I Corinthians Chapter 16

A Sacred Potpourri *

* Potpourri = a miscellaneous grouping (in this case - collection of writings)

We can divide Paul’s conclusion to his first letter to the Corinthians into these groupings:
   Verses 1-4  Concerns an offering
   Verses 5-9  Personal thoughts
   Verses 10-24  Personalities

Let’s Take Up An Offering

1 Cor. 16:1-4

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. [2] Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. [3] And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. [4] And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

I have always enjoyed reading what Scriptures say about “giving.” Furthermore, I enjoy taking up offerings because in so doing I am giving God’s people an opportunity to partner with the Lord in ministry and to receive blessings in eternity.

It is interesting to me that just after Paul finished exhorting (encouraging) believers in the glorious hope of the Great Resurrection (chapter 15) that he immediately wrote about offerings.

There are some preachers who don’t like to talk about offerings - or even receive them in the churches they pastor. Some of them merely have collection boxes in the lobby for people to give if they wish. However, giving is just as much a part of worship as singing songs or hearing preaching!
QUIZ QUICKIE:

Which of these two subjects does the Bible speak about more:

☐ Prayer
☐ Money

The correct answer is “money.” Surprising? There are 532 verses in the Bible about praying and 1,539 verses about money and giving. This is NO WAY negates the incredible importance of prayer, but it DOES give us the SPIRITUAL aspect of our wage earning and our giving to the Lord.

Scriptures emphasize that God owns everything. We are His stewards or managers of what He gives to us. We are commanded to be productive.

Do you realize that Jesus said more about the way we handle or consider money than anything else? Paul emphasized this truth, too. While he only touches on the subject in I Corinthians, he devoted two chapters - 8 and 9 - in his second letter to them to the matter of money.

In Corinth, there was a great issue to be considered. The church in Jerusalem, the ‘mother church,’ so to speak, was in financial need. You can only suspect that some of the believers in Greece must have thought, “So...their problem is no skin off my nose. What’s it to us?” Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers that other churches on his missions journeys were giving to the need and so should they. And further - think of what Christ gave them!

2 Cor. 8:1-9  [The Message]

Now, friends, I want to report on the surprising and generous ways in which God is working in the churches in Macedonia province. [2] Fierce troubles came down on the people of those churches, pushing them to the very limit. The trial exposed their true colors: They were incredibly happy, though desperately poor. The pressure triggered something totally unexpected: an outpouring of pure and generous gifts. [3] I was there and saw it for myself. They gave offerings of whatever they could—far more than they could afford!— [4] pleading for the privilege of helping out in the relief of poor Christians.

[5] This was totally spontaneous, entirely their own idea, and caught us completely off guard. What explains it was that they had first given themselves unreservedly to God and to us. The other giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives. [6] That's what prompted us to ask Titus to bring the relief offering to your attention, so that what was so well begun could be finished up. [7] You do so well in so
many things—you trust God, you're articulate, you're insightful, you're passionate, you love us—now, do your best in this, too.

[8] I'm not trying to order you around against your will. But by bringing in the Macedonians' enthusiasm as a stimulus to your love, I am hoping to bring the best out of you. [9] You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as he was, he gave it all away for us—in one stroke he became poor and we became rich.

A principle that we learn from Scripture is that GIVING IS CONNECTED TO GRACE. Giving is a sign that you understand grace and that you truly believe what God has done for us in Jesus. What is grace? *Grace is God’s attitude of undeserved favor toward sinners. It also means God’s unearned mercy powerfully working within us.*

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**CHARISMATICS**

Now this paragraph may startle you a bit: The Greek word for “grace” is *CHARIS*. From that word we get the familiar one, “charismatic.” We equate that word with “spiritual gifts.” We give in response to grace and giving is a spiritual gift - and where members of a congregation express the grace of God shown to them by giving graciously to others. There you see a church that can truly be called a charismatic church - a church full of “charis,” that is, full of grace.

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What are the principles behind “giving?” Paul lists some of them for us:

1. God’s people give cheerfully. 2 Cor. 9:7 *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

People of God who understand this do not get upset about offerings. They understand it’s an opportunity to bless others and God as well.

2. God’s people are generous. Matthew 10:8 “...freely ye have received, freely give.” Who said that? Jesus. And Paul builds on our Lord’s commandment with this teaching to the Corinthians: 2 Cor. 8:2 *How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

3. God’s people give sacrificially. Paul wrote how the believers in Macedonia “gave as much as they were able and even BEYOND their ability.”

4. God’s people give selflessly. That is, we don’t give to “get.” That is something
often taught in religious television - the “sow your seed” teaching. While it is true that God meets our needs, we don’t give in order to get something material in return. You cannot buy God off. You cannot buy God’s favor even if you have all the money in the world.

So here is what we know about giving:
- Giving generously pleases God.
- Giving generously helps further God’s work.
- Giving generously honors God.

The First Day Of The Week

In verse 2, Paul wrote, “Upon the first day of the week, let everyone lay by him in store...” What is the first day of the week? Sunday. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week: John 20:1-2 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. [2] Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Following the resurrection of Jesus, the believers came together for worship on the first day of the week - Sunday. Most Christian churches today meet on Sundays. It certainly is not a sin to meet on another day, but we follow the New Testament pattern.

