

Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

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Introduction

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians has treated a large number of practical problems that had arisen in the congregation. In many of these areas the apostle had to fault, admonish, and correct many in the congregation. Still, he continually dealt with them as Christians, confidently expecting them to heed his admonitions and show progress in their lives of Christian sanctification out of love to their Savior.

In Chapter 15, the great "resurrection chapter", Paul confirmed both Christ's resurrection and that of the Christian. His application was that they should stand firm in faith and abound in work for the Lord, because that living Lord guarantees that it will not be in vain.

He now concludes the epistle with a number of brief admonitions regarding certain aspects of their congregational life and work, together with information regarding his own and fellow-workers' work plans, and closing greetings. Far from being a scattered set of closing remarks, however, this last chapter is a *multum in parvo*, containing a fine set of practical guidelines for conducting the church's work, set in the briefest possible form.

Outline of 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

- I. Financial Gifts
 - A. Their gathering (v. 1-2)
 - B. Their handling (v. 3-4)
- II. Paul's Plans for Travel and Work
 - A. His plans to visit Corinth (v. 5-7)
 - B. His plan to work in Ephesus at present (v. 8-9)
- III. Other Church Workers
 - A. Timothy's work in Corinth (v. 10-11)
 - B. Apollos' plans (v. 12)
- IV. The Basics of the Christian Life
 - A. A constant battle (v. 13)
 - B. To be lived in love (v. 14)
- V. Christian Service
 - A. Leaders to be followed (v. 15-16)
 - B. Co-workers to be appreciated (v. 17-18)
- VI. Greetings
 - A. From various fellow-Christians (v. 19-20)
 - B. From Paul (v. 21)
- VII. A Last Word
 - A. To the lost (v. 22)
 - B. To the saved
 - 1. of God's grace (v. 23)
 - 2. of Paul's love (v. 24)

Translation - v. 1 – *Now concerning the collection for the saints – just as I arranged for the congregations of Galatia, you do so also.*

This collection is a specific one, marked by the double τῆς. It is "for the saints", implying the motive of loving care for one's fellow-believers. This is evidently the collection described more fully in Romans 15:25-26 "...But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." Nothing is said in Scripture as to the specific cause of their poverty.

Paul had prescribed the arrangements for gathering this collection to the churches in Galatia. Evidently the Corinthians knew of them, and Paul now urges them to follow the same arrangements, of which v.2 evidently provides a summary. Nothing further is included here as to the motives for this collection, as in Romans 15:7 and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. The stress here is on methodology. One might note that prescribing one set method of gathering a collection is a proper procedure in the visible church, and that various congregations were expected to follow the prescribed procedure. Making a joint effort with other Christian congregations, each doing its part for the good of the body, clearly is being promoted here.

Translation – v. 2 – *On the first day of the week let each of you for himself keep laying aside, storing up whatever may be granted success, lest whenever I come, the collections begin.*

κατά is distributive here, indicating a succession of things following one another. μίαν (supply ἡμέραν) σαββάτου is "day one of the sabbath", a Jewish usage pointing to the first day of the week of which the sabbath formed the conclusion. The phrase, therefore, could be translated "Sunday after Sunday". The present 3rd person imperative τιθέτω, with its basic thought of continued action, fits perfectly here. It seems a fair inference that Sunday already was a day set aside for public worship. Certainly, also, the Lord's "glory-day" of resurrection was a fit time for Christians to glorify Him with their gifts. Perhaps there is also the thought of looking back at the past week's profits in deciding one's gift. Definitely, however, regular, systematic giving is being urged, by the Lord Himself. And every one of the Christians was to take part in this collection if he had an income of his own in any form. With the παρ' ἑαυτῶ each person was being put on his own, to take personal responsibility for bringing his own fruits of faith. Each one should decide the amount for himself, as his heart told him that he could afford it and in love wanted to do it; there is no compulsion in any form. The participle θησαυρίζων completes the idea of the main verb: "let him keep laying aside and storing up". The very word, drawn from the noun which means a "storehouse" or "treasure chest", may point to the fact that a true treasure can be built up and given for God's work only by regular, on-going giving. The source of these gifts is to be "whatever may be granted success". The passive verb clearly points to God as the Source of any prospering. The ἔαν seems to allow for the possibility of not prospering, and then rightly not laying anything aside. εὐδοῶται, from εὐδοῶ, obviously comes from εὖ "well", and, ὁδός "road", and is like our expression, "things are going well". This would seem to include not only how much is coming in, but other circumstances such as health, other expenses, etc... or how well one is faring generally financially, as helping to decide the size of one's gift. The thought sums up to: If and when God gives the Christian something to give, he should give each Sunday. It might be noted that the word "as" (God hath prospered him) in the KJV has no basis in the Greek; there is no κατά or other word that points to giving in accordance with, in proportion to, or a percentage of, the amount God gives. Perhaps that can be inferred, but the emphasis is on God's giving and our regular giving.

