16:1: *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye.*

Paul often used the expression "*now concerning*" to introduce a new subject (compare 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:12). "This phrase indicates that Paul replied to questions raised in a letter that the Corinthians had sent to him. They had asked him the proper procedures for **the collection for God's people** in Jerusalem" (Holman, 7:281) and "Paul now makes his reply" (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 756). "With the major moral and doctrinal issues behind him, Paul now turned to some final, personal concerns. This closing section certainly illustrates the human side of Biblical inspiration in that private desires and divine directives blend into the same expressions" (Gromacki, p. 199).

The Beacon Bible Commentary (8:474) noted how the "sudden shift in emphasis from the glory of the resurrection to the mere taking of a collection may seem abrupt. For him, however, taking an offering for the needs of the church was as much a part of the Christian fellowship as was the thrill of a coming resurrection. The instructions concerning the collection were directed to the needs of the church at that time, but they contain principles of giving that may well be applied to our day also."

The word translated "*collection*" (*logia*) is used only twice in the New Testament (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) and the ASV translates this term as "collection" both times. The KJV, however, does not do this (in verse 2 the KJV translates this word as "*gatherings*"). While the word *collection* is not common in the New Testament, it was frequently used by non-Biblical writers to describe religious collections for a god, temple, or some other religious cause. The CBL (GED, 4:68) said that outside the New Testament this term described "all kinds of contributions" and was sometimes used to describe "special tax levies, but it is used frequently of collections and levies made for religious purposes." The Church's Bible (p. 283) noted how Paul "calls the collecting of funds a **contribution**, and thereby immediately lightens the topic by the way he introduces it. Whenever a financial burden is borne by all, the demand on each individual becomes light."

The word "*order*" (*diatasso*) is also important. While this term is discussed in some detail at the end of the commentary on 7:17, here it may be defined as "demand" (Brown, 3:854) or "command." Paul used his authority as an apostle to tell the Corinthians, as well as "*churches of Galatia*" (these were located in the province of Asia Minor), to take up a collection for needy Christians in Jerusalem. This "order" was very direct (Paul told Christians about what was needed and then he asked for their help to meet this need). This example is a divinely authorized method for collecting needed funds today (leaders should explain what funds are

needed for and then ask Christians to meet the stated need(s).

We do not know how or when the *churches of Galatia* received the instructions described in this verse. We do know where these congregations were (Pisidia, Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra), and we do know they were among the first congregations established by Paul (for more information on these points see Acts 13:14-14:23). We also know that Paul sometimes made reference to other congregations to provide Christians with good examples. Here, when speaking to the Corinthians, Paul used the Galatians as an example. When writing to Christians who lived in Macedonia, Paul used the Corinthians as an example (2 Cor. 9:2). When Paul wrote to the Romans, he asked them to consider the Corinthians and the Macedonians as examples (Rom. 15:26). Today we still have and need to use the positive as well as the negative examples in the Bible. Some of these examples are found in the lives of individual Christians (compare verse 19) and other examples are found in various New Testament congregations, such as Corinth. For information on the word "*churches*" (*ekklesia*), see the commentary on 11:16, 18.

Paul described the poor Christians in Jerusalem as "*the saints*" (*hagios*) instead of something like "Those poor people" or "our destitute brethren." Although these Christians were poor, Paul treated them with dignity and respect. He demonstrated the "kindness" associated with agape love (1 Cor. 13:4) and this example encourages us to be as tactful and diplomatic as possible when we deal with those who are undergoing difficult times. Our speech should be "seasoned with salt" so we know "how to answer each one" (Col. 4:6).

9 New Testament words to describe the "great collection":

Barclay (First Corinthians, pp. 182-184) noted how Paul used at least "nine different words to describe this collection. (i) Here he calls it a *logia*. The word means *an extra collection*. A *logia* was something which was the opposite of a tax which a man had to pay; it was an extra piece of giving. A man never satisfied his Christian duty by discharging the obligations which he can legally be compelled to fulfill. The question of Jesus was, 'What do ye more than others?' (Matthew 5:47). (ii) Sometimes he calls it a *charis*. (1 Corinthians 16:3; 2 Corinthians 8:4). As we have already seen the characteristic of *charis* is that it describes *a free gift freely given*. The really lovely thing is not something which is extracted from a man, however large it may be, but something which is given in the overflowing love of a man's heart, however small it may be. We must note that Paul does not lay down a flat rate which each Corinthian Christian must give. He tells them that they must give as their prosperity demands. A sum which might be nothing to a wealthy man might represent a real

