

1 Corinthians

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INTRODUCTION

Corinth was the capital of the Roman imperial province of Achaia and a crossroads of culture, commerce, and politics. One can imagine why Paul spent much time and energy preaching the gospel and establishing a congregation in Corinth. The city's commercial activity ensured a large and diverse audience. Additionally, Corinth's political connections to imperial and senatorial leadership provided Paul an intriguing and risky context to proclaim his anti-imperial gospel—a gospel declaring that true power resided not in the empire but rather in the hands of Jesus Christ, whom the empire had executed.

Many scholars date Paul's arrival in Corinth to the fall of 50 or the spring of 51 CE. According to Acts 18, Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months, laboring as a leatherworker and preacher. If Acts 18 is historically accurate, Paul sparked controversy during his Corinthian sojourn. Yet his extended stay may also indicate that he enjoyed missionary success.

After leaving Corinth, Paul traveled to Ephesus, and from there he began a fascinating literary exchange with the fledgling Corinthian congregation. Some of this exchange is now lost, but fortunately history has preserved much of it. In this exchange, Paul refers to an earlier letter

that he had written to the Corinthians (5:9). Although the contents of this letter are unknown, Paul offered ethical admonitions in it.

Possibly, in response to Paul's letter, certain Corinthians wrote Paul a letter, asking questions about Christian belief and behavior. Additionally, Paul received an oral report concerning events in Corinth from family members or slaves of Chloe, presumably an influential woman in the Corinthian congregation (1:11).

Paul then responded to the Corinthians' concerns by composing another letter. This response is 1 Corinthians. Though Christian history has entitled this letter *1 Corinthians*, it was neither the first letter Paul had written to this congregation, nor would it be the last.

First Corinthians presents the reflections of an apostle passionately concerned about a community he founded. By the letter's conclusion, Paul has: (1) explored communal life under Christ's cross, (2) provided lessons on Christian leadership, (3) discussed Christian sexuality, (4) promoted a communitarian ethic based on concern for the neighbor, (5) offered directives on Christian worship, and (6) engaged in theological reflection about the resurrection and the future of believers.

COMMENTARY

A Community of the Cross (1 Cor. 1–2)

Paul outlines certain themes of the letter in the introduction (1:5–9). He notes the Corinthians' abilities in speech (*logos*) and knowledge (*gnosis*). Also, he mentions their spiritual gifts (*charismata*) and the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the community. Though Paul mentions fellowship last in the introduction, he treats this topic first in the body of the letter. God, through Christ, has created a special community that should strive for a common, divine purpose.

Paul has received distressing news about the community (1:10–17). Excessive allegiance to certain Christian leaders threatens to corrode the congregation's unity. Paul turns to the cross to correct the harmful effects of factions. The message of the cross does not boast in human achievement but rather glories in the divine demonstration of "power through weakness" in Jesus' crucifixion (1:18–31). Divisions in a church—especially those based on social status and favoritism toward leaders—represent a fundamental misunderstanding of the message of the cross.

The cross judges the incessant quest of humans to achieve. The drive to acquire prestige and material wealth and be better than one's neighbor creates communities where competition and fragmentation rule the day. By emphasizing what God has done through human weakness, the message of the cross neutralizes the desire for one-upmanship. Thus, for Paul, communities of the cross should exemplify cooperation, not competition; fellowship, not fragmentation.

Paul uses ethnic relationships to demonstrate how the cross creates unity where one might expect disharmony. Interpreters often ignore the socially radical statement that the cross unites Jewish and Gentile believers (1:24). There was a long history of social hostility between Jews and Gentiles in the ancient world. Paul's yoking together these two

estranged social groups—"both Jews and Greeks"—would have seemed strange. Yet the cross mysteriously traverses social boundaries that often create bitter resentment and misunderstanding.

Paul personified God's power through weakness (2:1–5). Fearing that the Corinthians were emphasizing the rhetorical aptitude of preachers instead of the power of the gospel, Paul teaches them that human weakness does not dilute divine potency. Even though humans proclaim the gospel, the gospel is ultimately a divine accomplishment. In Paul's estimation, the Corinthians' preoccupation with human messengers indicates a lack of trust in the message of the cross.

Lessons on Leadership (1 Cor. 3–4)

Paul addresses the relationship between Christian leaders and the church in chaps. 3 and 4. Having alluded to the cliques forming around preachers (1:10–17), Paul revisits these schisms, noting that jealousy and strife are inappropriate for Spirit-led people.

