

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH APPLIED

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
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Let's Begin

The Christian faith is deeply spiritual but supremely practical. Why? Because believers belong to two different worlds, they are citizens of two competing kingdoms. We are citizens of heaven. However, we also live in the here and now, bound to live in the present world. Our head is in heaven while our feet are firmly planted here, so to speak.

Given our dual citizenship, we should not be surprised when the Bible speaks to both spheres of our life in extended detail. A significant part of the details about which the Bible addresses is our material possessions, our money, our wealth. Scripture is never embarrassed to admonish the believer concerning his or her finances. Neither should we be hesitant.

As Paul ends his words to the Corinthian believers in his first letter, he addresses the practical side of the faith beginning with how the church is to handle money! Subsequently, he deals with three more practical principles revealing how Christian faith is applied in life.

Thus, as we finish our study of 1 Corinthians, let's follow the outline below:

- I. The Principle of Appropriation
(vv. 1-4)**
- II. The Principle of Anticipation
(vv. 5-9)**
- III. The Principle of Appreciation
(vv. 10-19)**
- IV. The Principle of Authentication
(vv. 20-24)**

I. The Principle of Appropriation (vv. 1-4)

Paul begins the chapter by referring to the collection. He writes, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 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. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." (1 Cor. 16:1-3). Basically, Paul lists a bi-fold purpose for the collection.

First, the collection is to be taken for the benefit of the saints. He makes the need precisely known, telling the people where the collection is to be used. When people know, people will give. God will see to it.

Paul reminds the Corinthians concerning the plight of the Jerusalem church, including their poverty and persecution (cp. Acts 11:27-29). Paul envisioned the Gentile church assisting the Jewish church as being instrumental in healing ethnic barriers.

Even so, from Paul's standpoint, while the collection was to be taken for the benefit of others, the collection nonetheless became a blessing to the Corinthians themselves. A church is not a cistern for saving bounty, but a channel for sharing blessings. Hence, Paul speaks about the "liberality" of the collection. The term "liberality" basically means a "grace gift," a gift "freely given." The church must develop an atmosphere where

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Reflection Connection

When you give your tithes and offerings, do you ever anticipate the blessings your contributions will be to others? How? Do you feel guilty anticipating your offerings to bring blessing to you? Why or why not?

grace-giving is supreme. Indeed, a church which focuses on “required” giving—that is, giving merely out of duty instead of grace—subtly develops a resistance to joyful, Biblical giving which inevitably is described as “liberality.” Gifts given in this spirit always bring blessings back to the giver.

Now that Paul has dealt with the *purpose* of the collection, he moves quickly to the *procedure* of the collection. Interestingly, Paul never offers an apology for speaking about the collection nor does the church appear to offer an apology for taking the collection. On the contrary, Paul gives specific procedures on taking the collection. Collections are to be *punctual*; that is, collections take place on “the first day of the week.” What does the Bible mean when it refers to the “first day”? Clearly, when Scripture speaks of the “first day,” it refers to our Sunday (cp. John 20:19; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). The Jews met on the Sabbath (Saturday) to commemorate creation; Christians meet on Sunday to commemorate the resurrection. Every Sunday is Easter Sunday!

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In addition, collections are to be *personal*. Paul says, “let every one of you lay by him in store.” In other words, the collection is for all God’s people, not just some. Collections are for rich and poor alike. Consequences of not giving include barrenness in one’s heart and emptiness in one’s satisfaction with life.

Giving is also to be *proportional*. The gauge Paul gives us to measure our giving is simple, “as God has prospered him.” Leaving the amount to our own discretion, we determine a thoughtful consideration of what God has done for us. We count our blessings; then we count out our contribution. If God has blessed us physically, materially, and spiritually, we must consider whether or not we can ever give too much!

Finally, collections are to be *practical*. Paul desired “no gatherings when I come.” The Corinthians were to consider what God gave them and respond appropriately. The principle works the same with us.

II. . The Principle of Anticipation (vv. 5-9)

Paul next expounds the principle of anticipation. He writes, “Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.” (1 Cor. 16:5-9). There’s nothing haphazard about Paul’s life. He has goals and plans he actively pursues. Included in his plans was a trip to Corinth.

One thing he was sure about: he would remain in Ephesus for an indefinite time. Why?



First, he anticipated opportunity to preach the Gospel. Ephesus was the center of pagan idolatry. Ephesus was knee-deep in sophisticated sin, being the great metropolitan center of that part of the world. Indeed, Paul always tried to stab the Gospel flag into the heart of population centers. Many churches unfortunately abandoned the massive population centers in America, opting to move into the suburbs where safety is the supreme value. Christians must always take opportunities where they find them. However, God in His providence may shut the door (cp. Acts 16:6; Rev. 3:8).

Second, Paul anticipated opposition toward preaching the Gospel. Never imagine preaching the Gospel will be without opposition. Nothing the church does is more opposed by Satan than spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All the powers of hell are lined up against it. Wherever God opens a door of opportunity, Satan raises the flag of opposition. Churches that commit to touching a city for Christ, changing it for the Lord Jesus Christ, will face massive opposition from the enemy.

Thus, we must prepare for being too easily discouraged when we are opposed. Enemies too often are the reasons we cite to leave the battlefield. For Paul, enemies of the Gospel became an occasion for him to stay and fight! (cp. Phil. 1:28).

