

Chapter 16

Plans about the money for Jerusalem 16:1-4

v1 Now I will write about the money for God's people. Do what I told the churches in Galatia to do. v2 On the first day of every week you should put some money away. The amount of money should be in proportion to the amount that a person earns. Save the money. Then, when I come, you will not have to collect money. v3 Then, when I arrive, I will recommend some people to take your gift to Jerusalem. They will be men that you consider to be honest. v4 If it seems right for me to go as well, they will go with me.

The reasons for the collection

1. Paul had promised the leaders of the church in Jerusalem that he would remember the poor people in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9-10). There had been a great lack of food (Acts 11:27-30). There were many Christian widows (Acts 6:1-6). There was probably a lack of paid work.
2. Paul wanted Christians to realise that faith must cause us to act practically. They could show their love for each other if they helped poor people by gifts of money. Paul used the word 'charis' to show that their money was a gift (1 Corinthians 16:3). He also talked about this gift in 2 Corinthians 8:4. There he used the Greek word 'koinonia' to emphasise that they were sharing with each other. It was an honour to give this help (2 Corinthians 9:12).
3. Paul was eager to unite Jewish and Gentile Christians. They were part of one church, with responsibility for each other.

The questions

Verse 1 'Now I will write about' shows that Paul was replying to questions from Corinth. They may have asked him

1. how to organise the collection of money;
2. what the arrangements were to send the money to Jerusalem.

Paul's advice

Verses 2-3 'The first day of the week' was the day of the resurrection of Jesus. So it was a day on which Christians met for worship (Acts 20:7). So to set aside money on that day was part of their worship. It was a way to thank God. A single collection would produce some money. But regular collections over a period of time would produce more money. If one Christian was not as rich as another Christian, he would give less. The rich Christians should give more. But they all had the opportunity to share.

A number of people together would make travel safer. They would be carrying a large sum of money. They should be men that the local churches approved of. That would remove any idea that Christians were not honest. Acts 20:4 gives the names of some of these men.

The Christians in Corinth took more than a year to make their collection. We know that from 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. So Paul had to urge them to complete it. But the collection did reach Jerusalem. Later, Paul told Felix that he had come to Jerusalem to bring gifts to his nation (Acts 24:17).

Paul's plans 16:5-9

v5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you. I will be travelling through

Macedonia. v6 So perhaps I will stay with you for a while. I might even spend the winter with you. Then you can help me on my journey wherever I go. v7 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 allows it. v8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost. v9 That is because there is a very good opportunity for me to do some good work here. And there are many people who oppose me.

Verses 5-6 Some Christians in Corinth had doubted whether Paul would visit them (4:19). Paul's plans were not certain. But he hoped to visit Corinth after he had gone through Macedonia. He intended just to make a quick tour of the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica, but not to stay long. Perhaps he was worried about whether they were believing the right things. Some Jewish Christians were trying to say that Gentile Christians should keep Jewish laws, including the law about circumcision. Maybe that is why Paul needed to visit them.

But Paul hoped to spend some time at Corinth. He might even spend the winter there. People did not usually travel during the winter.

Verses 8-9 Paul thought that there was a great opportunity to preach the gospel at Ephesus. So he would stay there until Pentecost. Other churches in Asia were the result of Paul's stay in Ephesus for two years. People who had become Christians visited other places. They started churches there. For example, Epaphras had probably started the church at Colossae (Colossians 1:7). These churches were probably the ones that John named as the 'seven churches in Asia' (Revelation 1:11).

Paul was the Lord's servant. So his plans always changed if the Lord guided him. Paul had many enemies in Ephesus. Acts chapter 19 tells us how Jews spoke out against him.

And so did Demetrius and other workers, who made money from the worship of Diana. Because they were losing trade, they began a public protest against Paul. He could easily have died. Acts 20:1-3 shows that Paul carried out his plan to go through Macedonia to Corinth. He stayed in Corinth for three months.

Timothy and Apollos 16:10-12

v10 Timothy might come. If he does come, he will be staying with you. Make sure that he has nothing to worry about. He is doing the Lord's work, just as I am. v11 So nobody should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way happily, so that he can return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

v12 Now I want to speak about our brother Apollos. I wanted him to go to you with the brothers. I tried hard to persuade him. He did not want to go now. But he will go when he has the opportunity.

Verses 10-11 Paul had said that he would send Timothy to visit them (1 Corinthians 4:17). From Acts 19:22, we learn that he sent Timothy with Erastus before him into Macedonia. Timothy was young (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul thought that some of the Christians in Corinth might not behave in a loving way towards a young man. So, he reminded them that Timothy was doing the same work as himself. They should help Timothy as they would have helped Paul. It is not clear whether Paul and some Christians with him were expecting Timothy. It could be that Timothy and Erastus would be returning from their journey with some other 'brothers' to meet Paul.

Verse 12 'Now I want to speak about' suggests that the Christians in Corinth had asked about Apollos. There were Christians there who admired the way that Apollos preached (1:2). Paul showed that he and Apollos were friends. He had tried to

persuade him to go back to Corinth. For some reason, Apollos did not want to go at that time. He may have been too busy with the work in Ephesus. If he went back to Corinth, perhaps the Christians there would divide again (1:10-12). Perhaps he was worried about that. But Apollos would go at a suitable time.