There is exasperation in Paul's language (3:1–4). He derogatorily refers to the Corinthians as "infants." The Corinthians' partisanship demonstrates immaturity and a refusal to ingest the substantive food of the gospel. In a vexed tone, Paul exclaims, "Even now you are still not ready [to eat solid food]" (3:2).

Paul next launches a barrage of provocative images aimed at correcting the Corinthians' perceptions of leadership. Agricultural and architectural metaphors govern chap. 3. Slavery and familial metaphors are prevalent in chap. 4.

In chap. 3 Paul likens himself and Apollos, his apostolic colleague, to gardeners who plant and cultivate. Though Paul planted the Corinthian congregation (3:6), he quickly acknowledges Apollos's assistance. Paul and Apollos's efforts would have been in vain, however, had it not been for God's germinating influence.

Paul instructs the Corinthians on interdependence in ministry through these agricultural metaphors. Unless the planter sows, the one watering has nothing to water. Unless the one watering irrigates the seed, the planter's work will wither under the weight of drought. These apostolic gardeners are not in competition with each other but are connected to and dependent upon each other in a common purpose (3:8).

Switching to architectural metaphors in 3:10, Paul is the "master builder" in the Corinthian congregation. The term translated "master builder" (*architekton*) gives us the English derivative "architect." In antiquity the *architekton* was involved in both the design and construction of a building.

Paul alludes to his theology of leadership with these architectural metaphors. Unfortunately, the NRSV translation of 3:10, "skilled master builder," diminishes this allusion. The Greek word translated "skilled" (*sophos*) should receive its more usual meaning, "wise." Thus Paul refers to himself more literally as a "wise master builder." Paul demonstrates divinely inspired wisdom by recognizing the appropriate foundation for the community—the crucified and risen Christ. Christ, not human personality or ability, is the sure foundation of the church (3:11).

In 4:1–5 Paul appeals to a slavery metaphor to instruct the Corinthians on the proper identity and role of the Christian minister. He exhorts the Corinthians to consider Apollos and him as "servants" and "stewards." Frequently, slaves fulfilled the role of stewards in Greco-Roman culture.

Though ancient Greco-Roman slavery was violent and dehumanizing, slaves of well-to-do people (e.g., slaves of business managers and imperial bureaucrats) occasionally wielded power and enjoyed limited social prestige. Often these well-positioned slaves fulfilled important business duties on behalf of their masters, supervising the day-to-day affairs of the master's household. There was much incentive for slaves to be loyal to their

masters as well as faithful managers of the master's business dealings.

By alluding to himself as a "steward [i.e., a slave] of God's mysteries," Paul acknowledges the parameters of his leadership. As a slave of God, he possesses authority, but of a delegated nature. His authority is a gracious gift from God, not the consequence of personal ability or status. Likewise, any praise or blame for his ministry will ultimately come from God.

Furthermore, Paul is not free to do as he pleases; nor can he allow himself to be buffeted by the Corinthians' evaluations of his ministry. All human evaluations of Christian ministers, whether favorable or unfavorable, are always penultimate. Ministers should not court the applause of people but instead seek the ultimate affirmation—God pronouncing them "faithful" on the day of judgment. Ultimately, faithfulness, not human wisdom or rhetorical ability, commends one to God.

In 4:14–16 Paul employs a parental metaphor to recall his unique role in creating the Corinthian congregation. Paul's claim to be the Corinthians' father has drawn criticism from various interpreters. Some scholars consider this claim and Paul's call for imitation to be overt patriarchy meant to establish an oppressive authority. But the indictment of patriarchy in 1 Cor. 4 may be ill-founded.

First, familial metaphors serve as bookends around 1 Cor. 3–4. Paul opens chap. 3 with a *maternal* metaphor, likening himself to a mother who suckles children (3:2). Paul concludes chap. 4 by referring to himself as a father who begat children (4:15). Here and in other letters (e.g., 1 Thess. 2:7 and Gal. 4:19) Paul does not employ exclusively paternal imagery in his familial metaphors.

Second, although teachers might assume a significant role in the rearing of children, the father in an ancient Greco-Roman family was chiefly responsible for the education, and especially the moral instruction, of children. Paul's assertion of paternal status is not a manipulative power play but rather a passionate

appeal to the Corinthians to be more concerned about their conduct.