sacrifice to a poor man. A man's heart must tell him what to give. (iii) Sometimes he uses the word *koinonia* of this collection. (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Romans 15:6). *Koinonia* means *fellowship*, and the essence of fellowship is *sharing*. Christian fellowship is based on the spirit which cannot hug to itself that which it has, but which regards all its possessions as things to be shared with others. Its dominating question is not, 'What can I keep?' but, 'What can I give?' (iv) Sometimes he uses the word *diakonia* (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12, 13). *Diakonia* means practical Christian service. It is from its kindred word *diakonos* that we get our English word *deacon*. It may sometimes happen that the limitations of life prevent us from rendering personal service, and it may often happen that our money can go where we cannot go. (v) Once he uses the word *hadrotes*, whose meaning is *abundance*. (2 Corinthians 8:20). In that passage Paul speaks of the envoys of the Church who accompany him to guarantee that he does not misuse the *abundance* which is entrusted to him. Paul would never have desired an abundance for himself. He was content with what he could earn with the toil of his hands and the sweat of his brow. But he was glad in heart when he had abundance to give away. It is a grim commentary on the human nature that, when a man is dreaming of what he would do if he was a millionaire, he always begins by thinking what he would buy for himself, and seldom of what he would give away. (vi) Sometimes Paul uses the word *eulogia*, which in this case means *bounty*. (2 Corinthians 9:5). There is a kind of giving which is not a bounty. It is given as a bleak and unavoidable duty; it is given with a grudge and with no delight. In all true giving there is a bounty which is supremely glad to give. (vii). Sometimes he uses the word *leitourgia*. (2 Corinthians 9:12). In classical Greek this is a word with a noble history. In the great days of Athens there were generous citizens who volunteered out of their own pockets to shoulder the expenses of some enterprise on which the city was engaged. It might be to defray the expenses of training the chorus for some new drama or some team to compete for the honour of the city in the games; it might be to pay for the outfitting and manning of a trireme or man-of-war in the time of the city's peril. A *leitourgia* was originally a service of the state voluntarily accepted. Christian giving is something which should never be demanded from a man; it should be volunteered. It should be accepted as a privilege to help in some way the household of God. (viii) Once Paul speaks of this collection as *eleemosune*. (Acts 24:17). That is the Greek word for *alms*. So central was almsgiving to the Jewish idea of religion that the Jew could use the same word for *almsgiving* and *righteousness*."

"The Jew would have said, 'How can a man show that he is a good man except by being generous?' (ix) Lastly Paul uses the word *prosphora* of the collection. (Acts 24:17). The interesting thing about this is that

prosphora is the word for *an offering and a sacrifice*. In the realest sense that which is given to a man in need is a sacrifice to God. The best of all sacrifices to God, after the sacrifice of the penitent heart, is kindness shown to one of His children in trouble or in need" (ibid).

Introduction to 16:2, the "Sabbath day," and the "first day of the week":

The "Sabbath"	The "Lord's Day"
The Sabbath celebrated the finished work of creation (Ex. 20:10-11).	Sunday marks the finished work of the cross (Mk. 16:9).
It was a reminder of God's power.	It is a reminder of God's grace.
It was given to the physical nation of Israel (Neh. 9:13-14).	It is observed by "spiritual Israel" (the church), Rom. 2:28-29.
It was a day of rest (Ex. 20:8-11).	It is the designated day for worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).
Jesus was in the tomb on this day.	This was the day Jesus was raised from the dead (Mk. 16:9).
Jesus' resurrection, the start of the church (Acts 2), and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit never occurred on the Sabbath.	Jesus' resurrection, the start of the church (Acts 2), and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred on the "Lord's Day" (Sunday).
The Sabbath was a token of the Jews' deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 5:15).	Sunday reminds us that the Sabbath and the other parts of the Old Testament law were "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14-15).
The Sabbath commenced God's plan.	Sunday is part of God's final plan.
Attention is focused on Mount Sinai.	Attention is focused on Calvary.
The Sabbath is associated with Moses.	Sunday is associated with Jesus; it is the "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10).