The principle of anticipation should be practiced by every believer. We anticipate God's presence, His power, and His full pleasure when we stand in the face of the enemy and spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Christians must always take opportunities where they find them.

III. The Principle of Appreciation (vv. 10-19)

Paul never believed he stood alone. He always recognized God had His anointed wherever he travelled. He writes, "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also *do*. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. As touching *our* brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time." (1 Cor. 16:10-12). For Paul, though unknown saints existed, insignificant saints did not. Paul lists people who were virtually unknown either in the ancient world or ours. Nevertheless, he knew they were essential to God's Kingdom work.

Plain people are God's preferred servants. We need no special skills to be anointed by God. Instead we need only surrendered hearts. Walking the streets of Corinth were average people living for the Lord Jesus, walking in the Holy Spirit.

As examples, Paul mentions, first, the youthfulness of Timothy (vv. 10-11). While Timothy may have been timid, frail, and suffering from a stomach



Reflection Connection

Explain why skills are not important for Kingdom work. How may one seek to sacrifice one's skills and surrender to God's anointing? Be specific.

disorder, he nonetheless served the Lord Jesus faithfully (cp. 15:58). Later Paul exhorted no one to despise Timothy's youth (1 Tim. 4:12). Instead they were to honor his faith.

Paul also mentions Apollos (v. 12). Apollos was a great preacher. He further was wise and filled with steadfastness. In addition to Timothy and Apollos, Paul refers to Aquila and Priscilla (v. 19). Not only were they a wonderful, faithful couple who had been a blessing to Paul personally, their usefulness in ministry was unsurpassed. They were skilled church-planters, possessing the gift of hospitality.

Paul's appreciation for these dedicated servants of God did not hinder his apostolic role in admonishing them as well. He writes, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (vv. 13-14). With the authority of a commander, Paul exhorts them to "watch." Like sentinels, they were to be on constant alert. The church is an army, not a country club or a sewing circle. Hence, the people of God must ever be ready to fight the good fight of faith.

Paul not only admonishes them as an authority but also appeals to them as a lover. The church is a family, the eternal family of God. The greatest need for the family is love (1 Cor. 13). Their division, bickering, and self-centeredness must be tempered by love for each other.

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IV. The Principle of Authentication (vv. 20-24)

Finally, the Apostle Paul elaborates upon the principle of authentication. He writes, "All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." (1 Cor. 16:20-24). It was common for Paul to use the skills of secretaries who wrote his letters as he dictated them. Here, however, Paul takes the pen and gives strokes characteristically his own. Incidentally, this proves the letter authentic and not a forgery as some critical scholars erroneously maintain. Five statements specifically stand out.

First, Paul's statement about *enlargement* (v. 20). The customary practice of the early church was to offer a "holy kiss" in their brotherly greetings. Though this custom is normally not practiced by Western Christians, it still remains a common greeting among Christians in the East. Our normal custom is a rigorous handshake. Whatever the custom, it authenticates brotherly affection for each other, validating Christian communion.

Second, Paul gives a statement about *enlightenment* (v. 22). He uses the term translated "anathama" indicative of a devotion to destruction (cp. 12:3; Gal. 1:8; Rom. 9:3). This is the ultimate test of Christianity. The most horrendous sin

Reflection Connection

Reflect upon the times when your parents disciplined you. Do you think their discipline indicated their hate for you or their love for you? Explain.



in the universe is unrequited love. If you know how much Jesus loves you, what Jesus Christ did on Calvary to save you, but still reject Him, you deserve hell!

Third, Paul gives a statement about *encouragement* (v. 22). Paul uses another word translated “Maranatha.” The term is an Aramaic expression used by Paul in meaning either “Our Lord, come!” or “Our Lord has come.” While “anathama” is indicative of destruction, “Marathana” is indicative of deliverance—a prayer for the Lord Jesus to descend and come! “Maranatha” remains a watchword for believers everywhere. We ever turn our eyes heavenward, looking for the Lord Jesus to rescue us from the presence of sin.

Fourth, Paul gives a statement about *enablement* (v. 23). God’s grace is with us each day we live. No matter the difficulty, God never fails. We are not only saved by grace, we are sustained by grace.

Fifth, Paul gives a statement about *endearment* (v. 24). Recalling our journey through 1 Corinthians, it is easy to remember Paul’s words being stern, tough, sometime overbearing. It is almost as if the Apostle used a rod of discipline rather than a rope to deliver the fledging church. With these final words, however, he makes it clear his words should never be perceived as unloving toward the Corinthian believers.

Golden Greek Nugget

Paul encourages the Corinthians to “stand fast in the faith” (v. 13). The Greek makes it clear Paul is uttering a command. When we are under attack, our orders are to stand our ground. Furthermore, the term translated “stand fast” is *steko*, which means to stand firm in faith and duty, to be constant, to persevere. Even under the most difficult circumstances, Christians are never to waver from their faith.

Wrap Up

1 Corinthians is indicative of the church of Jesus Christ today. We face division, doctrinal heresies, and moral decay. The culture we inhabit only accentuates the problems the church faces. However, Jesus Christ offers hope, help, power, and deliverance. As Lord of the church, if we look exclusively to Him, our difficulties will vanish and our deliverance will be sure. May our Lord work His miraculous grace in and through His church today.