The reason for every-Sunday regularity in setting aside gifts is stated: "lest whenever I come, then collections begin (be made)." The inchoative idea inherent in γίνονται whenever, that offerings only *begin* then, could well be the emphasis. Paul does not say why he does not want the collecting to wait for his arrival. We must interpret—is it so that a larger offering be built up by systematic, regular gifts; or perhaps, so that Paul as a pastor may not be relegated to the role of money collector? He may also have feared, and been trying to ward off, procrastination, in view of his words in 2 Cor. 8:11, "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there

was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have." This may well be his main thrust, with the application that the only way ever to give richly for the Lord is to get started with whatever you've got now.

Translation - v. 3 – *And whenever I've arrived, whomever you've approved through letters, I will send them to bring your kindness to Jerusalem.*

Paul adds a word regarding the transmission of this gift from Corinth to Jerusalem. The Corinthians themselves are to select and to approve the persons who are to take the money to Jerusalem. The word δοκιμάζω has the root meaning to "test" or "examine", and then to approve in the sense of recognizing as worthy after examination; as in 11:29, "let a man examine himself" as to worthiness to receive the Lord's Supper. This arrangement that the handlers of the collection be "attested" –examined and approved—is worthy of note; together with the fact that laymen of the congregation, not Paul, are to be entrusted with handling the money. The church's track record in handling the gifts of the saints, so that no financial losses are incurred between the giving and the using, is not always the greatest. This brief word regarding methods urges upon the church scrupulous care in choosing its money handlers—that they be scrutinized and attested as both honest and capable in this area. And it can be inferred that today's clergy, like Paul, should promote this. Few if any of the clergy have degrees in business administration or large experience and expertise in handling money. They should take the lead in urging the church to find and place qualified laymen in its money-handling positions.

The phrase δι' ἐπιστολῶν could be construed either with the preceding δοκιμάσητε or the following πέμψω. The letters would seem to be a means of attesting the "finance committee" as representatives of the Corinthian congregation to their brethren in Jerusalem. They may also have served to emphasize that the entire congregation in Corinth was sending this gift through its representatives, thus to promote fraternal love and unity between these two geographically distant and ethnically different congregations. The term τὴν χάριν ὑμῶν for the Corinthians' gift also emphasizes the kindly and fraternal Christian love which lies behind their gift, and is the most important feature concerning it.

Translation - v. 4 – *And if it be fitting that I also go, they will go with me.*

What would make it fitting or unfitting for Paul to go is not said; we can only guess. (ἄξιος –lit. "having the same weight as", "worth as much as"; thus usually "worthy".) It seems logical that God would be the decider as to whether this trip to Jerusalem with the Corinthians' gift would be a fitting, worthwhile one for His missionary apostle or not, by deciding whether this would fit His plans for having Paul spread the Gospel, or whether He would guide Paul to go elsewhere. What plans God had for him Paul did not know at this time. That Paul was led to make this trip, and that it eventuated in his imprisonment in Jerusalem and subsequent trip in chains to Rome, where he got to preach the Gospel, all might point to this as the plan of God for Paul which made it "fitting" or "worthy" that he join in taking this gift to Jerusalem.

Translation - v. 5 – *And I will come to you whenever I pass through Macedonia; for I am passing Through Macedonia.*

According to 2 Cor. 1:16 Paul originally planned to go from Ephesus to Corinth, then to visit Macedonia and return to Corinth, and then to proceed to Jerusalem. For the reason stated in 2 Cor. 1:23, "to spare you", Paul changed his plan and now informs the Corinthians regarding that change. He now plans to go from Ephesus through Macedonia, and then through Greece to Corinth. This plan he eventually carried out, as is seen from 2 Cor. 2:13 and Acts 20:1,2. He evidently means to assure them that his work in Macedonia will be only temporary, and that he will see them in person eventually.