As indicated in the preceding chart, God redeemed the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage and gave this nation the "Sabbath day," a "day of rest." Readers may also wish to compare Ex. 31:13-17; Deut. 5:12-15; Ezek. 20:10-12 as these references also confirm that the Sabbath was given to the nation of Israel instead of the whole world. Israel's "day of rest" (the Sabbath) foreshadowed the "rest" now found in Christianity (Mt. 11:28-29).

Before going to the cross Jesus said His death would result in a "new covenant" with mankind (Lk. 22:20) and He was right. Jesus died and God made a brand new agreement with the entire world (see Heb. 8:6-13 and this author's commentary on 1 Cor. 11:25b). Part of this new agreement (testament) involved doing away with the Sabbath and making Sunday, the first day of the week, the proper day to honor deity. Sunday was the day of the resurrection (Mk. 16:9), a day on which Jesus appeared to people (see Mk. 16:2, 9; Lk. 24:1-9; Mt. 28:1-9; Jn. 20:1-10), the day on which the church started (Acts 2:1—Pentecost came on Sunday), and the day on which Christians came together for worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

About 40 years after Paul authored the First Corinthian letter, John spoke of the "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Although John wrote the book of Revelation more than 4 decades after the church was established, he was able to say there was a "day" that belonged to Jesus and Christians understood what he meant. As noted in the commentary on 11:20b, Christians realized the *Lord's Day* was another way of describing Sunday ("the first day of the week"). The "Sabbath" (Saturday) was an integral part of the Old Testament, but the "first day of the week" (Sunday) is an integral part of the New Testament.

Some commentators have noted the apparent connection between the discussion of Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15), the fact that Jesus was raised on the first day of the week (Mk. 16:9), and Paul's reference to the "first day of the week" in 1 Cor. 16:2. Paul's telling the Corinthians to take up a "collection" (a religious act) on the *first day of the week* further solidifies the fact that Sunday (the first day of the week) is the proper day for Christians to come together and worship. Additional information about why Sunday is the appointed day of worship is found in the following paragraphs as well as the introductory commentary on 1 Cor. 10:16 and the commentary on 1 Cor. 11:20b.

Some believe man is still obligated to observe the Sabbath because God said the Sabbath day was a "perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:16). Those who make this argument conveniently overlook the fact that other things associated with the Old Testament law are also referred to as "perpetual," but people do not insist on doing these additional things. For instance, the Old Testament law said "*incense*" was to be perpetual (Ex. 30:8). There was also a "perpetual law" against eating some forms of "*fat*" (Lev. 3:17).

As noted in the commentary on 11:25b, the Old Testament law, which included the command to keep the Sabbath, has been permanently removed (readers may also wish to review Rom. 7:1-7; 10:4). Paul also spoke about this matter in Gal. 3; he said the Old Testament law was added "*till the seed should come*" (Gal. 3:19). The "seed" (Jesus) has now "come" (Gal. 3:16), so the Old Testament law and everything associated with it, even all the "perpetual" statutes, have been removed. The Sabbath, as well as the other things under the Old Testament law, was *perpetual* for as long as the Old Testament was in force. Since this law has now been "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14), Sunday is now the prescribed day of worship and people are to observe this day (the "first day of the week") on a *regular* basis (compare Heb. 10:25—some Christians were tempted to forsake the regular Sunday assemblies).

Some have asked if we can know if the day we regard as Sunday is really the *first day of the week*. The answer to this question is "yes." We know from the opening chapters in Genesis that a week has seven days. We also know that God gave the Hebrew people a new calendar to regulate the special days associated with their law (Ex. 12:1-2) after they left Egypt. While the Jews were not always faithful to God, they did accurately maintain their divine calendar (Jesus never challenged the Jewish understanding of when the Sabbath day was). First century Jews did not always use the Sabbath day in the right way, but they did know which day of the week the Sabbath was. Since Jesus endorsed the Jewish understanding of when the Sabbath occurred, and His endorsement was just over 2,000 years ago, and good records have been kept since that time, we can be sure about what day "Sunday" (the first day of the week) is.

There are people who regard Sunday as the "Christian Sabbath," but this idea is not found in the Bible. Sunday is now the divinely appointed day for worship and, as noted in the commentary on the next verse, Christians are to meet *every Sunday*.