Paul's call for imitation is an expression of parental responsibility. As the first Christian leader the Corinthian family ever knew, Paul presents himself as an ethical model. His model celebrates God's power through weakness, the indispensability of mutuality, and ultimate accountability to God—hardly the staple qualities of a patriarchal mind-set.

Community Membership and Sexual Ethics (1 Cor. 5-7)

Paul turns his attention more fully to ethics in these chapters. His ethical admonitions are not simply focused on the individual (What should I do?). They concentrate primarily on the communal (How do believers' actions affect the broader Christian community?).

There are four major sections in 1 Cor. 5-7. First, Paul comments on an inappropriate sexual relationship within the church (chap. 5). Second, he chastises the Corinthian proclivity for taking internal church disputes before "pagan" law courts (6:1-11). Third, he addresses another instance of immorality, the sexual union of believers with prostitutes (6:12-20). Finally, Paul discusses how the call to be a Christian affects persons in various social relationships, many of which involve sexual matters such as celibacy, marriage, being single, being widowed, or being divorced (chap. 7).

Paul first addresses the troubling news of sexual immorality (*porneia*) in the church (5:1). Apparently, a Corinthian Christian is having sexual relations with his stepmother. While this improper sexual activity horrifies Paul, certain members of the community celebrate the relationship between this man and woman. The Corinthians' "boasting" about the relationship may reflect adoption of the values of the culture where sexual activity outside marriage was not a source of shame for men.

Paul strongly urges the Corinthians to expel this man from the community and to hand him over to Satan for the destruction of his body but the salvation of his spirit. The word Paul uses for "body" is *sarx*, not the more usual term, *soma* (5:5). *Sarx*, which is commonly translated "flesh," is a characteristic Pauline term connoting a life dominated by sin. Paul considers this communal discipline restorative, not punitive. He hopes that the shame engendered by this excommunication will prompt the man to change his behavior, thereby restoring both the man and the health of the church. Given Paul's silence about the woman in this relationship, some interpreters assume that she was not a member of the Corinthian church or was not responsible for her actions because she was a slave and was coerced into the relationship.

Though details surrounding this incident and Paul's response to it remain unclear, the straightforwardness of Paul's approach to sexuality is striking. Two impulses have characterized attitudes about sexuality in many modern cultures. One impulse has been sexual obsession—the pursuit of sexual pleasure at all costs. The other impulse has been sexual repression—the denial of sexual pleasure or ignoring of sexuality.

The pendulum has swung decidedly toward repression in many discussions of sexuality across Christian history. Yet Paul demonstrates that the frank discussion of sexuality is a matter of ecclesial discernment and should not be delegated to families and cultural institutions alone. The church must overcome its reticence to address sexual matters and openly teach about sexuality.

In addition to Paul's forthrightness about sexuality, he provides another vital lesson, the importance of restoration. Christians must vigilantly seek the restoration and healing of the victims of sexual misconduct, as well as the restoration of the church's integrity when the misconduct has involved Christians.

Also, the gospel, which promises unmerited forgiveness for those who seek it, mandates believers to restore to the Christian community the perpetrators of sexual misconduct.

Paul next rebukes the Corinthians for taking certain disputes (possibly involving sexual matters) to pagan law courts. In these courts believers allow pagan judges to adjudicate their sacred business. Moreover, these secular judicial proceedings frustrate attempts at fellowship among believers. By inciting hostility, an apparent legal victory of one believer over another is actually a defeat for the involved parties and the entire congregation (6:7-8).

Paul then chastises the Corinthians for another occasion of sexual immorality (6:12-20). Presumably, certain Christian men are frequenting prostitutes. Again, this immorality may indicate how thoroughly some Christian men had adopted the mores of the wider culture. Paul's response to this immorality amplifies the theological significance of the human body.

As a Jew, Paul did not subscribe to the soul-body dualism of Greek philosophy that deemed the human body a prison from which the eternal soul sought release. Paul believed that believers' bodies would be the location of God's transforming power in the resurrection. The future would involve not the saving of souls but instead the transformation and resurrection of bodies. He appeals to the resurrection of Christ's body as evidence that bodies will play a role in God's future (6:14). Moreover, God has made human bodies dwelling places of the Holy Spirit even in the present (3:16-17).

