win a Super Bowl...

No! I'm talking about **the greatest day of your life!**

**The day Jesus snatches away His Church. For if you follow the Lord Jesus that'll be your very best day!**

1 Thessalonians 4 tells us on that day the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout - with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God - and the spirits of those who died in Christ will come too - their bodies will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits...

Then we who are alive at the time will be transformed into our glorified state. **We'll be beamed up into the clouds. Jesus will snatch us away to heaven to live forever with Him. *It'll be a good day!***

This is the day Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15...

Verse 1, **"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast that word which I preached to you."** Notice, **saving faith is a standing faith.**

, It's not enough to simply believe, you have to *"hold fast"* to your faith. Paul is crystal clear, *"you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you..."*

This theme appears over and over in the NT. We're saved not by once having faith, but by continuing in it.

It reminds me of a Monday Night Football Game in 2008 when Eagles' receiver DeSean Jackson, slipped behind the defense to catch a 61-yard bomb from Donovan McNabb. He glided into the end zone. It was a touchdown, or was it? *There was just one problem...*

Jackson accidentally dropped the ball on the one yard line. The Cowboys recovered and negated the score. It just goes to prove *you've got to finish the drill.*

You can't score if you drop the ball. And likewise with salvation - *you've got to cross the goal line of life with your faith intact.* It's not enough to have had faith at some time in the past if you don't finish with your faith.

People ask me, *"Do you believe in eternal security?"*

And my answer is always, *"Absolutely, as long as you're trusting in Jesus, you are eternally secure."*

Salvation has nothing to do with my works - what I do or don't do. It's all faith. But a legit faith perseveres and endures. Paul says, *"hold fast that word which I preached to you..."* Don't fumble away your faith!

Verse 3 *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received..."* The Gospel Paul preached wasn't his own

invention. He delivered what he received. He was just the messenger. And here he lays out the Gospel...

**"That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,"** Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, *Leviticus 16* and the *Day of Atonement* describe in detail the death of our Savior. The entire Levitical system of sacrifice foreshadowed the death of Jesus on Calvary's cross.

**"And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..."** Several OT passages predicted Jesus' resurrection. One of the clearest is Psalm 16:10. It's clearly a messianic prophecy. **"For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."** Obviously, the Messiah will be raised from the dead.

But here, Paul says the OT Scriptures predicted Jesus would rise from the dead on **"the third day."** *Where is that detail found?* Well, you've got to delve a bit deeper. It's mentioned metaphorically three times...

**First is Jonah.** As a type of Christ, he was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish... **Second is the feast of first fruits.** It occurred three days after Passover. And likewise, Jesus was the first person resurrected - three days after His death on Passover.

And finally, you see three days **in the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.** Three days elapsed from the time Abraham committed to sacrifice his son until God delivered Isaac from death on the top of Mount Moriah. Metaphorically, Isaac rose the third day.

Paul points out that the OT Scripture predicted Messiah would rise from the dead on the third day...

And what Scripture predicted, history affirmed...

In the next few verses, Paul mentions numerous eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Verse 5, "And that He was seen by Cephas (that is, Peter), then by the twelve. After that, He was seen by over 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep." Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians around 57 AD. That means it had been 25 years since Jesus' resurrection. Paul is noting that many of the eyewitnesses were still alive and kicking.

If the Corinthians doubted his Gospel all they had to do was track down the eye-witnesses, and see for themselves. Realize, God based the Good News that saves us on objective, historically verifiable events.

Jesus stepped into the real world. Our Savior occupied a point on the timeline. Other religions are tied to metaphysical speculation and vague promises, but Christianity is built on verifiable evidence.

Its enemies could've shot Christianity down before it got off the ground. All they had to do was present the body of Jesus. *They didn't, because He was alive!*

Verse 7, "After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all, He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time." Years after He had ascended to heaven, the risen Christ made a special post-resurrection appearance to Paul on the Road to Damascus. I believe Paul

was one of the twelve apostles. He just joined the band a little late.