16:2: *Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.*

As shown by the preceding information as well as the introductory commentary on 1 Cor. 10:16 and the commentary on 1 Cor. 11:20b, the "first day of the week" refers to the day we now call "Sunday." Since there are 7 days in a week and the 7th day is "Saturday," the "first day of the week" is Sunday. The Jewish people had the Sabbath (Saturday) as their special day, but all now live under a "new testament" and this new covenant has a new day to honor God (Sunday). Some calendars portray Monday as the first day of the week, but this reflects the first day of our *work week* or *school week*. The true *first day of the week* is Sunday

The beginning of this verse is translated "*Upon the first day of the week*" in the ASV and KJV. We also find this expression in Acts 20:7: "*And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread*." This cross-reference is useful because it illustrates that Christians were in the habit of meeting on Sunday. If Acts 20:7 said: "At evening Christians came together," this would imply a daily meeting. If this passage said: "On the 20th day of the month," this would imply a monthly meeting. If Acts 20:7 said: "During the quarter," this would imply a quarterly assembly. If Acts 20:7 said: "On the 7th day of the 8th month," this would imply a yearly meeting. Since Acts 20:7 says Christians met on the *first day of the week*, this is one more proof that Christians are supposed to meet on a weekly basis (every Sunday).

A regular Sunday meeting is also expressed in 1 Cor. 16. In fact, in 1 Cor. 16:2 there is a preposition in the Greek text ("*kata*") that has the sense of "every" (this is why the NASB, NIV, and RSV actually use the word "every"). Stated another way, the text could and should read "every first day of the week." Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 759) suggested this rendering: "Sunday by Sunday." The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (2:253), said "*on each* first day of the week/*on each Sunday*." Other passages that have this same preposition (*kata*) and use it in this same way (i.e. it has the sense of "every") include Lk. 8:1 (KJV); Lk. 8:4; Acts 8:3; 13:27; 15:21, 36; 17:17; 20:23; 22:19; Tit. 1:5; Rev. 22:2.

MacKnight (p. 208) noted how, *kata polin* signifies every city, *kata meena* signifies every month, and *kata ekklesian* signifies every church. Thus, the Greek text in 1 Cor 16:2 (*kata mian sabbatoon*) describes the *first day of every week*. The Corinthians as well as Christians in every other first century congregation (compare 4:17b) were to meet every Sunday. Readers may also wish to refer back to 14:26, a place where Paul used a present tense verb to describe the Corinthians' "coming together" (the Corinthians knew they were to be meeting on a regular basis).

When the first Christians came together on Sunday, they engaged in various acts of worship (this point is discussed in the commentary just prior to 12:1—see "*Some thoughts on worship*"). Here Paul had some additional things to say about the "*collection* for the saints" (verse 1). As noted in the commentary on verse 1, the word *collection* (*logia*) described a *formal* collection. Paul wanted each one to "*lay by him in store*" so "*no collections*" would need to be made when he arrived. Paul also said the collected funds were to be based on how Christians had "*prospered*" and these funds were to be collected from everyone ("*each one of you*," ASV and "*every one of you*," KJV).

The word *prosper* (*euodoomai*) is only found here, Rom. 1:10 and 3 Jn. 2 (in 3 Jn. 2 this term is used twice). Here the word *prosper* means "'as much as *he may prosper*' (not 'as much as he makes a profit')" (Exegetical

Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:81). Kittel (Abridged Edition, p. 673) said this term means "as much as possible" and it "is unlikely that there is reference to 'profit'; the idea of success is linked to saving, which each is to accomplish with genuine weekly sacrifice." If a billionaire gives $25 for his Sunday offering, he is not giving as he has prospered (people are to give based on what they have received). "On one Sunday he may be able to lay by more, on another Sunday less" (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 760). MacKnight (p.208) noted how Paul meant a Christian was "to separate, from the gains of the preceding week, such a sum as he could spare, and put it into the treasury." The KJV adds the word "*God*" ("*as God hath prospered him*"), but *God* is not in the original text.

Some believe the Corinthians were to habitually come together for worship, but they were supposed to keep their money at home (i.e. funds were "set aside" in a person's home instead of a church treasury). This explanation is possible, but if this is what Paul meant, why specify that funds be set aside on *the first day of the week*? Why not say "when you get paid?" Why did Paul specifically refer to setting aside funds on Sunday?