Human bodies are not autonomous but are joined to Christ's body. Thus, when believers have improper sexual relations, they replace the holy union shared with Christ's body with an impure union. Paul's positive perspective on the body is meant to curb sexual immorality. Also, the theological significance he places on the human body has

implications for topics ranging from genetic cloning to health care for persons with various diseases. Regardless of the positions that Christians advance on these complex issues, our bodies are not simple objects for science but instead subjects in God's redemptive process.

Finally, in 1 Cor. 7 Paul affirms his own preference for celibacy, while offering a variety of opinions to the married, the unmarried, and persons in "mixed marriages" (i.e., one partner is a Christian while the other is not). His instructions demonstrate enormous flexibility. Contrary to one popular portrayal of Paul as an authoritarian, Paul willingly accommodates a variety of spiritual gifts and dispositions regarding sexual matters (7:7). Rather than establishing rigid apostolic decrees, in many instances he offers opinions, fully aware that the preferences of others may win out. This portrait of the flexible Paul provides an important counterbalance to the more definitive stances he takes in chaps. 5-6.

The Relinquishment of Rights (1 Cor. 8-10)

Paul's concern for communal ethics continues in chaps. 8-10. If sexual immorality has threatened the community's health in chaps. 5-7, disdain for the welfare of fellow believers is the peril in chaps. 8-10. There is a growing controversy over the appropriateness of Christians eating food sacrificed to idols in pagan temples. The deeper issue is elitism produced by knowledge.

Corinth was home to a number of religious temples and shrines honoring Greco-Roman deities such as Apollo and Aphrodite. In religious celebrations at these temples and shrines, meat would frequently be sacrificed to various deities and then eaten by guests. In addition to their religious function, these banquets provided a forum for important cultural and commercial networking.

Apparently, upper-class members of the Corinthian church were attending

these banquets and freely eating meat in the temples. They had no qualms eating the meat since they had "knowledge" that the idols to whom the meat was sacrificed did not exist (8:4). Their knowledge liberated them, so they thought, from the problematic religious implications of eating the meat, and they eagerly welcomed opportunities for contact with the wider Corinthian society.

While dining in these temples did not damage the religious sensibilities of the "enlightened" Christians, it could defile the consciences of certain Christians, the so-called weak, who still associated this food with idols (8:7). Some members of the Corinthian church were recent converts from pagan religions. If these "weak" Christians (for whom idols were still real forces) witnessed other influential Christians dining in these temples, the "weak" might be encouraged to enter the temples and possibly be tempted to return to idol worship (8:10). Far from being a simple social occasion for "enlightened" Christians, these pagan banquets might serve as a catalyst for the destruction of another Christian's faith.

Responding to this crisis, Paul remarks, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (8:1). Interestingly, Paul agrees with the "enlightened" Christians' assertion that idols do not exist (8:4-7). Yet he reprimands the "enlightened" Christians for their preoccupation with a "liberating" knowledge that actually enslaves fellow believers.

This knowledge has "puffed them up," creating in them an elitist disdain for fellow Christians. Paul has used the verb "to puff up" (*physiōō*), which carries the connotation of human arrogance, on other occasions (4:6, 18-19; 5:2). Knowledge can lead to an inflated obsession with one's own interests. Love, however, eagerly seeks to edify the neighbor, even if it involves the relinquishment of one's rights.

Paul demonstrates his willingness to relinquish rights for others. After establishing his right to financial support as an apostle (9:1-14), Paul recants that right

(9:15-18). Due to the Corinthians' inclination toward elitism, Paul is leery of accepting their financial support. Through financial patronage, the Corinthians might claim "ownership" over Paul. By refusing payment, Paul remains free from their "ownership." Yet, returning to the slavery metaphor, Paul reminds them that he is God's slave, having been commissioned as a "household steward" (9:17-18).

In chap. 10 Paul reflects extensively on the dangers of idolatry—the wrongful attribution of ultimate status to something or someone not ultimate. In his prohibitions against idolatry, he appeals to Jewish Scripture, offering very imaginative interpretations. Furthermore, he boldly declares that these biblical texts were not written exclusively for ancient Jews but also for Paul's present community (10:6, 11). Paul unashamedly reads biblical texts for their contemporary religious value, not simply for ancient historical accuracy.