Translation - v. 6 - *And perhaps I will remain or even pass the winter with you, so that you may send me forth wherever I may go.*

Paul proposes to make a stay of some length among the Corinthians, Acts 20:2-3 seems to indicate that he spent three months there. But he adds τυχόν, a neuter aorist participle of τυγχάνω, to "happen" or "meet by chance", that is used like an adverb, "it may be", "perhaps". Realizing that some necessity may arise that will compel him to cut short his visit to Corinth, Paul refrains from making his promise absolute. His stated purpose in coming is that they may send him forth on his further journeyings, wherever they may take him. It seems that Paul is reaching out for the Corinthians' friendliness, support, and understanding, showing that he intends to favor them with a lengthy stay, and then looks for their help in making preparations for his further work.

Is there here a very tactful effort on Paul's art to direct the Corinthians' attention away from their own needs and troubles, real as they are, but which are taking all their attention; and to imbue them a bit more with the world-wide look when it comes to the Lord's work? If so, the very positive way he does this is a fine example of how to "push" mission-mindedness in the local congregation.

Translation – v. 7 – *For I don't wish to see you now (merely) in passing; for I hope to stay with you for some time, if the Lord allows.*

Two consecutive γάρ clauses add further explanation. Paul's wish and hope is to be free to remain in Corinth for some time. This implies that he feels the work to be done there is important, and that he intends to allow ample time for it. What τυχόν in v. 6 means Paul now expands and clarifies with the clause "if the Lord permit". (ἐπιτρέπω -"turn over to", "commit", and thus "permit", "allow") In all of his movements and his work Paul waits on the Lord's directions and permission, for all his work is in the Lord's service.

Paul seems to be laying out for the Corinthians exactly what the call to the Lord's work means for the Lord's worker. The work in each congregation or other phase of the Lord's work is important; seeing the needs, the worker plans and works to meet them. But at any time the Lord may place another call and need before His worker and convince him that he should meet those needs. The Lord decides where and how we are to serve; it's not our choice. This may be a final brief summary regarding the proper outlook on the ministry, the matter dealt with in chapters 3 and 4. At any time the Lord can change His worker's plans and whole life—where and even in what kind of work he is to serve Him. This willingness to bow to the Lord's will—to ask only to know what the Lord's will is and then follow it—is and must be the worker's one reaction to every call.

Translation - v. 8 – *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.*

Despite the needs in Corinth, Paul declares that he intends to spend some further time in Ephesus before beginning his trip. It is unclear from this and other usages of the word "pentecost" in the New Testament whether a Christian festival by that name already was being celebrated in the early Christian church. It could refer simply to the Jewish "harvest festival".

Translation - v. 9 – *For a door has opened for me, great and active, and (there are) many opponents.*

Paul gives the reason for his delay. "Door" is evidently a figure of speech for opportunity to advance the work of the Gospel. The Lord was making many hearts willing to listen to the truths of salvation; the influence of the Gospel was spreading. ενεργής, "active" or "working"; εν-εργής, like our "at work", seems an unusual adjective with "door". Some take it as "a door for effectual work". Since ἀνέωγεν, the perfect of ἀνοίγω, "open", meaning "has opened" or "stands open", certainly implies God's opening of this door or creating of this opportunity, ενεργής may refer to God "at work" creating this "opening". Acts 19, especially verses 18-20, (vs. 20 "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed") describes the great opportunity to which Paul refers.

But here, as in so many places, Paul met strong opposition. In 15:32 he spoke of having "fought with beasts at Ephesus". Acts 19:23 ff. describes the opposition aroused there by Demetrius the silversmith. Perhaps the very brevity of Paul's words about the "opposition", however, is meant to point to the powerlessness of those enemies to stop the Gospel's progress, because the risen Lord guarantees the success of the laborers with His Word, 15:58. It seems that Paul's reference to the "many opponents" also is meant to help explain why his presence and immediate efforts are required in Ephesus at this time. As a faithful shepherd he would not desert his post at the time of danger, when his presence was most urgently needed. Incidentally, the factors which Paul mentions as dictating his continued presence and work in Ephesus just at this time surely are points of consideration for any church worker when pondering a call: the immediate prospects at a given place, or pressing spiritual dangers, requiring attention urgently.

