

GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES
Part V: Gems From The Ending Of 1 Corinthians, A. D. 56
(1 Corinthians 16:5-24)

I. Introduction

- A. The epistle of 1 Corinthians was written around A. D. 56 during Paul's second missionary journey (Bible Knowledge Commentary., New Testament, p. 434).
- B. Corinth was known for its moral debauchery, for the Greek verb formed by the city name, *korinthiazomai*, "to act the Corinthian," meant "to practice fornication." (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1619)
- C. The believers at Corinth, coming from a bad background, indulged in many vices and errors, so 1 Corinthians is a case study on pastoring a carnal church. Paul's ending reflects this fact as he shifted from topic to topic admonishing his readers on various issues. We thus view 1 Corinthians 16:5-24 for insight and application:

II. Gems From The Ending Of 1 Corinthians, A. D. 56; 1 Corinthians 16:5-24.

- A. Paul revealed that opposition in the ministry is often a sign of effectiveness by God's servant, that opposition is not to be met by automatically leaving a ministry, but by continual faithfulness to the Lord, 1 Cor. 16:5-9:
 - 1. The apostle informed his readers of his plan to leave Ephesus, pass through Macedonia and then turn south to head into Corinth where he hoped to spend the winter (1 Corinthians 16:5-6).
 - 2. Paul wrote that he did not plan to visit the Corinthians right away, but to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost since a great, effective door of ministry was open to him and there were many adversaries, 1 Corinthians 16:7-9. Paul's decision to face opposition instead of withdrawing from it reveals that resistance in the ministry is not to be met by one's necessarily ceasing that work, for opposition can indicate angelic conflict that is resisting an effective effort by God's servant! Believers need to follow the **Lord's** leading!
- B. Paul directed that believers not heed personality cults in God's servants, but to follow Christ, 1 Cor. 16:10-12:
 - 1. The apostle directed the Corinthians not to cause Timothy to be afraid of them if he came to them, for Timothy worked the work of the Lord just like the apostle Paul did, 1 Corinthians 16:10.
 - 2. No one was to be allowed to despise Timothy because of his more reserved demeanor in contrast to Paul's more overt, dominant personality, but they were to give him the support he needed to travel to meet Paul since Paul was looking for Timothy to come to him with other believers, 1 Corinthians 16:11.
 - 3. The Corinthians tended to follow personality cults in God's servants seen in Paul's critique of this problem in 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, but Paul did not tolerate it because all of God's servants serve the Lord.
 - 4. Paul practiced what he preached, too: he told his readers that he had greatly desired for Apollos to come to his readers with the brethren, but Apollos was not willing to do so at that time, but at a more convenient time, 1 Corinthians 16:12. The Corinthians had split over following the personalities of Apollos, of Peter and of Paul (1 Corinthians 1:12-13), but Paul was unthreatened by Apollos' coming to Corinth!
- C. The apostle then gave a fivefold exhortation for his readers (1) to be diligent in carrying out God's will, (2) to stand firm in the faith, (3) to be men of courage, (4) to be strong and (5) to do everything Paul directed them to do in love, 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; *Ibid.* This multi-faceted admonition was designed to equip the readers to overcome the multiple problems Paul had addressed in this epistle (Bible Know. Com., N. T., op. cit., p. 547).
- D. Paul noted that the household of Stephanas was among the first converts in the province of Achaia of which Corinth was a part (*Ibid.*, p. 547-548), and since they had devoted themselves to the oversight of the Church at Corinth, he urged his readers to be subject to such people, 1 Corinthians 16:15-18. This directive teaches us to respect and to heed devoted believers with long-term records of quality service to the Lord.
- E. In his closing salutation, Paul addressed multiple issues: he sent greetings from himself and others (v. 19-20a), he urged them to greet one another warmly (v. 20b), he took the pen from his scribe and wrote in his own hand to validate his authorship of the epistle (v. 21), he put an excommunication anathema on anyone who did not love the Lord Jesus (v. 22a), he stated in Aramaic "Maranatha" that means "our Lord, come!" as a typical saying among devout believers (v. 22b) and he closed the epistle warmly, expressing his love to all (v. 23-24).

Lesson: *In closing an epistle to a carnal, immature church, Paul revealed that opposition to one's ministry was to be met not by ceasing to minister, but by heeding God, that believers should not follow personalities, that believers should overcome spiritual problems by God's enabling, that believers should submit to those with long-term records of godly devotion to God's work and that they should stand for the truth while looking for Christ's return.*

Application: *May we heed Paul's admonitions to the Corinthian believers to be edified and to mature in the Lord.*