

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 33, 1 Corinthians 16, Paul's Response to the Question of the Collection for Jerusalem Saints and Closing Remarks

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 33, 1 Corinthians 16, Paul's Response to the Question of the Collection for Jerusalem Saints and Closing Remarks.

Well, welcome to the last of our series of lectures on the book of 1 Corinthians.

We're going to be looking at chapter 16 today if you're one of those rare people who has persevered through all these lectures, congratulations. Thank you for honoring me by listening to these lectures.

I hope that they stimulate your research. There's plenty more to be looked for in terms of the book of 1 Corinthians and to be validated by reading good literature. The reading of good literature is the secret to your growth and to your ability to have confidence about your understanding of any part of the Bible for that matter.

Well, today is lecture 33, and it's notepad number 17, which starts with page 241. Page 241, notepad 17, and we're looking at the ending of the book, chapter 16. This is an epistle, as we've talked about before.

It's a long one, and epistles, if you'll remember, have an opening, a main body, and a closing. And we're now coming to the end of the epistle, but not a closing yet. The closing is the last half of chapter 16, because Paul is still going to address an issue that is part of either the questions or the interest of the Corinthians, or perhaps Paul's promotion, but he uses the peri-death, that now concerning phrase in 16.1 that connects this into the flow of chapter 7.1 and following.

The now about is the way the NIV 2011 puts it. Now, about the collection. This has to do with an offering that was a major, major project for Paul.

It related to the saints at Jerusalem. There had been problems with the economy and with famine in the city in terms of their availability of resources, and Paul had made it a mission of his to gather money to take back to Jerusalem to help with this. And I'm sure that a lot of this has to do with Paul's own passions.

He was a Jew, he was a Jew of the Jews, as he says in his testimonials, and he loved the city of Jerusalem, and he loved his traditions, and he wanted to demonstrate, I

think, not only to the Jewish people but to the Jewish church in Jerusalem, that this greater Gentile mission had not forgotten them. They still viewed them as, so to speak, their mother, who has provided them with the opportunity to see Jesus in terms of the Old Testament. Now a collection that Paul was soliciting from these Gentiles Churches for the Jewish Christians and the poor in Jerusalem, in 1a on page 241.

I've given you other texts here that reference this collection, and you can see that by looking up those passages. The return to the structural indicator, now concerning, indicates that Paul is still addressing some Corinthian concerns, either a question they ask or perhaps some concerns that he knew they had. This offering relates to Paul's passion for the saints in Jerusalem.

They were suffering hardships, and this effort of the Asian churches particularly, those are the ones that Paul mentions, helping them is going to send great goodwill back to the mother church. The Greek term used for the collection was common for soliciting money for sacred purposes in secular Greek. Garland notes that this is the only time that Paul uses this particular term in reference to the Jerusalem collection project.

Garland thinks that may indicate that the Corinthians used that term for some reason and that Paul had picked up on it because he wasn't using it in the other references to the Jerusalem project. You can see Garland's interesting chart portraying Paul's imaging of the Jerusalem project on page 763. I chose not to reduplicate that here in the notes. That's a commentary you should have, and you can see the chart in that location.

This ministry of the Gentile church to Jerusalem probably signified several things to Paul and, hopefully, to other Christians of the era. First of all, it was an acknowledgment of the Gentile church's spiritual debt to their Jewish origins, and that's a very important concept. The church was not born out of no historical connection.

The church merged this Jewish mission of the Messiah into its own piece of history as Israel, which was a civil setting, declined and actually disappeared. The church becomes the package that God uses to communicate his truth to the world. From the time of Abraham until 70 AD, basically, God had used Israel to be the package that he worked through to send his message to the world, and the church picks up that gauntlet in relation to that message as it's fulfilled in Christ and filled out in terms of its historical significance through the church.

And so, this offering is an acknowledgment that the church owes a debt of gratitude to the Jews and to the Old Testament particularly. Don't ever separate the Old Testament and the New Testament. Don't try to drive a wedge between the two.

There's much in the Old Testament, not just the history of Israel, not just the history of God's redemptive work, but there's much moral teaching in the Old Testament that we still need. There are many, many, many issues not addressed in the New Testament that the Old Testament addresses—many moral issues.

There are many sexual issues, and we need that information to bring it to bear into our own ethical context. So, the dispensational traditions, at least the early ones, had a way of bifurcating the Testaments. But even the Ryrie Study Bible, which is the last of the Study Bibles from that dispensational group, ameliorated that greatly.

In fact, the originals of Schaeffer and Schofield would probably have fired Ryrie if they had seen his Study Bible, but they were long gone by the time he produced that. They thought that the Sermon on the Mount was legal material, but it wasn't. It's good moral material.

So, we need to be very, very careful in how we draw lines of demarcation between the Old and the New. There's more continuity than discontinuity, and yet there is a real sense of discontinuity. Many things that we won't be talking about, such as Israel, as a civil entity.

It was a nation. It had the government. I'll mention that at the end when we come to the question of the offering.