Pete Best was the Beatles original drummer.

But when you think of the Beatles it isn't, "John, Paul, George, and Pete." It's *Ringo!* Everybody considers Ringo Star the fourth Beatle. And likewise, in my mind Paul was one of the 12 apostles - *he just got to the party a little late!* He was "*born out of due time.*"

And Paul talks about his apostleship. "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Paul was a persecutor turned preacher and apostle.

It's interesting, he wrote 1 Corinthians in 57 AD, yet he called himself "*the least of the apostles...*" He'll write Ephesians three years later, in 60 AD, and there he'll call himself "*the least of all the saints...*" And when he writes 1 Timothy, five years after Ephesians, in 65 AD, Paul refers to himself as "*the chief of sinners.*"

It seems the longer Paul walked with Jesus the lower an estimation he had of himself. And this should be true of us, the more we hang out with God - and behold His glory - the smaller we become in our own eyes.

Verse 10 is a favorite verse... "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Paul was the poster child for God's grace!

He went from Christianity's *chief opponent* to its *main proponent!* He was gripped by the grace of God.

Paul received God's offer of free forgiveness, and free favor, and free blessing - and then he spent the rest of His life finding ways to say thanks to God.

People today take pride in being a **self-made man**, Paul rejoiced that he was a **grace-made man**.

All that Paul accomplished he chalked up to grace!

I like to tell people, I'm hanging on a slender thread called "*grace*," but the longer I do, the more I learn it's stronger than a thousand ropes. *Paul would agree.*

Paul sums up his thoughts on the Gospel, verse 11, "**Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.**" Paul preached it. They believed it.

Verse 12, "**Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.**" Understand, Greek philosophy and Jewish theology were at odds on the subject of resurrection.

The Greeks taught that the body was the cage of the soul. Man's ultimate triumph is to free himself from this fleshly prison. The body was only temporary housing.

Whereas, the Jews taught the resurrection of the body - that man's ultimate triumph was not **freedom from the body**, but the **transformation of the body**.

Our victory isn't merely *escaping the flesh*, but there needs to be a *reshaping of the flesh*. The Jews believed God's goal

was the elimination of sin's effects. God would one day raise our body uncorrupted by sin.

The Corinthians were Christians - they believed in Jesus' resurrection - but apparently, some of them held onto a Greek concept of the afterlife. And here, Paul sets them straight... They're contradicting themselves.

If you don't believe in the resurrection of everyone's body, how can you embrace the resurrection of the body of Jesus? *You can't have one without the other.*

Verse 14, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty."

Paul knew without the resurrection of Jesus Christianity crumbles like a house of cards.

If Jesus is just another dead guy - like Mohammed, Buddha, or Moses - then He's not the Lord of life! He loses His uniqueness. He's not who He said He was.

"Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up - if in fact the dead do not rise." Paul states the obvious. If you deny the bodily resurrection of the dead; then the Gospel of the risen Lord Jesus is a lie, and its preachers are liars.

Christianity rises or falls on the resurrection.

"For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" Jesus had a human body, so to deny the resurrection of human bodies in general, is to deny His

resurrection. *If Jesus didn't overcome death; then we're all still under the wages of sin, and lost forever...*

We might as well trash our Bibles, sell off the church building, and then go out and get drunk... *If life stops at the grave, then it's eat, drink, and be merry.*

And neither would there be any hope for our loved ones who have already died. Paul adds, "Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, you can forget about seeing your believing mom and dad, or spouse, or friend. Paul sums it up, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

If there's nothing more to life, than the here and now; then the sacrifices necessary to live the Christian life aren't worth making! If Jesus never rose from the dead, then "the last man with the most toys really does win."

**But that's not what life is about!** For verse 20 tells us, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

The fact is Jesus has risen from the dead, and He dwells in the glory of His Father. His resurrection has now paved the way for you and I to follow. The person who presents their body to Jesus a living sacrifice, will one day see Jesus transform that dedicated body.

