

Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

1 Corinthians 16:5-24 "The Strong Team: The Church"

1 Corinthians 16:5-9 But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; ⁶ and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. ⁷ For I do not wish to see you now *just* in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; ⁹ for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

- This trip is referred to in Acts 20:1-3 just after the Ephesian riot of Acts 19. *"After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. ² When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. ³ And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia."*
- Winter would soon arrive and plans had to be made to adjust. Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem with the collection of funds in a little over a year in time for the next Pentecost. This way it would give the Corinthians as well as the others to collect more for the flood of Christians whom would be in Jerusalem. If he went by ship to Corinth, he would have to leave quickly because the seas would be difficult to maneuver in the winter. Instead he would travel by land to Corinth, visit all the churches on the way and lodge for three months of winter in Corinth. When spring arrived, then he would depart for Jerusalem, giving him a strong wind to his back and enough months to make it in time.
- He would be evangelizing the land route the entire way through Macedonia. Romans 15:19, written by Paul from Corinth while he wintered, states *"...from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."* This is the description of his route and his mission on the way to Corinth.

Lesson #1: A Strong Church plans their work and then works their plan.

1 Corinthians 16:10-11 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. ¹¹ So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

- Timothy was already in Corinth for the purpose of grounding them in the faith which Paul planted in them. 1 Cor. 4:17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.
- Sending someone else to continue the follow-up was a common thing for Paul. He would become all things for all men (9:22), but he could not be all things in all places at all times. It is okay to send others whom are competent to follow-up as a means to further Christian development in the lives of young saints. Timothy was one of these for Paul.
 - He brought him into the faith. (*Acts 16:3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*)
 - He trained him like his own son. (*1 Tim 1:2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*)

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- He mentored him to be a godly example. (*1 Tim. 4:12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.*)
- He enlisted him to carry out the word in his absence. (*2 Tim. 4:1-2 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*)
- He taught Timothy to be a mentor to others. (*2 Tim. 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*)

Lesson #2: A Strong Church seeks to empowers others to replace them.

1 Corinthians 16:12-14 But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity. ¹³ Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.

- We are first introduced to Apollos in Acts 18:24-26. He was mighty in the scriptures and eagerly desired to teach, but he knew only the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla took him aside in Ephesus and "showed him a way of God more accurately. Presumably he was re-baptized the correct way.
- What is of interest concerns what happened next. He was sent to Corinth to deal with the rowdy Jews that attempted to disrupt the church family. *Acts 18:27-28 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.* He was the right man for the right job in the church at Corinth. They recognized him as a strong teacher and preacher. He was a good fit for them then and apparently many years later. He communicated with them well and kept them alert of the dangers that await Christians. Paul is hoping to send him back to further the job.

Lesson #3: The Strong Church sends the best man and the best woman for the job.

1 Corinthians 16:15-20 Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), ¹⁶ that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. ¹⁷ I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. ¹⁸ For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. ¹⁹ The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. ²⁰ All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

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- Stephanas was an old friend of Paul's, for he brought this man into the faith according to *1 Cor. 1:16 Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.* There is always to be a special bond between the one who evangelizes and the convert. It gave Paul great joy to see that his friend had made the trip from Corinth to Ephesus. He was among the first fruits of conversions in Corinth and likely a member of the synagogue associated with Crispus (Acts 18:8).
- Fortunatus and Achaius also made the trip with Stephanas. Fortunatus' name means "lucky" and was a common name for slave in the first-century. He likely converted through his master. Achaius' name also has a deep slave background. They brought supplies for Paul with them on the visit. Together they may have likely been slaves in the household of Stephanas. All three of them brought great joy to Paul's heart and refreshed his spirit.
- Priscilla and Aquila were the first Christians that Paul met in Corinth. They were exiles from Rome, kicked out by Claudius and looking for a new place called home. Paul teamed up with them making tents when first arriving in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3)
- There are salutations from old friends and to old friends. There is even the most intimate charge of a holy kiss, which would have been a peck on each cheek. These people all have strong ties!

Lesson #4: The Strong Church keeps strong ties with strong Christians.

1 Corinthians 16:21-24 The greeting is in my own hand—Paul. ²² If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴ My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

- There is a strong contrast in this last scripture. The first love "love the Lord" is *phileo* and the second love "My love be with you all" is *agape*. The first is a more affectionate brotherly love and the latter is a love of doing right by you regardless of feelings. This recalls a conversation between Peter and Jesus in John 21:15-17. Jesus asked Peter twice "Do you love (agape) Me?" to which he responded "I love (phileo) You". The third time Jesus asked "Do you love (phileo) Me" to which Peter adamantly stated "You know I love (phileo) You". Each time Jesus gave the paraphrased statement "Take care of My sheep". In other words, don't say you love (phileo) Christ like a brother and neglect the sheep (other members of the church).
- Our affection towards our God is contingent to commitment to our fellow Christians. Paul is lining their emotions for God with their commitment to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul's commitment for them in Christ Jesus and their affection toward God are to be on the same page.

Lesson #5: The Strong Church shows a deep passionate love for their members.