Instructions about Worship (1 Cor. 11-14)

Behavior in worship is the theme connecting the disparate discussions in chaps. 11-14. Paul treats four main issues. First, he deals with certain women in the church prophesying with their heads "uncovered" (11:1-16). Second, he speaks about social divisiveness when the community shares the Lord's Supper (11:17-34). Third, he examines the role of spiritual gifts in Christian worship (chaps. 12-14). In the midst of discussing spiritual gifts, Paul inserts a compelling "hymn to love," which contends that love is the proper context for all spiritual gifts (chap. 13). Finally, he addresses the matter of certain women speaking in public worship services (14:34-36).

A worship dilemma troubling Paul emerges in 11:5: "Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head." Apparently, certain Christian women prophets have broken with prevailing social custom by either removing their head coverings or loosening their hair and letting it down while

prophesying in worship. Paul is concerned that people inside and outside the Corinthian church might realize that these women have shamefully disregarded gender distinctions symbolized by "appropriate" hairstyles. Additionally, people might mistake these women for members of suspect social groups whose women also let their hair down in frenzied prophetic utterances. While assuming women's vital leadership roles in Christian worship, Paul cannot endure the shameful implications of their actions and mounts three basic arguments. He argues on the basis of culture codes in vv. 4-6, the Genesis creation stories in vv. 7-9, and finally "nature" in vv. 14-15.

Paul reveals his own doubt about the persuasiveness of these arguments. In frustration he remarks, "We have no such custom [for women prophesying with their hair down]." A paraphrase of Paul's socially conservative plea might be: "Do as I have urged because this is the way we have always done it."

Paul's words are riddled with patriarchal assumptions. The avoidance of social disgrace is Paul's motive in 11:1-16. He uses some form of the word "disgrace" or "shame" three times in vv. 4-6. Earlier in the letter, Paul's theology of the cross stressed that the church finds its honor in what the world calls shameful (1:18-31). It is hypocritical for him to suddenly become concerned that outsiders might heap shame upon the community. How can Paul place the cross at the center of his ministry and be worried about social respectability?

Additionally, Paul employs a patriarchal method when reading the creation stories in 11:7-9. No amount of interpretive maneuvering can rescue him from the charge of chauvinism here. His assertion that a woman brings glory to a man and not directly to God gives to women a derivative, second-class status. Finally, Paul suggests in vv. 14-15 that it is contrary to "nature" for a woman's head to be uncovered. By "nature" he appears to mean prevailing cultural customs defined by patriarchal assumptions. Verses 1-16

serve as a cautionary tale of how easily well-intentioned church leaders can perpetuate the sin of patriarchy.

In 11:17-34 Paul returns to the theme of schism that governed earlier portions of the letter. Class inequities are at the root of these schisms and manifest themselves at the Lord's Supper, the sacred meal of the early church symbolizing the community's common history and destiny. More specifically, as the community gathers for the Lord's Supper, certain wealthier members also bring elaborate dinners and eat them in front of the poorer members, who lack resources for such meals. As in the case of meat offered in pagan temples (chap. 8), this flaunting of class differences demonstrates an inexcusable lack of concern for the community.

In chaps. 12-14 Paul explores the use of spiritual gifts in worship. Clues in the text reveal that Paul has at least two objectives. First, he wants to de-emphasize speaking in tongues, an ecstatic language that believers employ when praying to God. Christian worship in Corinth is apparently a lively affair. Yet the prevalence of speaking in tongues and a disregard for order in worship threaten the effectiveness of the worship services (14:13-19). Second, Paul wants to emphasize the variety of ways that the Holy Spirit equips believers.

The de-emphasis on speaking in tongues and frenzied worship begins as early as 12:2. There Paul appeals to the Corinthians' former involvement with idol worship. In their pagan religious rituals, they occasionally were carried away in religious frenzy. Paul contrasts their former religious ecstasy with the correct confession of Jesus' lordship, which the Holy Spirit inspires (12:3). The work of the Holy Spirit is supremely manifested in instructive speech that builds up the community (i.e., prophecy), not in frenzied speech that potentially edifies only the individual (i.e., speaking in tongues).

Paul also emphasizes the diverse ways that the Holy Spirit empowers believers for the common good of the church. He repeats the word "variety"

(*diareseis*) three times when discussing the media through which God's power flows (12:4-6). Additionally, he returns to the body metaphor to underscore that the proper functioning of the body of Christ (i.e., the church) depends on diverse parts carrying out their responsibilities (12:12-31).