We'll be resurrected like Jesus. This is why Paul calls Jesus "the first fruits" of the resurrection.



There was an OT feast known as “**First Fruits.**” It occurred three days after Passover. The priest would bring a bundle of wheat before the Lord. The sheaf of wheat was the first of the spring crop. It represented the rest of the harvest - thus it was called “*first fruits.*”

When the priest waved it before God He was saying there was more to come, and it all belonged to Him.

This is why Paul compares Jesus to “*the first fruits*” of the harvest. Jesus was the first of many followers who’s bodies will one day rise from the dead. Because Jesus rose from the dead there’re now more to come.

“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.” People who are only born once share the destiny of their great-great-grandfather, Adam - they die and rot in the grave.

But people who are born twice - who experience both a physical birth and later a spiritual birth in Christ are destined to be like Jesus. Their body lives forever.

But there’s an order in resurrection...Jesus was resurrected at His first coming in 32 AD. Our bodies will experience the same metamorphosis when He returns. **Jesus is resurrected first; then we follow in the future.**

Verse 24, “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule

and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."

1 Thessalonians 4 tells us that the Church will be resurrected at the rapture - and this mass exodus will be followed by seven years of what the Bible calls "**Great Tribulation.**" During this time God's wrath will be poured out on this wicked world. This climatic period of judgment ends when Jesus triumphs over all His enemies and establishes His Kingdom on the earth.

At His first coming, *salvation was on Jesus' mind.* At His second coming, *domination is on His mind.*

Gentle Jesus will crush His enemies. He'll take kings by the scruff of the neck and force them to submit!

In John 5:28-29 Jesus tells us there're actually two resurrections. "**The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear (the Father's) voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.**" Yet these two resurrections occur at least a thousand years apart.

Revelation 20:12 tells us after Jesus reigns over the earth a millennium of years, Hades will be emptied out.

At that time the lost will also be resurrected - *but not to life.* Their bodies will be tossed into the lake of fire.

Verse 26, "**The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.**" Revelation 20:14 concurs, "**Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.**" Our archenemy, Death, will be no longer threaten those who believe.

Next, Paul quotes **Psalm 8:6**, "For '(Jesus) has put all things under His feet.'" And that includes death!...

Realize, this is the ultimate goal in God's eternal plan of the ages... He intends for the whole universe to end up in submission to King Jesus - under His feet!

In verse 27 Paul points out a technicality that ends up teaching us something about the unity of God.

He says, "But when He says..." *Who was the author of Psalm 8?* In a sense it was David, but in a deeper sense, it was the Spirit of God. Thus when God "says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted." A son doesn't rule over His father, and God the Son isn't over God the Father. Verse 28, "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." The Father God exalts the Son; then in the end, the Son of God will submit to the Father.

The Godhead exists forever in an ordered equality.

Verse 29 is at first a puzzling passage. Paul writes, "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" Remember, Paul is trying to prove the resurrection of the dead, and here He brings up a pagan practice to make his point. The cults of Paul's day practiced what we'd call "proxy baptisms."

Today's cults do the same. Mormons get baptized for deceased people who weren't Mormons. It gives the dead a

second chance to become a Mormon. As if that did you any good in the first place. It's a false religion.

And proxy baptism is nothing but a superstition.

Nowhere does the NT teach that baptism for a dead person conveys any kind of merit or extra opportunity!

Especially not here... Notice how Paul words his argument, "*what will THEY do who are baptized for the dead?*" and "*why then are THEY baptized for the dead?*" Paul never says "us," he's specific, it's "*they.*"

"*They*" meaning the pagans. Proxy-baptism was never a Christian practice. It was an aberrant ritual performed by the pagans in the city of Corinth...

But the practice did indicate their belief in a physical resurrection. *Why would you go to the trouble of being physically baptized for a friend if you didn't believe their physical body would one day be resurrected?*

Paul's point to the Corinthian church is clear, "*If even the heretical heathen can see the truth of the resurrection, why can't Spirit-filled believers?*"

Verse 30, "*And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*" Paul was persecuted daily because of his belief in a physical resurrection.