So, this offering relates to Paul's passion for the saints in Jerusalem. It's an acknowledgment of the Gentiles' church's debt to them. Secondly, it's a token of the genuine faith of the Gentile church.

They have faith because Abraham had faith, and that was transmitted through Israel and picked up in the New Testament by Paul, who was a Jew of the Jews, and Christianized, Christologized, if you please, and then passed on in terms of the redemptive program. Jesus died according to the scriptures, particularly the Old Testament. Thirdly, there's a sort of palm branch, if you please, in light of the occasional tensions between Jerusalem and the larger part of the Greco-Roman world.

As the Jews were scattered abroad, the Christians were also scattered abroad according to the book of Acts, and when that happened, where did they go? They went out into what's known as the diaspora. The book of James uses that in its early verses. The diaspora is the Jews who are scattered abroad, and as they were scattered abroad in the ancient world, all the way from the Atlantic to Western Asia, all of that was covered by pockets of Jewish communities, and according to tradition, when they had 10 Jewish families, they would start a synagogue.

A synagogue is a community center. It's not a temple. Don't ever think of the synagogue as a temple.

It is not a temple. The synagogue was a community center where the Jews gathered to hear the scriptures and to discuss God and to gather their community together on a regular basis, and so when the Christians went into that larger world, and when you read the book of Acts, you can see this clearly. They went, first of all, to the synagogue and proclaimed to the Jews.

Then they went to the Greeks, usually at the Agora, which was the marketplace, and so you've got all of these opportunities all over that populated world that the Christians had easy access to. The timing of God is superior in relation to the Christian mission. The battles for the power of who's going to run all of the inheritance from Alexander the Great has been settled.

Rome has won. They did that in about the seventh decade before the time of Christ. They've established their rule.

The Greeks were great warriors. They conquered land, but they were not good at organization and keeping it. Rome was an organizational machine, Roman law, Roman processes, and procedures, and they took the world that Alexander provided them and just walked in and gained control of it.

They had a great army themselves, of course, but at the same time, they inherited what Alexander the Great had accomplished and his own heirs. All over that known world, the Jews existed, which gave the Christians immediate access to their missionary work in terms of informing the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. He's the one who is going to deliver the kingdom to the Father, and so consequently, there's a great debt of gratitude, and there's a great integration, not just integration, there is a lot of integration, but there's a great connection between the Jews and the Christians, and that should never, never be forgotten.

Even to this day, the study of Jewish scholars of the Bible is of great benefit to Christian scholars, and I go to seminars where Jews and Christians interchange in terms of the study of scripture. Of course, the first century, particularly the Gospels, were still Old Testament in terms of their literary genre. That's why a lot of people have trouble reading the Gospels after they've read Paul, because the Gospels are still Old Testament literary driven, and consequently, you've got to have an understanding of Jewish hermeneutics in order to deal with the Gospels.

A lot of harm and abuse has been perpetrated upon the Gospels as a result of not doing it. Now, 16:2-4. Now, notice 16:1, about the collection for the churches to do, and here comes Paul's instructions in verses two to four. On the first day of each

week, every week, each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income.

This is the NIV, saving it up so that when I come, no collections will have to be made. That's an interesting little nuance, isn't it? Get it ahead of time. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.

If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me. This is a fascinating little insight into how Paul handled money. This could have been a significant amount of money, and in those days, it would have been a heavy amount of money because it would have been in coin and gold of various kinds, gold, and silver. It could have been anything from jewelry, which could be exchanged for money, or money itself, that it probably would have to be carried in cases on a beast of burden back to Jerusalem.

That would be no small task, particularly in a world where the Roman roads were massive, but there was lots of robbery that took place in that ancient world. So, this would not have been a small project by any stretch of the imagination. 16.2-4. The first day of the week.

Now, that's Sunday, and that was the day that the Christians primarily worshipped. Now, during the Book of Acts, they met frequently; sometimes, they met every day. In the early part of the Book of Acts, the pattern became to meet on the first day of the week together as a corporate group.

Acts 20, verse 7 points this out. It's clearly signaled as the time when the Christians formally gathered. His encouragement about giving here is not only about the Jerusalem project.

Excuse me, I put the word not in there, and I shouldn't have. It's only about the Jerusalem project. This is not a passage about how the church should support itself.

This is a passage about a special offering taken up for the Jewish Christians, particularly in Jerusalem. Taking up repeated offerings for this purpose will help it to grow. So, when Paul got there, he didn't have to pass the plate again, but it would all be taken care of and ready to go.

Note that Paul makes no appeal to a standard like tithing or any other standard other than whatever one could afford. As Zerwick puts it, the RSV puts it this way, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn. In the NIV 2011, you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up.

There's no standard that's stated here. It's sort of an offering that relates to after you've paid your bills and taken care of your obligations, you have a profit, so to speak, and let that be the giving out of which you draw your funds. That's kind of interesting.