It is worthy of note that an "open door" of opportunity for work with the Gospel does not mean lack of opposition. Opponents and competition are nothing to scare us off; God can and does create golden opportunities for Gospel work where it might seem none could exist. One might wish for more details about the "open door" Paul found: how he found it, what opened it, etc. But the answer seems obvious. How does one detect open doors? Evidently only by knocking on them to see if they open. All doors are closed to the Gospel by nature; God alone opens them. It is significant that the two other uses of ἐνεργῆς in the New Testament refer in one case to God's Word (Heb. 4:12) and in the other to confession of our faith (Philem. 6). Also to be noted is the "open door" which the Lord promised to faithful Philadelphia in Rev. 3:8 because they had "kept my word" and not "denied my name". The "open door" seems to be both the gift to, and produced by, faithfulness to the Word and faithful confession of Christ before men.

Translation - v. 10 – *And if Timothy comes see that he may fearlessly be with you; for he is doing the work of the Lord, as also I (am).*

In 4:17 Paul told the Corinthians that Timothy was coming, and why: "...who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." It is fair to conclude that it was Timothy's task to try to correct the various disturbances in the Corinthian congregation. The "if" (εἴν) is one of expectancy; Timothy should arrive soon. Paul evidently feared that some members might show arrogance and try to intimidate Timothy where he brought his needed admonitions, perhaps also because of his youth. For this reason Paul writes pointedly: "See to it that he be with you without fear," The reason to treat him with due respect was: "for he is doing the Lord's work just as I am." The Corinthians are to respect the person for the sake of his divine work. And Timothy's work is identical with Paul's. The apostle puts the two on the same level and insists that the Corinthians do likewise. So Paul evidently was trying to counteract the false factionalism regarding preachers that he knew existed in Corinth. It reminds us to build up our fellow church workers and their office in the eyes of their people wherever this is called for.

Translation - v. 11 – *Therefore let no one despise him; but send him forth in peace, so that he may come to me, for I am waiting for him with the brothers.*

ἐξουθενέω means to treat as ὄυθεν, as nothing, as not worth considering. The οὖν points back to the previous thought, that he is doing the Lord's work. It would be utterly wrong, therefore, to despise and pay no attention to him. Despising, of course, is an inner attitude of the heart. It is only this which could lead to any intimidation such as is warned against in v. 10. This points again to the constant need to build up the proper attitude toward the office of the ministry as the way to avoid practical problems in this area.

When his work is done, the Corinthians are to send Timothy forward on his journey back to Paul at Ephesus. "In peace" implies that Paul wants Timothy's mission to proceed and end in a peaceful way so that, when he leaves, no trouble or strife are left behind. Paul is expecting him, eager to receive his report regarding Corinth, hoping to hear that peace has replaced factionalism.

Translation - v. 12 – *And concerning the brother Apollos, I exhorted him often that he come to you with the brothers; and it was not at all (his) wish to come now, but he will come whenever he has the opportunity.*

Apollos evidently had labored in Corinth for quite some time and had done so very successfully (3:6 "I have planted, Apollos watered..."). Paul made a strong plea that Apollos now go to Corinth; πολλά, an adverbial accusative, could mean "with many words" or "at many times". Why he urged it is not said; the implication certainly would be that Corinth's needs were important and that Apollos could help.

The πάντως, placed forward in the next clause, makes the statement very emphatic: Apollos absolutely would not consider visiting Corinth now. This, however, is only a temporary situation. He will come whenever εὐκαιρήσῃ, whenever he has the opportunity, when the fitting or proper time arrives. (εὐκαιρέω from εὖ and καιρός, "a fixed, definite, limited portion of time, with the added idea of suitability".) The point is that Apollos had good reason for declining; he could not spare the time to go now. We thus assume that Apollos was busily engaged in other church work and could not leave, but that he agreed to make the desired visit just as soon as his present work would permit.