If it wasn't true, why was he killing himself trying to preach the risen Christ? He continues, "*If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me?*" Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus. He says he fought "*beasts*" for the sake of Christ. He's probably referring to evil

men, but it's possible he was thrown to the lions a time or two.

And why in the world would Paul risk his life for a lie?

If there is no resurrection; then Paul was wasting his life suffering for a false doctrine. He says, "If the dead do not rise, **"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"**

Again, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead let's drop by the liquor store, and down a bottle of Jack Daniels. If all we have to look forward too is rotting in the grave, life is nothing but a cruel joke. Why sacrifice earthly pleasures for eternal rewards if there's no eternity?

*If there's no forever, why not live for right now?*

Verse 33, **"Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."** The reason some of the Corinthians embraced false doctrines is because they were hanging out with people who believed in heresy.

It proves, **hang with the wrong crowd and you get hung!** Evil rubs off. Choose your friends wisely!

He says, **"Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame."** You've heard, **"Ignorance is bliss."** Don't believe it! What you don't know can hurt you!

Take for example **a man from Bristol, England who dove headfirst off the local pier. He plunged 25 feet into the ocean - but what he didn't realize was the tide had gone out and the water was only eighteen inches deep.**

What he didn't know ended up having a tremendous *impact* on his life! And Paul is saying we need to wake up to what we believe. Give it serious thought. Some of us are ignorant of the Word of God that sits in our lap.

"But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Some of the Corinthians were asking about the mechanics of the resurrection. "Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies." And Paul's explanation draws from nature. He uses agriculture to teach a little theology.

And here's the first principle, resurrection requires a death. Before a fruit sprouts, a seed has to be buried and die. **Death always precedes resurrection.**

"And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain - perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body." A new body comes only after *the old body* dies. A seed gives up the life that becomes the delicious fruit. One form of life dies, so that from it, God can resurrect a different form of life.

"All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds." God created different types of bodies to survive in different environments.

A bird's body needs to be *aerodynamic*. A fish's body needs to be *aqua-dynamic*. A body that's suitable to one ecosystem may not adapt to another environment.

The Creator fits all of life with a body that's suitable for its surroundings. And the same is true spiritually.

"There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." As there are different bodies on earth there're also *earthly* and *heavenly* bodies. "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory." Each star has its own mass, luminosity, and density - its own characteristics.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Remember, nothing rises to resurrection life until it first dies. Life springs from death. Bodies only change in character after they die...

That's when a body goes *from corruptible to incorruptible...* and *from shameful to glorious...* and *from weak to strong...* and *from natural to spiritual...*

I'll never forget the young man who gave his life to Jesus on his death bed. This fellow was in terrible pain. He was dying of cancer. I baptized him in his bed.

I remember asking Mike, "Is there anything I can do for you?" He said rather matter-of-factly, "No, unless you can get me another body." Well, guess what?... I can't, but that is exactly what Jesus can do!

One day my friend, Mike, will get his new body. It'll be a pain-free, cancer-free body. In fact, everyone who trusts in Jesus will one day receive a brand new body.

Verse 44, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man (which was Adam) was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man (that is Jesus) is the Lord from heaven."

Adam was earthy. Jesus is heavenly. Adam came first; then came Jesus. This is God's order - *our current bod is from the sod, but our future bod is from God.*

I have a definite principle when it comes to rearing kids. *Every teenager needs to drive a beater before they graduate to a nice ride - a vehicle with rust. They'll appreciate the newer model car after driving a jalopy.*

And the same is true with us. Right now we're in a jalopy of a body. But Jesus is going to put us in a brand new model, fresh-off-the-lot, body. One day we'll get new bodies with no dents. We'll have a new car smell!

During the weeks after His resurrection, Jesus displayed the capabilities of our future bodies. He took His heavenly body on a forty-day test drive.

The risen Christ was unhindered by time and space. He appeared to two of His disciples on the Road to Emmaus; then vanished as they were having lunch...