In our own day and time, the idea of a tithing situation continues to hang on heavily in churches, oftentimes as a manipulative way of keeping the collections where they're supposed to be. So, please notice that. I'll come back and make another comment.

Paul's instructions are about how to give everyone levels to an across-the-board standard so that the rich and poor may participate. Give as you are able in light of your life circumstances. That might be little, it might be a lot, but there's no standard.

10% might not be anything to the rich, but it might be everything to the poor. And so, everyone is to give before God what they've been blessed with above their needs, and that becomes the standard here. The implication is reasonable that giving relates to after necessities are cared for.

There is no manipulations. There are no implications of guilt in relation to this offering. Each does their giving before God.

Paul doesn't manage how you give other than that. Other than that, he only wants the offering so that he can take it to Jerusalem. Paul asked for them to give out of their abundance.

He does not ask for them to give sacrificially. Every sermon I've ever heard about giving always has that concept of giving sacrificially. They often use the widow's might in the Gospels, which is the last day that Jesus is at the temple, the last event in the day that Jesus preached in the temple during Passion Week.

As they're leaving, he tells the story about the widow and her giving her widow's might. That story wasn't about giving. It shouldn't be used to talk about a standard of giving.

It should be used to talk about commitment and faithfulness. The widow's might is an illustration that out of all the unfaithfulness that Jesus had encountered on that entire day in the temple, be they religious leaders or whoever they were, she is the only one that gets praise. She is the only one that's showing her dedication to God at the nth degree.

So, there is a bit of sacrifice because she certainly could have used that money, but under that Jewish system, she was faithful to God. And Jesus commends that, the only thing he commends that entire day. But this is a different context.

It's not the same context. Paul distances himself from the control of this offering and from the caretaking in terms of the gift while still remaining connected. Even the last phrase, if he remains connected, he will be in charge of the trip.

It's kind of interesting that it's stated there in 16. If it seems advisable for me to go, also they will accompany me, but I will accompany them. Paul was an apostle, and therefore, he would be there to supervise the project.

However, it is not absolute. It is not absolute. We don't know exactly what happened in that regard.

Now, this is an appropriate place to note, as I've already alluded, that the concept of tithe in the Bible relates to Israel. It's an Israel of creation. Israel was both a religious and a civil entity.

Israel needed funds for the temple, but Israel needed funds for the infrastructure of the nation of Israel. In fact, when one studies the concept of giving in the Old Testament, one will find that you could call the tithe 30 percent, not 10 percent because there were different points at which giving took place. They went to the festivals in Jerusalem, not just to worship God.

Yes, that was why they were there, but it also served the economic stability of the city. They came in for a whole week and camped out and spent money. In fact, the Old Testament makes it quite clear: buy, buy food, drink, and have a party as you worship God.

That all supported the infrastructure of the city of Jerusalem, the nation of Israel, and the priests who regulated the prospects and the process of the temple. And so, consequently, that tithe was actually their taxes. What is known as a tithe is actually a tax, and that tax is driven not only by a religious purpose but by a civil purpose, and that is unique to Israel.

That is not the church. The tithe was a tax to cover many domains of religious and civil life. The New Testament never raises the issue of tithe as a standard for giving.

It's not in the New Testament anywhere. One might observe a useful analogical relationship to the Old Testament patterns, but that risks being manipulative and abusive of the Bible, so be very, very careful if you even use it analogically. I find it quite interesting that many Christians that I've known want to distance themselves

from the Old Testament, but they don't want to distance themselves from the concept of tithing because it's useful.

Well, let's be careful how we use the Bible. Let's use it as it was intended to be used. There's plenty of talk in the New Testament about how to give and what to give.

The problem is we've created structures in our world about the church that really wasn't part of the New Testament period, and as a result, we've also created a need for some pretty massive budgets. Churches sit empty six days a week, many of them for one service. Thankfully, many of them house daycare.

Many of them house other religious aspects during the week of counseling and perhaps Bible study and those sorts of things, but the main thing is one time a week in our current culture because so many services are gone that used to be there. Some churches will build multi, multi, multi, multi-million dollar plants. They call them campuses.

Why they use that word, I don't know because there's not that much education that happens there, I'm afraid. If it's a campus, it ought to be a school, and so consequently, we have a challenge in terms of raising budgets in the church, and it's getting really difficult. The church is struggling at many levels, but at the end of the day, the concept of giving and supporting is a product.

It's not a goal. It's a product. It's a product of spirituality if you please.

It's a product of commitment. It's a product of owning the necessity to spend the money for stipulated aspects of the spread of God's word in the world. You'll get more money if you focus on those other things and let the money come as people's burden deepens.

If you focus on money for money's sake, you're doomed to problems and resistance. So, here is an interesting statement from Paul in relation to this offering. There are many things we can learn from it.

It's brief, but it's packed with information that's still useful for us by analogy. Moving on, the middle of page 242, Paul's entourage travel plans. Not only in verses 1 through 11 do we have the collection, 1a, but now 2a, we have the travel plans for Paul.