One almost gets the feeling that Paul is trying to get across gently to the Corinthian congregation that they are not "the only tin can in the alley". So must all Christian congregations and individuals learn to look not only at their own needs or plans, but realize that other places and work also are important, and learn to adjust, bend, and work with the needs and plans of others. What governed Apollos' decision also would seem to be the prime consideration for any church worker when receiving a call—where is the most pressing need and most work that needs doing at the present time.

Translation - v. 13 – *Keep watch, stand in the faith, keep showing yourselves men, keep being strong!*

These all are present imperatives to express durative and continuous actions. "In the faith" in this verse is matched by "in love" in the next verse. Faith is and must be first. Faith then produces love, always. Paul is summing up the basics of the continuing Christian life as he nears the end of his epistle.

γρηγορέω, according to Thayer, comes from ἐγρηγόρα, a perfect of ἐγείρω, to have been roused from sleep, to be awake; therefore meaning to "watch", "be cautious or watchful", "keep one's eyes open". We are watchful against enemies or hostile influences. Concerning what his readers are to be watchful Paul does not say, but the word points to some destructive calamity that could overtake one. Those which come to mind, and regarding which the word is used in Scripture, are: forsaking Christ, falling into sin, or being corrupted by errors. No doubt all should be included here. A dangerous sleepiness had risen in the Corinthians' midst, a failure to watch out for lapses both in Christian belief and sanctification. Watchfulness was necessary, lest they yield once more to the sins and errors which Paul had reproved in his letter.

στήκω, derived from ἕστηκα, the perfect of ἵστημι, means to "stand", with the emphasis to stand firm, to persist and persevere. The admonition is directed against wavering, uncertainty, and doubt, and implies that we never dare take our faith for granted. The context seems to dictate that "in the faith" be taken subjectively, in our "believing"; not objectively, in the doctrine we believe.

The last two imperatives are the exact words used in the Septuagint translation of Psalm 31:24 – ἀνδρίζεσθε καὶ κραταιούσθω ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν. This may mean that Paul was encouraging the Corinthians from the scriptures which they knew by using a familiar Bible passage. ἀνδρίζομαι, "show oneself a man", "be brave", surely points to dangers, opposition, or even persecution against which the Christian is to show bravery and unflinching courage. κραταίωω, to strengthen, here in the passive meaning "be" or "be made strong", calls for an invincible, victorious faith, showing strength in every situation that may call for this quality. The entire emphasis is that Christianity is a contest demanding "backbone", not sissy stuff. This deserves emphasis today over against the feeling some surely have that "Christianity is for women and children".

Translation - v. 14 – *Let all your affairs keep being conducted in love!*

The ὑμῶν plural, seems to point especially to the life and work of the Corinthian congregation as a group. Paul's letter has described Christian love at length in chapter 13; the Corinthians also have been made to feel the deficiency of their love in various areas. So Paul's admonition stresses how indispensable love is. This reminder is especially needed over against the admonitions in v. 13. A manly fight is needed against enemies, but this dare not mean a constantly belligerent attitude. Gentle love is required in all one's dealings, even in the firmest stand against sin or error. Perhaps this admonition also points to the way to overcome enemies and opposition in all the work of the church—not 'battling them with contentious acts or words, but winning them by demonstrations of love.

Verses 13 and 14 together surely summarize the requirements for a soundly confessional church: constant watchfulness against error, battling for and standing firm in the truth—and yet plainly showing love and concern for others in the midst of such stern strivings. They likewise encourage the church's ministers to be strict watchdogs and loving shepherds at the same time, and remind us that the two are not mutually exclusive.

Translation - v. 15 – *And I call on you, brothers—you know the family of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruit of Achaia, and they dedicated themselves for service to the saints.*

This verse contains an obvious parenthesis. What Paul calls on the Corinthians to do is found in the ἵνα clause in verse 16. The family of Stephanas is mentioned in 1:16 as one that Paul baptized. This family now is called the first-fruit of Achaia, or Greece. It seems to be a clear-cut declaration that this family comprised the first converts to Christianity in Greece. This might conflict with Romans 16:5, where the KJV gives Epaphroditus that distinction; however, the chief texts have in Rom. 16:5 ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀσίας. There also seem to have been earlier individual converts in Greece: Dionysius, Damaris and others in Athens, Acts 17:34; this, however, was probably the first entire family.