GOD PLANS PAUL’S ITINERARY

1 Cor. 16:5-9

Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. [6] And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. [7] For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, [if the Lord permit]. [8] But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. [9] For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

“If the Lord permit...” There it is - one of the great keys to Paul’s ministry. He was led of the Lord. As we read the book of Acts, we read of the Holy Spirit’s guiding those early missionaries from place to place. Is it wrong to make plans? Of course not. But those plans must always be amenable to God’s will. We should be willing to change our plans. In his second missionary journey, Paul meant to minister in Turkey (Asia Minor) but the Holy Spirit sent him instead to Europe.
Acts 16:6-12

They went to Phrygia, and then on through the region of Galatia. Their plan was to turn west into Asia province, but the Holy Spirit blocked that route. [7] So they went to Mysia and tried to go north to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them go there either. [8] Proceeding on through Mysia, they went down to the seaport Troas. [9] That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" [10] The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans. [11] Putting out from the harbor at Troas, we made a straight run for Samothrace. The next day we tied up at New City [12] and walked from there to Philippi, the main city in that part of Macedonia and, even more importantly, a Roman colony. We lingered there several days.

You see, Paul had no initial intentions of going into Europe; but the Holy Spirit wanted him there. Look again at verse 9 (1 Cor): FOR A GREAT DOOR AND EFFECTUAL IS OPENED UNTO ME and there are many adversaries.
Pay attention to that last line: “...and there are many adversaries.” My friend, God’s will can sometimes lead you right into a battle ground. The fact that you have a directive from God does not preclude trials. Satan does not stand idle while we obey the Lord, my friend!

PERSONALITIES

No one works in ministry alone - at least for very long. In this short passage, Paul honors men and women who assisted him in bringing the Gospel to so much of the world.

1 Cor. 16:10-24 [The Message]
If Timothy shows up, take good care of him. Make him feel completely at home among you. He works so hard for the Master, just as I do. [11] Don't let anyone disparage him. After a while, send him on to me with your blessing. Tell him I'm expecting him, and any friends he has with him.
[12] About our friend Apollos, I've done my best to get him to pay you a visit, but haven't talked him into it yet. He doesn't think this is the right time. But there will be a "right time."
[13] Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, give it all you've got, be resolute, [14] and love without stopping.
[15] Would you do me a favor, friends, and give special recognition to the family of Stephanas? You know, they were among the first converts in Greece, and they've put themselves out, serving Christians ever since then. I want you to [16] honor and look up to people like that: companions and workers who show us how to do it, giving us something to aspire to.
[17] I want you to know how delighted I am to have Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus here with me. They partially make up for your absence! [18] They've refreshed me by keeping me in touch with you. Be proud that you have people like this among you.
Aquila, Priscilla, and the church that meets in their house say hello.
[20] All the friends here say hello.
Pass the greetings around with holy embraces!
[22] If anyone won't love the Master, throw him out. Make room for the Master!
[23] Our Master Jesus has his arms wide open for you.

1. Timothy
Paul loved this young man whom he regarded as his “son in the faith.” We learn more about him in Acts 16.

- He came from a godly heritage. 2 Tim. 1:5  That precious memory triggers another: your honest faith—and what a rich faith it is, handed down from your grandmother Lois to your mother Eunice, and now to you!

- Even in his youth, he studied scripture. 2 Tim. 3:15  And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- It is believed that Timothy was martyred for his following Jesus - perhaps during the insane rule of Emperor Domitian (the same one who sent John to Patmos).

2. **Apollos**

Apollos was an educated and cultured Jew from Alexandria, Egypt, who was an orator. He, too, worked with Aquila and Priscilla in the establishing of churches. He became one of Paul’s most trusted friends.

3. **Stephanas**

He was a believer from Corinth. Paul had preached in his home there.

4. **Fortunatus and Achaicus**

These men were in the delegation that brought the letter to Paul indicating there were problems in Corinth. Paul said, “Be sure to thank them for their faithful service upon their return.”

5. **Aquila and Priscilla**

We remember they were Jews who lived in Rome until Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from that city. They came to Corinth and worked as “tent-makers,” which probably meant they also made sails for the ships that came in and out every day. They were great friends and helpers to Paul and a Christian church was established right there in their home.

Note the final words of Paul in this letter: 1 Cor. 16:22

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.
“Anathema” means cursed. “Maranatha” means “our Lord returns.” It is believed that a common greeting among the early Christians was “Maranatha.” Would that not be a good thought for us - to constantly be reminded of our Lord’s return?

The book (letter) of I Corinthians is followed by II Corinthians. While we won’t study that book now, a short synopsis of it would be in order.

Paul was working in Ephesus, Turkey (for three years, we believe), when he got word that the believers in Corinth wanted him to return to deal with some issues. He could not come and so he wrote I CORINTHIANS, which we have just studied. Later, Paul received word that the Corinthians were doing much better while he was ministering in Philippi. There, at Philippi, Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthians. It is a charming letter, indeed, in it we come to know Paul much better. I encourage you to read it this week - easily done in one setting.

NEXT WEEK: It has been some time since I had a “question and answer” session. Lord willing, we will do that next Wednesday night.

The next series will begin in several weeks and I’ve called it ROUTE 66. There are 66 books in the Bible. How does one go about effectively and systematically study such a great work? Please join me for that series soon.