This is not unusual in the ending of an epistle. Some epistles are longer than others. Romans and 1 Corinthians have pretty long endings, and we learn a lot about travel and the historical nature of it from those endings.

There's a tendency, especially after the study of a long book and a challenging book, to just kind of dismiss or quickly move over the final words. And we want to try to avoid that, even though we won't fill it out as much as we could, but hopefully, we'll do an adequate job of that. Paul's rehearsal of his travel plans provides us with a number of insights into how the earliest missionary ministries operated.

I have to use the word missionary. What other word can I use? Paul was an apostle. He traveled all over.

There were others who worked with him who were probably elders. Each of them were gifted in different ways. They may have been pastors, but they were all itinerant.

And with Paul's activities that we learn at the end of these epistles, we can see some of the aspects of what it meant in our terms to be a missionary in the first century. Today, we use the word missionary for those who usually leave the homeland and go to foreign lands and spread the gospel. We could use it here in the U.S. I did some missionary work in the U.S. with servicemen and military, in Norfolk, Virginia, and Key West, Florida, and between some of my schooling.

The word missionary is what we need to use to communicate the idea. The word evangelist is used in Ephesians 4 along with pastors and teachers, but the fact is that an evangelist would be like a missionary to a great extent. I think the word missionary captures what we need to use. First of all, the bullet points are in the middle of 242.

The earliest missionary projects were always itinerant. Resident leadership emerged from the founding congregations. The leadership and the ministers for that local situation emerged from that group.

Now, that's challenging to think about because many of those were first-time converts, particularly in the Jewish, excuse me, in the Gentile mission. They were first-time converts. They needed to be taught.

This is probably why Paul, John, and others mentored these churches so closely. That's why they had an entourage. They were teaching constantly, and they would leave those people there for a year or two.

Paul was in Ephesus for a couple of years. He spent extended time in Corinth and other places teaching others so they could go out and fulfill the needs to teach in these congregations. So, it was a challenge, and we need to be aware of that and realize that he didn't always have a pool of seminary graduates from which to choose.

He would have liked that, but he did seminary on the fly, which was the only thing they had available for them to do. So, these founding congregations, so itinerant, there's the key word. Missionaries didn't go sent by another church to live in another place and do their work.

Now, there's nothing wrong with that, which is the modern method by and large, because we're not talking about prescription here about how you do mission. We're talking about description, the way that they did it. So, we can do it in lots of different ways today, but I think that there's a principle involved in its itinerant nature that ought to strike us.

Our purpose is not to spend 30 years in one place, have a life there, be the pastor of the church, and never let it go. Most good missionaries, that's sort of a, sorry, that's a bit of a manipulative phrase, isn't it? But most missionaries' goal is to find a church, get it established, and then go somewhere else and find another one. If that is not happening, then I would have to call into question their philosophy of missionary ministry.

Missionaries were dominantly dependent upon the places to which they ministered. As you see, the apostles and their entourage moving around depended upon the places where they were for physical and financial needs. They put them up, they provided for them, and then, as the text says, a number of places they were sent on their way in a manner worthy of them.

That has to do with giving them enough money to get to the next place, to get established, and to begin their ministry there, where that group of people will pick them up and support them. So, this was very much an on-the-job support situation in the early, in the first century. Some churches, like Philippi, saw how serious this was and did tend to send Paul money.

But by and large, it was on-site. Their support was raised in the midst of their ministry, and there was no salary above expenses. They basically had the money that they needed to do the things they needed to do at the time.

Once again, I'm not saying that modern missions shouldn't have a salary above expenses. There are certain issues that need to be addressed in our own culture. But I think that we need to seriously think about the concept of mission, what it is for, what that means for the people who are involved in it, and how they go about it.

It's not a place to accumulate wealth. It certainly is a place to plan for your retirement in our kind of culture because you're probably not going to die before you get a chance to take care of yourself. We've got more healthcare challenges and so forth and so on.

This stuff should be cared for, but we need to be careful that we don't create a situation whereby missions are more interested in the support level than it is interested in the call and the task. And I would assume that, by and large, that's the case, but that would have to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. So we're dealing with descriptive material here, which is not prescriptive, but there are good leads to consider.

There were also variations. Paul was single, it seems. We don't know a lot about Paul.

He may have been married, and his wife may have left him, or she may have died. Jewish leaders, the norm was for them to be married, and so we just don't have all the information we'd like to have about Paul. Peter, we know, was married.

He took his wife around with him because people complained about it, and I've noted that here. Peter took a wife around as well. There was usually an entourage of people traveling with Paul, so there was a need for a support net at every location where they ministered.

That meant housing and food, and then, when they left, enough to get them to the next place—the third bullet point. There are numerous passages that give us insight into the travels of these workers.

Acts, Romans, Titus, the Gospel of John, Second Corinthians, even First Maccabees, which says the Romans gave them letters to the people in every place asking them to provide, that's what we've been talking about, for the envoys safe conduct to the land of Judah. So that was the nature of travel in the ancient world. That's how the ancient world operated.