Paul's promotion of love—the self-transcending attention to and concern for the other—reaches full maturity in his famous hymn to love in chap. 13. In its literary context, Paul's hymn is not an abstract speculation about love but rather a concrete pastoral insight that the use of spiritual gifts must spring up from the soil of love.

At the conclusion of chap. 14 Paul addresses another divisive issue concerning speech in worship. In a notorious passage he seemingly urges certain women in the congregation to be silent (14:34-35). Interpreters have advanced at least three positions concerning this passage: (1) Some believe it is an interpolation inserted into the letter by a later copyist. (2) Some consider it to be Paul's authentic words and note the unfortunate patriarchal perspective. Yet they emphasize Paul's affirmation of female ecclesial leaders in other contexts. (3) Some read vv. 34-35 as a slogan of persons in the Corinthian congregation, which Paul quotes. Then, in v. 36, Paul rejects the slogan with his question: "Did the word of God originate with you [who believe that women should not speak in worship]?" In other words, Paul is not silencing women but disagreeing with those who want to silence them.

Paul demonstrates great concern about the importance of worship throughout chaps. 11-14 as he engages this wide range of issues with which the Corinthian community struggles as it builds its communal identity.

The Resurrection Reexamined (1 Cor. 15)

Paul tackles possibly the most pressing dilemma in the Corinthian congregation in chap. 15. Apparently, certain believers

are denying the prospect of future bodily resurrection. In Paul's estimation they misunderstand the significance of Christ's resurrection. Thus Paul attempts to reestablish the link between Christ's bodily resurrection in the past and their bodily resurrection in the future.

Paul does not immediately attack the faulty premises of these believers. Instead, he creates common ground, recalling his initial preaching among them (15:1-11). He reminds them that the death and resurrection of Jesus were the bedrock of his proclamation, which they eagerly accepted. Paul then cites multiple appearances of the resurrected Christ to confirm that the resurrected Christ had a body that other people could physically experience.

In the remainder of the chapter, Paul's arguments reveal more clearly the problematic positions of these Corinthians. On the one hand, they fail to connect Christ's resurrection in the past and their resurrection in the future (15:12-19). On the other hand, they do not believe that the resurrection is bodily (15:35). Paul's involved arguments address these issues.

He employs agricultural metaphors to instruct the Corinthians that Christ's resurrection and their future resurrection are inextricably linked (15:20-23). He likens Christ's resurrection to the "first fruits." In Judaism persons sacrificed the initial produce of the harvest (e.g., Exod. 23:19). This "first fruits" sacrifice symbolized both the greater harvest to come and God's sovereignty.

Christ's resurrection exemplifies the symbolic realities of the "first fruits" and is the beginning of a greater future harvest—the resurrection of all believers (1 Cor. 15:23). Additionally, Christ's resurrection signals God's sovereignty over other contending powers (15:24-28). Even death, that ancient and persistent foe, will eventually succumb to God. Paul then provides agricultural and cosmological examples to persuade the Corinthians that resurrection is always a bodily phenomenon (15:35-57). Yet Paul admits that in the resurrection human bodies will undergo a mysterious transformation.

Paul's arguments provide useful guidance for theological discernment about the resurrection. First, Paul teaches that the proclamation of the risen Lord is essential to the church's identity (15:3–4). Christ is central not because he was a good teacher or a moral exemplar, but because he is the risen Lord of the church! Second, since Christ's resurrection is the opening, not closing, act of God's eschatological drama, the celebration of the resurrection cannot focus solely on Christ. It must also celebrate the resurrection's implications for all Christians. Finally, the prognostication of death's defeat should always fan the flames of Christian hope—the unswerving assurance that God has a glorious future for believers and the whole creation.

Parting Words (1 Cor. 16)

In chap. 16 Paul provides instructions about the "collection for the saints." He encourages this congregation to contribute to a relief fund to support Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who have fallen upon financial difficulties (Gal. 2:10). Paul believes that the acceptance of this offering by Jewish Christians in Jerusalem might signal the unity between the Jewish and Gentile wings of early Christianity,

since the Pauline congregations contributing to this fund are largely Gentile.

Intending to visit with the Corinthians soon, Paul also sketches his future itinerary. Yet, as the reader of 2 Corinthians learns, Paul's travel plans undergo serious alterations. New controversies in Corinth challenge Paul to present even more persuasively his understanding of God and the gospel.

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