Their early conversion was not the only distinction of Stephanas' family. They also dedicated themselves to the service of the saints, the church. τάσσω, of which ἔταξαν is the aorist, means (literally) to "put in place", to "station". "arrange in order", or "appoint". Thus they placed themselves in this position that they rendered service to the believers. No clue is furnished here or elsewhere as to what this service entailed; it no doubt included all kinds for which a need arose. They would seem to have been a good example of those willing workers who are some of the chief blessings of any congregation.

Translation - v. 16 – *That also you submit yourselves to such people, and to everyone who keeps cooperating and laboring.*

The ἵνα clause states the contents of Paul's request. The καὶ points to reciprocal action; the family of Stephanas has done their part, so should all the Corinthians. This fitting reciprocal action also is indicated by the two verbs: τάσσω in v. 15 and ὑποτάσσω in v. 16. Where the family of Stephanas had placed themselves into a position of service, the Corinthians now should "place themselves under" such people and be glad to serve under them, to look to them, for leadership in the Lord's work. Paul shows fine tact as he says τοῖς τοιοῦτοις, "such people", not "the family of Stephanas". He displays no partiality to certain persons, but urges a happy appreciation of all those who voluntarily step forward to accept positions of responsibility in the Lord's service.

One can almost feel Paul working to overcome the natural reaction that often arises regarding such willing workers—that they want to "run everything". So he emphasizes the two features that really characterize every such leader in service: "everyone who cooperates and toils". Such service inevitably involves cooperation, willingness to work together with others to accomplish the church's common goals; and true "toil", the top positions in service regularly involving the most and hardest work, and going to those who show themselves willing to work. The present participles συνεργοῦντι and κοπιῶντι no doubt point to the continuing willingness to work of such people.

Translation - v. 17 – *And I am happy over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaius, because your lack they supplied.*

We know nothing further about Fortunatus and Achaius, who together with Stephanas obviously formed an official delegation representing the congregation in Corinth. The reason why their coming made Paul happy is put in a rather strange-sounding way to the Corinthians: "Your lack they supplied". Even though ὑμῶν seems to be the preferable reading to ὑμέτερον, ὑμῶν is hardly an objective genitive (the lack of you) as some take it; at least, there is no other such usage in the New Testament. Rather, the lack is on the Corinthians' part, in not being present in person both to receive and act on Paul's instructions and admonitions regarding their various problems. But Paul is happy that in and through this delegation, as their representatives, he is able to communicate with them.

Translation - v. 18 – *For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore keep recognizing such people!*

The delegation put both Paul's and the Corinthians' mind and heart at rest, ἀναπαύω meaning to "refresh" or "give rest" in the sense of a "break" to recover strength. They did this for Paul by allowing him to send his needed instruction to the Corinthians through them, and for the Corinthians by bringing their questions to Paul and then conveying his response to them. The aorist is used also for the "refreshing" of the Corinthians' spirit as something already having taken place, no doubt in view of the Corinthians' reception of 1 Corinthians through this delegation.

Therefore Paul urges the Corinthians to "recognize" not just this delegation, but any who perform such services, obviously in the sense of recognizing this as a highly valuable service. ἐπιγιγνώσκω means to "know thoroughly", or "recognize something for what it really is". The delegation's function clearly was to confer and thus find help with specific practical problems of the church. May we not apply this to conferences in the church, large and small, scheduled or impromptu; and say that God wants all Christians, and certainly all church workers, to meet together for the instruction and practical guidance which one is able to give the other on the basis of God's Word?

Translation - v. 19 – *The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you in the Lord very much, with the church at their house.*

Paul sends greetings from the church in Asia Minor, indicating their fraternal concern for the well-being of the congregation in Corinth. He likewise includes greetings from Aquila and Prisca (usually called Priscilla, the diminutive), the πολλὰ no doubt emphasizing their close personal concern, since they at one time were members of the church in Corinth, Acts 18: 2-4. "The church at their house" is variously interpreted to mean the church consisting of their family or the church that meets for worship at their house. The same expression is used in Rom. 16:5, Col. 4:15 and Philemon 2. We have no other clue to the precise meaning than what the expression itself conveys. If it refers to their family, it is a very nice "push" for family religion, like Acts 16:31. If their house is the meeting place for worship for a little congregation, as many missions start, what a fine picture again of a family willing to take the lead in the gathering of Christians for worship.