Hospitality in Semitic settings was extremely important because that was part of their obligation. In fact, if you saw the movie, I can't even think of the name of it, but it was a true story about the seals and Navy seals who were killed in Afghanistan. One of them survived because of the laws of hospitality among the Arabs where this person ended up.

The village protected him, even losing some of their own lives and fighting their own Arab enemies to be able to keep their word of hospitality to this individual. So, ancient practices have even popped up from time to time in Asian parts of our world. First Corinthians 16.6, so that you may send me on my way.

That's a technical phrase that pops up in various places. It also occurs in Third John, one of my favorite little epistles, where Gaius sends John, the apostles, entourage on and away worthy of them. They needed that support, and you need to read that epistle over and over, as well as Second John.

Third, John's my favorite window into the early work of itinerant missions. After Paul's death, the apostle John managed the churches of Asia Minor. Early on, he lived in Ephesus, and he probably had the help of Timothy, who was from Ephesus.

Third, John provides a window into how itinerant work happened that day. Very fascinating. There's also in the Didache.

The Didache is a 2nd-century doctrine. It's about the 12, and it talks about how early church was done. There's a section in the Didache that talks about itinerant ministry, and that they only come for a brief time, and then they have to go on.

They don't settle in. If they stay too long, in fact, back then, I think it started two or three days; they weren't valid. They were false teachers because they were living off of the community.

So, it's a very interesting aspect to see how this world functioned in terms of itinerant teachers. In relation to his travel information, Paul also talks in verse 9 about the patronage system. This is one of the areas, as you'll remember, that... I said verse 9, but I want to... Yeah, verse 8. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost because a great door for effective work was opened for me, and there are many who oppose me.

And it comes up a little bit later down here in verse 15. I've got it early in my notes. The Roman patronage system also served the Christian mission, and we'll look at it in 16:15.

I'm not sure why I put it here, but we'll see that there. The next thing is Timothy's status. Timothy was the major, probably most prominent person with Paul.

There were a number of others, such as Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Titus, and Mark. There were a number of individuals who were part of Paul's entourage, and they're mentioned at the ends of lots of the epistles—Timothy in verses 10 and 11.

When Timothy comes, see to it... Now, here comes some other pieces of personal information. Way back in one of our first lectures, when we looked at that ancient letter, we saw some of this at the end of that very brief letter, but notice it here. Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear.

Why in the world would Paul say that? Well, for two reasons. One is the strong personality of Roman Corinth and the weak personality, perhaps, of Timothy, which is talked about by Paul in the pastoral epistles. Timothy was faithful.

Timothy worked hard, but Timothy does not seem to be what you would call a strong personality, and Paul, frankly, is protecting him. He says, see that he has nothing to

fear. It may relate to how intimidating Corinth could be, like 1 Corinthians 4 talks about, and in 2 Corinthians, or it could be Timothy's own personality.

A second part, let no one despise him. Timothy does not seem to have that personality of strength. 1 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 1 and 2. Talk about this.

So, Paul is protecting him. It must have been a little embarrassing, frankly, to Timothy to have that read publicly, but nonetheless, that's the case. No one, then, should treat him with contempt.

His youth was something that was not appreciated in the pastorals by some testimonies. No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way.

There's that phrase again in peace. Shalom, in a sense, means in every good way.

It's not just don't hit him on the door out, with the door out. So that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

This would be the entourage that we refer to. Send him on his way. So, there are lots of nuances in this language that have to do with the nature of itinerant ministry and the responsibility of churches to support those individuals.

That was their missionary project, if you please, as well as whatever overhead they had to care for and take care of their own people, widows, the poor, and those with various challenges. That community was all internal in terms of its own care. There was no social security system in the ancient world.

The social security system was the family. All the way back to Abraham, we see how that operated in the narratives. And the same thing is true in the first century.

Your family is your social security network. It made it very important. It also made the issues of firstborn, even up into the New Testament, important, particularly in a Semitic culture like in the Old Testament.

And so, the necessity of caring for that is extremely important. Apollos in 16:12. Now about our brother, Apollos.

Now listen to this and think. Think about it. I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers.

Now, strongly urged. It's not a wimpy sort of a statement. If Paul strongly urged you to do something, you ought to submit it.

Well, Apollos didn't. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he would go when he had the opportunity. I can't imagine myself saying to the Apostle Paul, look, Paul, I'm too busy with some of these other things right now.

When I get a chance, I'll go. Just be patient. Frankly, I don't think that's a whole lot of an exaggeration of the implications of that text.

Paul's just brutally honest. And they probably liked Apollos at Corinth because, what little we know about Apollos, he was a rhetorician. He was a person who could deliver a speech, and you'd sit there with your mouth hanging open.

And so, they may have requested his presence for a number of reasons. That could be some of the reasons he didn't want to go as well. We don't know.

Paul wanted him to go. He evidently pleaded with him to go, and Apollos said, no, I'm not going yet. He was obviously not part of Paul's managed entourage, but he was a freelancer, but in consort, and I'm sure with respect to Paul.