Some commands 16:13-14

v13 Watch all the time. Be firm in the faith. Be brave. Be strong. v14 Do everything with love.

Verse 13 Paul means that they must watch out for the enemy of Christ. The devil is like a lion that is looking for someone to destroy (1 Peter 5:8). They must not allow people with wrong ideas to make their faith weak (Acts 20:30-31). They must be ready at all times for Christ's return (Mark 13:38). They must have courage and act like responsible adults. They will need strength to keep their faith pure from wrong ideas and wrong behaviour.

Verse 14 This final command is about the relationships of Christians to each other, and to those outside the church. Paul had shown them what love was like in chapter 13. 'Everything' was a necessary word because of all their quarrels and selfish behaviour. Paul had heard about the way that they went to the courts with each other (6:1-11). He had blamed them for the way that they behaved at the Lord's Supper (11:17-22). They did not think about the gifts of other people when they met for worship (chapter 14). So they must act with love in all that they do. In that way, they would show their spiritual strength.

Stephanas 16:15-18

v15 You know that the first believers in Achaia were from the family of Stephanas. They have spent all their time to serve God's people. Brothers and sisters, v16 I urge you to obey people like that. Follow everyone

who works hard at the task with me. v17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived. They gave me what you could not give me. v18 They have cheered me up and they have cheered you up as well. You should appreciate people like them. They deserve your honour.

Verse 15 Paul had baptised Stephanas and his family (1:16). They were the first people to become Christians in the region called Achaia. Stephanas and his family had taken the responsibility to serve other Christians.

Verse 16 Paul says that those who serve can lead other people. He urged the Christians at Corinth to obey people like Stephanas. They should obey anyone else who worked in this way. He used the word 'task'. It meant that such work was not easy. It required great effort.

Verse 17 Fortunatus and Achaicus may have been slaves who belonged to the home of Stephanas. They had arrived from Corinth with news about what was happening there. Paul had felt sad without his friends in Corinth. These three made him feel that he was not completely separate from all of his friends in Corinth.

Verse 18 It had been a great pleasure for Paul to receive them. It was good for the Christians at Corinth to send their messages to Paul. The three men may have taken Paul's letter back to Corinth.

Final greetings 16:19-24

v19 The churches in Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla send you warm good wishes in the Lord. So does the church that meets in their house. v20 All the brothers send you greetings. Greet each other with a holy kiss. v21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. v22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let a curse be upon that person. Come, Lord. v23 I pray that the grace of the Lord Jesus will be with

you. v24 I give my love to you all because of your faith in Christ Jesus.

Verse 19 The churches in the region called Asia were those that Christians had established during Paul's stay in Ephesus. He stayed there for two years. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 tell us the places where those churches were.

Aquila and his wife Priscilla were good friends of Paul. They had lived in Rome. But the Roman ruler Claudius had ordered the Jews to leave Rome. This was perhaps because of trouble in a synagogue. This trouble may have been because Jews opposed Christian preaching (Acts 18:2). When Paul arrived in Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla gave him a home. He worked with them in their business to make tents (Acts 18:1-3). They travelled with Paul to Ephesus. They remained there when he returned to Antioch. While he was away, they taught Apollos more about Christianity (Acts 18:24-26). Then they returned to Rome, perhaps to prepare for Paul's intended visit. A group of Christians met in their house. Paul says that they risked their lives for him. We do not know when this was. Paul says that he and the members of all the Gentile churches are grateful to them (Romans 16:3-5).

Verse 20 Paul does not name the 'brothers'. But he means all the Christians who were working with him in Ephesus.

Paul encourages them to greet each other with 'a holy kiss'. A kiss was a normal greeting in Paul's time. Paul refers to this in three other letters. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 2 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 16:16.) Peter refers to a 'kiss of love' (1 Peter 5:14).

It was a 'holy' kiss because it showed the special relationship of God's 'holy' people with each other. It became part of the service of the Lord's Supper. But Judas used a kiss that was a false greeting (Luke 22:48).

Verse 21 Paul's personal greeting is in his own handwriting. He usually dictated his letters to someone who wrote them down. We know that Tertius wrote down the letter to the Christians in Rome (Romans 16:22). Paul's signature would show that the letter was genuine. He wrote in Galatians 6:11 about his large handwriting. In 2 Thessalonians 3:17, he said that the greeting in his own handwriting was in all his letters.

Verse 22 All those who did not love Jesus ought to suffer God's punishment.

'Maranatha' is an Aramaic word that means 'Our Lord, come'. (Aramaic was the language that Jesus spoke.) Even Christians who spoke Greek knew this word. So the early Christians must have used it. It may have been a secret sign of Christians to each other. But it certainly was a prayer that Jesus would return soon. It is like the prayer at the end of Revelation (Revelation 22:20): 'Come, Lord Jesus'.

Verse 23 Paul prays that the grace of the Lord Jesus will be with his friends. Paul always ended his letters like this.

Verse 24 Paul ends this letter by sending his love to them all. In parts of his letter, he had blamed them for their actions. Many people had opposed Paul in Corinth. But he sent his love to 'all' of them. They were all united because of their faith in Christ Jesus. So the apostle of Christ Jesus (1:1) showed the same love as his Lord.

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