Translation - v. 20 – *All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

Finally, Paul includes greetings from all his fellow Christians, which probably refers to those with whom he was together at present in Ephesus. Then he urges that all the Corinthian Christians greet each other with a holy kiss, mentioned often in the New Testament, and called by Peter a "kiss of love", 1 Pet. 5:14. The obvious purpose was to express loving concern for each individual fellow Christian and to develop personal closeness between the church's members. The fraternal kiss may be out of style in our land and time, but Paul surely seems to be promoting a good hearty handshake or even a friendly hug, and that at church, where the

Christians gather. We gather that the showing of affection is very proper, that Christians should lovingly greet each other, that even any seeming coldness or indifference isn't right, and that Christians are to reflect their Lord's loving concern for each person and make each one feel a part of the family of God. Any methods to further such closeness are good practical Christianity.

Translation - v. 21 – *The greeting of Paul with my (own) hand.*

Paul adds his own fraternal greeting to the Corinthians. Apparently Paul had dictated his letter up to this point. Now he himself took the pen and, in a way, himself signed the letter. In 2 Thess. 3:17 Paul adds a reason for this practice: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token (σημείον) in every epistle: so I write." It would seem that his handwriting was recognizable, and this comprised an authenticating sign that the letter was genuinely his.

Translation - v. 22 – *If anyone doesn't love the Lord, let him be cursed. Our Lord is coming.*

In one verse, Paul reacts to all the perversions and abuses in Corinth which he is attempting to correct by means of this letter. He records his apostolic verdict, with the indignation of God behind it, by pronouncing a curse on all who may dare to remain hardened and continue in their evil ways. Where Paul almost always uses ἀγαπάω with regard to our love for Christ, here he uses φιλέω, the lesser term, perhaps to accentuate that he is speaking about a person in whom there is not the least glimmer of love for Christ remaining. ἀνάθεμα, from ἀνατίθημι, to "set forth" or "set aside", is the term for a sacrifice set aside for God and therefore due to be slain, and hence comes to mean a "curse" or a cursed person, doomed to eternal destruction. So Paul emphasizes that God's wrath and judgment rests upon the unrepentant—a final word of warning to any like the man guilty of incest dealt with in this letter.

Like a seal Paul stamps the Aramaic expression "Maranatha" upon the curse he has just recorded. μαρναθά, though written in Greek letters, is comprised of two Aramaic words. The two basic words can be found in our Hebrew OT dictionaries: מרנא, a Chaldean word for "lord" found in Daniel, with suffix נא, for "our Lord"; and "תנא (or תנא), a poetic Hebrew word meaning "come". Because it is written in Greek letters, and in most manuscripts as one word, it is impossible to decide whether the expression is indicative: "Our Lord has come"; or imperative: "Our Lord, come!" An early Greek commentator and a translation into Latin take it as indicative.

Whichever it be, the context seems to decide that the coming of the Lord here spoken of is His future coming in judgment. The indicative past tense then would need to be interpreted as the prophetic past, speaking of a future event as already having taken place. The thought, either way, is that the Lord is coming to execute the curse just pronounced on all who do not love Him, and to vindicate the faith of those who "stand fast" (v. 13). At this late place in the letter, it sounds a chilling note of final warning to any whose hearts have turned away from the Lord, but a thrilling note of final victory for those who remain faithful to Him.

Translation - v. 23 – *The grace of the Lord Jesus (be) with you.*

Paul adds a closing blessing, as is customary in his letters. It centers one word, "grace", the unmerited favor of God that is ours in Christ, which extends pardon to the sinner, and from which flows every other gift we receive from the Lord. Possessing that grace, the Corinthians have all they need.

Translation – v. 24 – *My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.*

Paul's final word adds a thought not usually found at the close of his letters; it assures the Corinthians of his personal love for all of them in Christ. Perhaps it is added because of the number of areas in which he has

had to correct the Corinthians. Here is the assurance that back of every one of his admonitions stands love. That love embraces them all, those who distress his heart as well as those who delight his heart. This assurance of his love forms an eminently fitting close to Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. It may well remind every Christian pastor to let love for his people govern all his service of them, and to show and express that love—indeed, make it the "bottom line" in all his dealings – especially when his service must include admonition and correction.