We do not know much about him, but he was his own man and approved by Paul as a worthy minister anyway. I like that. Paul could have somebody push back, and Paul still appreciated and respected them, though he didn't get his way.

Not many leaders can handle that. It is good to know that Paul didn't always get his way and that he could handle that issue of not getting his way. And so here we have the travel plans.

We've got the offering, and the travel plans are moving around. There are other details geographically that we didn't talk about right here that one could follow up on. You need yourself a good map.

You can get those off the internet or out of a good survey book sometimes. All right, let's move on then to the epistolary closing. Remember, every epistle has a formal opening.

Every epistle has a formal closing, and that's where we're coming to here now in verse 13. While it seems that it might have started earlier, it really starts in verse 13 because Paul even uses now concerning with Apollos, which connects back to 7.1. So maybe the Corinthians had pushed for Apollos's presence, and perhaps Paul is just letting them know, hey, I tried, but he wouldn't go live with it. Verse 13: Be on your guard.

Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong.

That is a very typical transition into the very closing statements of an epistle. The encouragement and the call, a general exhortation to be alert. Watch.

It's a verb used 21 times for future perspective and eschatological alertness, particularly in the gospels to watch and pray, for example. And so, it's not a word that they would not have, at least to some extent, caught the gist of. A watch means to be alert.

Be on your guard. Be ready. You are standing fast in the faith.

Be established in the faith. I was being courageous and strong. Provide boundaries to worldly practice.

Paul ends with that exhortation. Stand firm in the faith, not just stand firm. Paul had to tell them about the faith what the appropriate processes are, and what it means not to be worldly, not to seek elitism and status and so forth, but to be a biblical person.

And he adds in the faith, I think, to bring back all of the things that are being discussed as part of what it means to stand firm. Don't give up on the scriptures. Let the text be the text.

All right. Do everything. Be courageous and strong.

Do everything in love. A commendation in verses 15 and following. We have a commendation to honor Corinthian Christian workers.

By the way, verse 14 sort of echoes chapter 13, doesn't it? The so-called love chapter. And love is an activity. Remember, love is not just an emotion.

Love is an activity. Do everything in love. The community operates in the concept of love.

Love is the guardian of the community. It is the manager of the community and how it operates—verse 15.

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. I was glad when Stephanas Fortunatus and Achaias arrived because they had supplied what you were lacking.

This is not unusual either. In a lot of the closings, like Epaphroditus, for example, in Colossians, Paul had never been to Colossae, but Epaphroditus is the one Epaphrus,

who founded the church was one of the entourage of Paul established the church, and then he came and visited Paul. And Paul writes back about him and promotes him to that congregation.

So, the congregation sent people. When Paul was in prison, in that prison, it was sort of like house arrest, but it was in a facility. But you had to provide your own care.

You had to provide your food and so forth. Rome didn't take care of you. You had the privilege of someone coming in and bringing you something.

And the churches took care of Paul on a number of occasions. And we have, particularly in relation to Rome, some references to that. For they refreshed my spirit, and yours also.

Such men deserve recognition. What they did for me, they did for you. All right.

It's interesting, isn't it? Now, so we got the general exhortation to watch, to stand fast—a commendation to honor the Corinthian Christian workers. Paul commenced several of these workers who were valuable in ministry.

Stephanus's household probably was a household of patronage to the church. He's mentioned in the beginning of the epistle, as well as here. And Winter notes that patrons are usually motivated to foster honor for themselves by doing good.

They do good to get a return. In Paul's statement, Stephanus did the reverse. He gave the community the honor and improved their status rather than just his own.

And that's the kind of transition that Paul was looking for. And this individual had it. Paul's epistolary closing in his final greetings in verses 19 to 24.

The existing network of churches is the first thing that comes up here. The churches in the province of Asia. And if you can see the Mediterranean Sea down here, the Peloponnesus of Greece, and then you've got water, and then you've got the mainland Ephesus comes down to the seaside, as it were.

There was a river that filled with silt, and it filled up the river and sort of moved Ephesus back a bit. But in the early days, it was closer to the water as a trade port. And then out to the right, if you were looking at it, you've got the circle of the seven churches that you find in Paul, but it's John who manages those churches after the death of Paul at the end of the first century.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, you remember. Ephesus was where John operated out of. And we don't have a lot of information about whether John was there when Paul was there or whether John came later.

Did John stay in Jerusalem longer and then come over to Ephesus? That's probably very likely. Timothy also worked out of Ephesus. And it's not too imaginative to figure that after the death of Paul, Timothy was at Ephesus, and when John came, we have that team again, Apostle and Timothy.

At that time, Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The churches of Asia in 16:19 covers a pretty large spectrum. Ephesus, Colossae, Heropolis, there's a typo there, that Q should be an O. Heropolis, Laodicea, and probably the other churches mentioned in Revelation 1:11. Laodicea was part of that group, but it's the seven churches that John managed.

