

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XLIII: Paul's Example Of Godly Relationships With Co-workers

(1 Corinthians 16:10-12)

I. Introduction

- A. It is estimated that half of all problems God's servants face are problem relationships with co-workers!
- B. Ideally, this should never occur, but since it often does today, we do well to heed Paul's example of his godly way of relating to his co-workers in 1 Corinthians 16:10-12 for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Paul's Example Of Godly Relationships With Co-workers, 1 Corinthians 16:10-12.

- A. First, Paul had no hierarchal attitude toward his co-workers though he was an apostle of Christ over them:
 - 1. As an apostle, Paul had the power of life and death over other believers (2 Cor. 13:10; Acts 5:1-11).
 - 2. Yet, in relating to co-workers who were not apostles in 1 Corinthians 16:10-12, he bore no hierarchical attitude, but respected their will, H. A. Ironside, Addresses on the First Epistle to the Cor., 1966, p. 542:
 - a. In his clause, "if Timotheus come," Paul used the conditional particle '*ean*' ("if") with the subjunctive form of the verb "come" (*'elthei*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 619) to form a "third class" condition, a probable future condition, but not a fact, Dana and Mantey, A Man. Gram. of the Grk. N. T., 1957, p. 290.
 - b. In other words, he recognized that Timothy might not come as planned, revealing that Paul was allowing Timothy to decide if he would come even though Timothy was Paul's subordinate.
 - c. Similarly, Paul wrote how he had greatly desired that Apollos might come to Corinth with the brethren who were set to arrive, but that Apollos was not at all willing come at that time, but that he would come later when he had opportunity, 1 Corinthians 16:12 NIV. Paul respected Apollos' decision in the matter.
- B. Second, in respecting the will of his spiritual subordinates in Timothy and in Apollos, Paul also gave room for God's leading in their lives independent of any pressure on his part as others did with Paul in Acts 21:10-14.
- C. Third, Paul had no superiority or inferiority complex in regards to gifting or abilities in relating to his co-workers, but he viewed them as members of the same team in the Lord's work:
 - 1. Though Timothy was his subordinate, Paul reminded his Corinthian readers that Timothy worked the work of God just like he did as an apostle, 1 Corinthians 16:10b.
 - 2. Paul had already written that he and Apollos were team members in the Lord's work in 1 Corinthians 3:4-9, so whether he wrote of Timothy or of Apollos, Paul considered them both co-laborers in the Lord.
 - 3. Remarkably, Timothy might have seemed to be a weaker vessel in the Lord's work as Paul felt he had to protect him before the rough Corinthian readers in 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, but Paul had no superiority complex regarding Timothy. Then, Apollos was held by Paul's readers to have greater speaking gifts (cf. Acts 18:24) than Paul whose speech they thought was "contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10), but Paul had no inferiority complex in regard to Apollos, but he urged Apollos to return to Corinth, 1 Corinthians 16:12.
- D. Fourth, Paul did not allow other believers to oppress vulnerable co-workers, but he was protective of them:
 - 1. Paul's Corinthian readers were rough and imposing as a group to disciple seen in the fact that he felt it necessary to direct them not to cause Timothy to feel afraid, but to let him be at peace, 1 Cor. 16:10-11.
 - 2. Accordingly, Paul not only directed that his readers not cause Timothy to be intimidated by rough treatment, but that he would anticipate Timothy's return from them, implying that Paul would get a report from Timothy on their treatment or mistreatment of him, what Paul would handle in response by his authority in dealing with the Corinthians when he then next saw them, 1 Cor. 16:11b; 2 Cor. 13:1-3, 10.
- E. Fifth, Paul was not self-serving in relation to his co-workers, but he sought the promotion of their ministries:
 - 1. The Corinthian readers had already split into divisive groups over either whether they followed Paul or Apollos or Paul had likened their divisions to being followers of him or of Apollos in order to cloak the actual divisions they had in their midst, 1 Corinthians 3:4; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 508.
 - 2. In spite of this, Paul tried to urge Apollos to return to Corinth, obviously not competing against Apollos, but viewing him as an invaluable servant of God and co-worker in God's field, 1 Corinthians 16:12.
 - 3. As for Timothy, Paul tried hard to get the Corinthians to accept his ministry as a co-worker, v. 10-11.

Lesson: Paul related to his co-workers in the Lord by not holding a hierarchical attitude toward them though He had a superior office as an apostle, he gave room for God's leading in their lives, he carried no superior or inferior attitude about them, but saw them as co-workers in God's team and he was protective and selfless toward them.

Application: May we rely on the Holy Spirit of God to have godly relationships with our co-workers in the Lord!