When He visited the disciples behind closed doors, he appeared in their midst. Jesus' body came right through the walls... yet He held out his hands for Thomas to touch. Jesus was still flesh and bone.

Jesus even ate fish and bread with the disciples for breakfast... *This is the body we'll one day possess.*

Here's how I imagine our glorified bodies...

*Lock your keys in the car? No biggie, you'll be able to transport yourself through the door panel...*

*But who'll need a car? Want to take a jaunt around the world? You'll be able to travel at the speed of desire... We're talking Star Trek stuff in real life! We'll all receive a body that will be out-of-this-world!*

Verse 48, "As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly." On earth, we get earthy bodies. In heaven, we get upgraded to heavenly bodies. In a sense, we going from dust to stardust.

"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man." And of course, the heavenly Man is our Lord Jesus.

Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." When the first men walked on the moon, NASA knew a human body could never survive on the lunar surface. Our body wasn't fit for lunar life.

That's why NASA designed a life-support suit perfectly fitted for the moon. And likewise, these mortal bodies aren't suited

to survive the awesome, physical presence of God. If we enter pure holiness wearing flesh and blood, we'd fry like eggs on the hood of a race car. When we enter God's throne room we'll have to shed *our earth-suits*, and suit up in a *spiritual body!*

*But how will it happen?*

Verse 51, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..." We use to have a sign in our church nursery that quoted verse 51, "*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...*"

For, "*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.*" You would think a transformation *from earthy to heavenly* would take hours, but Jesus plans to give me a new body - not in a blink - but in a twinkle.

And a twinkle is even faster than a blink!

"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Kathy likes to plant bulbs in the spring - ugly, twisted bulbs. *Who would think a gnarly bulb would sprout into a beautiful flower?* Yet this is what happens when Jesus returns for His church. You and I are ugly, gnarly bulbs, but we'll suddenly sprout into gorgeous flowers.

We caterpillars, will turn into butterflies. One day we'll shed our cocoons and sprout wings... I love the inscription on the tombstone, "*Budded on earth to bloom in heaven.*" That's the destiny of all believers.

Verse 53, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Bodies designed for time and space aren't capable of occupying eternity. We'll need bodies with heavenly capacities. Our mortal bodies must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Our Lord Jesus won't be satisfied until He has reversed every trace of sin and its painful consequences - *especially that of death.*

*Jesus will one day abolish death once and for all, and Paul is so sure of it, he begins to taunt death...*

"O Death, where is your sting?" Death is the only pest that stings before it bites. The worse aspect of death is not that it *stops life*, but that it *spoils life*.

Death effects us long before we die... It casts a cloud over the good times knowing they'll one day end... *The wealthy man doesn't feel as rich knowing he can't take it with him... Fame loses its luster knowing it won't last...* There're no marques in the graveyard, just tombstones. Death is a robber. It steals the joys of life.

Death terminates relationships - it busts up homes and hearts - it creates missed opportunities - it causes regrets that are never resolved. *Death certainly stings!*

Once, a little boy was allergic to bee stings. He and his dad were driving in the car when he saw a bee swarming over the front dash. The little guy panicked.

He screamed for his father, who was driving, to do something. The dad reached up with his fist and caught the bee. But after a minute, he released his fist.

Again the boy came unglued. *What was his dad trying to do?* That's when the father opened his hand and showed his son the stinger stuck in his palm.

The dad loved his son and had allowed the bee to sting him so that it wouldn't be able to sting his son.

*And this is what Jesus has done for us!* He's taken the sting of death in His feet, and hands, and side.

Jesus was separated from His Father so we could live forever with Him. He paid sin's penalty so we could be forgiven. *Once and for all, Jesus defeated death.*

And today, death is still present - like the bee in the car - but Jesus has made sure it can no longer take anything of real and lasting value from the child of God.

And now Paul taunts death! *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* The bars of Hades have been broken. Jesus has sprung us.