And it's interesting to me, just think about this, John managed the churches of chapters 1 to 3 of the book of Revelation. In the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks in some of these early statements. John receives it while he's on the Isle of Patmos.

And John knew those churches. They weren't unknown to him. Then, he gets these messages about each church.

That must have been a fascinating situation to hear God's analysis of what you've been managing. Probably trying to put them in the right direction but finding it difficult. Ephesus, which was such a great church, had lost its first love.

And it was a shadow of its former self and its commitment, evidently. So, there are a lot of fascinating things to think about in terms of these geographical references. It's also interesting that in the latter decades of the 1st century, as I already mentioned, the Apostle John was the overseer of the churches of Asia.

Read 3rd John particularly to see how that happened with his entourage. But read 2nd John where there's a patron of the church addressed, and a lady in fact. And see how that goes.

Aquila and Prisca. We're used to hearing the word Priscilla. But Prisca, they were known to the Roman church since they were prominent converts of Paul while he was in Corinth.

And Roman Corinth would have known them. Acts 18. They may have been patrons of the Corinthian church at one time.

Romans 16. They became part of Paul's entourage of ministry according to Romans 16 verses 3 and 4. So, these were two prominent people. This time Aquila is mentioned first.

They were teachers and promoters of the growth of the Christian church. They must have been merchants in Rome. They traveled around quite a bit.

We see them popping up here and there. And it was a very fluid world. And people who were entrepreneurs and merchants did travel.

Greeting one another with a holy kiss. Well, in their culture, they greeted each other with a kiss. Sort of like in Europe, as you've probably seen many times or practiced.

It was a common custom of greeting. Just like a handshake is a common custom in some cultures. A handshake can be polite or warm.

And the two people are the ones who make the difference. Even a hug with a handshake. In American culture, the kiss is never caught on very much.

Nonetheless, we greet one another with a holy kiss. A good handshake is its equivalent. You can see how descriptive and not prescriptive that is.

Paul's authenticating signature. This is an interesting piece of epistles, in chapter 16 and verse 21.

I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. The closing, or excuse me, this closing, illustrates the use of an amanuensis. An amanuensis was a professional writer.

And they were used quite a bit in the first century to produce documents. And it seems quite clear in several places that Paul used amanuensis. They may have been part of his entourage or they may have been a local professional.

We don't know. As a result of that common practice, Paul authenticated the letter by writing something at the end or at least giving his signature. There are a lot of proposals about why Paul just didn't write the whole thing himself.

He was certainly capable of doing that. One of the answers to that is when Paul was stoned on the road to Lystra, his eyes were damaged. As a result of he had trouble seeing, and there were some issues and that would have affected his writing.

There is the statement of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Some think that refers to whatever happened to him. When people stone you, they do not throw stones at your feet.

They throw them at your head. And more than likely, Paul was horribly scarred and perhaps even damaged in eyesight as a result of the stoning on the road to Lystra. We don't know.

That is one perhaps reconstruction of that. But we see Paul using amanuensis and then authenticating the letter with his signature or some final statement. In Galatians, he talks about seeing with what big letters I write.

And that could even refer to his eyesight. The third thing is Paul's serious anathema, and Maranatha in 1622. If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed.

Wow, that's like a glass of cold water thrown in your face. That seems pretty harsh, doesn't it? It is actually an imprecation. We have imprecatory psalms in the Old Testament where the writer weighs against another nation, person or situation calling upon that situation the judgment of God.

Well, this is not far off that base. It may not be as verbalized, but it is adequately clear that this is an imprecatory type of statement. If you don't love the Lord, you're cursed.

You are anathema. That goes back to the beginning of chapter 12 where anathema is brought up. The connection we may not be absolutely clear on, but nonetheless that's the term.

Come Lord, and that's the word maranatha. It's an Aramaic term that means come to Lord, and it's translated here rather than transliterated with the term Maranatha. The closing anathema, maranatha, is unique to 1 Corinthians.

You won't find this anywhere else in terms of the New Testament, although one could compare the opening to Galatians 1:8, and 9 where a curse is stated. Who has bewitched you, O foolish Galatians? There's no opening to that letter. The protocol is broken, which is a big, big statement in terms of the beginning of the book of Galatians.

An anathema constitutes a New Testament imprecation. Maranatha is an Aramaic term that was a common language in first-century Palestine. Fitzmeyer claims Paul prayed in Aramaic, possibly in correlation with Jesus' use of Aramaic in his earthly life.

Well, I'm not sure about what all that is. This is a pretty thin piece, just with one word that could have become a code word. But nonetheless, Jesus and the apostles were well-versed in Aramaic, Greek, and probably Hebrew.

And perhaps Paul also knew Latin, which was the language of Rome. Historical documents have evidence of these languages in Roman Palestine, as well as the use of Latin for official Roman business. We have military correspondence in first-century Palestine where the orders were sent out in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin so that there could be no confusion.

There will be somebody who could read one of those languages at the recipient's place. So, Paul's very serious. You know, this is not, he's not playing games here.

If you don't love the Lord, you're cursed. Come, Lord. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen. Paul states his love for the community.

Love in the Bible is dominant in the community—a concept of covenant loyalty. Love in the scriptures is not an emotive term as it is in many of our cultures.

Love is a commitment. If you love your husband or your wife, you're committed to them. Invariably, when people come into a pastor's office and they want a divorce, they say, we don't what? We don't love each other anymore.

And then I give them a lesson on love right at that point. Love doesn't have to do with how you feel. Love has to do with a commitment that's been made to persevere in a relationship.

Now, there's a lot of things to discuss. I'm not trivializing that discussion by being brief about it. But the fact is that love is more than an emotive statement.

I love you. I have your best being at heart. Love is the decision to do good, the greatest possible good toward the object love.

We talked about that back in chapter 13. And that's what Paul was saying. And the same negative is true back in verse 22.

If you don't love the Lord, that is, if you don't recognize the Lord for who he is and commit yourself to him, and therefore you live apart from that, then you're cursed. You don't know the grace of God. You have no place to go.

All right, so we're back to some themes that we have seen previously. It's interesting that 1 Corinthians is the only Pauline epistle where he speaks of his love for the recipients. Now, that doesn't mean he didn't love the others by any stretch.

But it is interesting that he uses it here at the end. Perhaps, given the nature of this epistle, it is particularly encouraging both to the early audience and to their relationship. Now, the fact that he uses love both negatively and positively is interesting as well.

If there are still those in Corinth who, because of their elitism and status, will not show covenant loyalty to the Lord, then they're cursed. So, Paul was drawing a line of

demarcation. He's not mincing terms, and he's calling for a serious, serious level of response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to his church. Well, that's 1 Corinthians. That's a synthesis of 1 Corinthians.

What a book. Much more you can do. And for you to gain convictions and control of understanding certain views that are serious within 1 Corinthians for your ministry, you have got to do the research on your own.

Even if you persevered in listening to me and using the notes legitimately, you still have to do your own reading and research because that's the process that's necessary for it to percolate into your entire being. And for you to have confidence and for you to be able to help others. It's not easy, but it is necessary.

And I trust that you will have the fortitude to plow forward in your own ministries in that manner. I would like to say, as we close out, congratulations for hanging in there if you've been with us through these 31 lectures. I'm sure it's not easy sitting in front of a computer screen listening to me.

I hope that my notes helped you to not be lost or bored as a result of the process. I hope I've stimulated you to further research. Agreeing with me is not the purpose of this course, but searching the scriptures is.

So, congratulations for doing that. While the hours and notes may seem like a lot, I'm painfully aware that we have only scratched the surface in proving a lot of our assertions. I've said a lot, but I've said a lot sometimes without having a lot of substantiation because you just can't do it in this kind of context.

But I've given you the resources because these are not my bright ideas. They're not my thinking alone, but they're well-founded within the literature on 1 Corinthians. I would appreciate it if you would review this series of videos.

I'd appreciate that. You have my email in the notes at the beginning of the lectures. And if you would send me an email of a review of the strengths and the weaknesses of what you experienced as you move through these.

There's not much I can fix with this present series, but I hope to do some others. I would like to do a series on knowing God's will. I've written a book on that, and I would like to put it into this sort of format.

I also have a serious series on the fruit of the spirit, which would probably take 10 to 15 hours. It'd be a short series to put out into this format. And there are other things as well.

But I would appreciate your feedback to help me, because communicating to this video's camera is not an easy thing to do. I try to do it, and imagine you sitting there, even though I can't get your immediate feedback. But I hope that we've been at least somewhat successful in keeping your attention.

So, God bless you. And I'm going to close this in prayer, as I mentioned earlier in our series, that I will not be doing a pro forma type prayer at the beginning of each. I pray for myself, you pray for yourself, and we get down to business.

But I would like to close this out with just a word of prayer. Our Holy Father, we thank you for your love for us. We thank You for not leaving us alone in this world, but You've given us Your word, which is a light and a lamp to our path.

You enlightened us in terms of your teaching. You give us the constructs that we need to deal with our world. You expect us to do so because we've been created in your image.

When we think and process your word, we glorify you as a result of that effort. And that you're pleased with that. And we thank you that we have the opportunity to please you in that regard.

We pray that our growth and understanding might not be the only thing that we achieve, but that our convictions might be deepened and our commitment might be more established. That we might stand firm, as the book of Corinthians encourages the Roman Corinth to do. That we might stand established and firm in our beliefs so that we can be good emissaries for you.

We pray that your word will spread throughout the world. We live in a very troubled world in these days, and we need the power of God meted out through the church of God to address the ills of our world. We need that individually.

We need that corporately. And we ask in Jesus' name that you would be pleased to achieve that until Jesus comes, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Blessings on you.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 33, 1 Corinthians 16, Paul's Response to the Question of the Collection for Jerusalem Saints and Closing Remarks.