Paul sums it up, *"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Verse 58, *"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."* Since Jesus rose from the dead, we will too.

There is life after the grave. One day we'll stand before our Creator. *This means your labor for the Lord is not in vain.* What you do today matters in eternity.

This is why Paul says, *"be steadfast (never give up), immovable (never give in), always abounding (never give out) in the work of the Lord."* Never give up, never give in, never give out. What you do for Jesus matters!

**Chapter 16, "Now concerning the collection for the saints..."** Paul had been taking an offering from the Gentile churches for the first church in Jerusalem.

The Christians in Jerusalem had fallen on hard times. Judea was suffering a famine that had left many folks hungry. Paul felt the Gentile Christians owed their Jewish brothers a debt of gratitude. In a sense, the Gentiles' spiritual heritage had begun in Jerusalem.

He continues, *"As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week..."* (That's when Christians met, *then and now*. We meet on Sundays - the day Jesus rose from the dead.) And when church gathers, *"Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."*

Here's a part of worship that's often overlooked, but is just as important as singing or praying - and perhaps more revealing than either as to where our heart lies. We need to worship God with the giving of our money.

Paul wanted the Church in Corinth to pony up and take care of their part in the collection before his visit. It would be awkward for Paul to deal with it personally.

"And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem."

This was wise. Paul wanted a representative of the people who gave the money to escort it to Jerusalem.

Paul was careful to be accountable with finances. "But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me."

Verse 5, "Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia)."

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. 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." Or as it's pronounced in Latin, "Deo Volente," that is, "God willing." Paul was the pre-eminent leader of the church, but he never stopped following Jesus.

His decisions were contingent, "if the Lord permits."

"But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. (or late spring) For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." Hey, *adversaries* didn't stop Paul from pursuing *opportunities*.

If Christians were less intimidated by our adversaries we'd find a lot more opportunities to speak for Jesus!

Verse 10, "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. 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."

Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted allies.

"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." According to Acts 18, Apollos was the Bible teacher who Aquila and Priscilla had tutored on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Some teachers stop being teachable after they start teaching. To Apollos' credit, he was not one. He was a humble man. *But here Apollos disagrees with Paul.*

*Why we're not told,* but Paul doesn't condemn him. Apparently, he chalked it up as a difference of opinion.

It happens at times, even among serious and sincere Christians. Like these two, we can disagree agreeably.

Paul tells the Corinthians in verse 13, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love." What a challenge for you and me.

"I urge you, brethren - you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia." Stephanas' family was Paul's first converts in Corinth.

"And that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints - that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us."

Apparently, Stephanas was not only the first believer, he became the pastor. His family founded the church.

Recall earlier in Paul's letter he rebuked the Corinthians for rallying around celebrity pastors. Folks said, "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Cephas."

Here he overlooks the superstar pastors. He's saying *support your local leadership*. Be loyal to the faithful pastor who labors in the trenches - not the slick guy with the novel approach who sweeps into town and impresses everyone before they get to know him.

Verse 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."

This was the trio who reported to Paul the problems in Corinth. Paul knows they could be branded tattle-tails, so he urges everyone to show them respect.

"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."

Notice, the dynamic duo, Aquila and Priscilla, are at it again. Everywhere you find them in Scripture there's a church meeting in their house.

They opened both hearts and home to the Lord.

Prior to Ephesus Aquila and Priscilla lived in Corinth.

It was there Paul had met this dedicated couple. Now they're sending their greetings to their friends.



"All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss." And the point here is not whether we greet each other with a kiss, or a handshake, or a hug, or a high five - but whatever greeting we use it should be warm and sincere - and most importantly, *"holy."*

"The salutation with my own hand - Paul's."

Paul's custom was to dictate his letters, then at the end, he would add his signature to authenticate the letter.

Verse 22, "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." Or "Anathema" - which means *excommunicated*... Paul adds an Aramaic phrase, "Maranatha." In English, it's "O Lord, come!"

Paul closes his letter to the Corinthians in verse 23, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."