It seems more likely that these Christians were to *save their money at home* and then bring part of what was saved to the Sunday worship where it was kept until Paul arrived. This conclusion is partly based on four facts: (1) Paul spoke about a collection; (2) Christians were in the habit of meeting on Sundays; (3) Paul said the collection was to be given on Sundays; (4) This procedure would have allowed Paul to avoid any last minute collections when he came. Paul "wanted the money to be 'in hand' by the time he arrived" (Gromacki, p. 200). If the Corinthians were keeping their contributions at home, this would have led to the type of last minute collections Paul wanted to avoid.

The explanation in the preceding paragraph is reinforced with the words, *by him*. Though some have understood *by him* to mean Christians were to keep their contributions at home, the text does not say, "lay by at home." The text says, *lay by him* (himself). In other words, these Christians were to decide how much they planned to give *before they came to worship*. We decide what to give beforehand and then we *lay by in store* at worship (i.e. contributions are put into some type of treasury or account for future use).

The verb translated *lay* (*tithemi*) meant "put aside, store up, or deposit" and here this verb is expressed with the present tense and the imperative mood (this was an on-going command). The Corinthians had to realize that "Christian giving is not a hit-or-miss matter. Nor is it a once-and-for-all proposition. A Christian gives systematically and consistently" (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:475). The word translated *in store* (*thesaurizo*) is also expressed with the present tense. Jesus used this same term in Mt. 6:19-20 and Lk. 12:21 and Paul used this word in Rom. 2:5 to describe the

"treasuring up" of "wrath." Aside from these passages and 1 Cor. 16:2, the word translated *in store* is only found in 2 Cor. 12:14; Jas. 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:7. Here it means the "Corinthians were to 'save' their finances according to his instructions" (CBL, GED, 3:112).

Paul had already spoken about money earlier in this letter (see 1 Cor. 9:1-14), but here he spoke about giving from the standpoint of "the first day of the week" (the day on which Jesus was raised from the dead, Mk. 16:9). "The day itself was enough to move them to compassion" (The Church's Bible, p. 283). Paul was also gentle in that he did not require these Christians to provide all the needed funds at once. Christians could give as they had been blessed and avoid a "lump sum" contribution. Today this example is still important for us. People can bring funds week by week and these funds can be stored until they are needed for church related work.

Additional thoughts on Christian giving and the Sunday collection:

As noted in the discussion on 16:2, giving is not limited to the rich or middle class—each one is to take part in the "collection." *Each one* does not mean each person in a family is literally required to make an offering (there can be a "family contribution" from each family). Whether we are young, middle aged, retired, poor, or rich, we have a duty to give if "we have been prospered." If people have children or grandchildren, they may wish to encourage these children to also participate in this act of worship.

The giving described in 1 Cor. 16 was for a specific purpose ("the collection for the saints" in Jerusalem, verses 1, 3), but Bible authority for a general weekly collection is found earlier in this book. If preachers are going to be paid, and Paul said this is right (1 Cor. 9:14), how can this be done effectively if a local congregation is not taking up a weekly collection?

In these opening verses we see that God does not want people to be forced into giving; Christians are to give because they love God and His work. We also see that giving is to be **personal** (*each one of you*), **planned** (*the first day of the week*), and **proportional** (*as God has prospered us*). Giving may also be broken down into *when* (*on the first day of the week*), *who* (*let every one of you*), *what* (*lay be him in store*), *how much* (*as God as prospered us*), and *why* (*that no gatherings had to be made later*).

Unlike the Jewish people who were told to offer "tithes" and other offerings (see this topic discussed in this author's commentary on Rom. 13:6-7 and compare Mal. 3:10), Christians are to give based on what they have been "prospered" (1 Cor. 16:2). Some have tried to bind the practice of tithing (the giving of 10%) on Christians, but this is not right. As the Bible Knowledge commentary (p. 546) noted, "Paul never used the word

'tithe' when he discussed giving, even though he gave more attention to giving than any other New Testament writer." Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 760) observed, "Although Paul comes from Judaism, and the Corinthian church has its contingent of Jews, at no time does he propose the old Jewish system of tithing to the churches under his care. The only references to tithes found in the New Testament take us back into the Old Testament, Heb. 5:7-9, or criticize the Pharisees at Christ's time, Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12. This is quite decisive for us." When Christians give "as they have been prospered" (and they will do this if they truly love God, Mt. 22:37), local congregations can meet their needs plus engage in mission work outside their local area. Moreover, giving *as we have been prospered* eliminates the need for the "money making schemes" and "church fundraisers" found in many groups that profess to follow Christ.

Most know of at least one religious group that has engaged in carwashes, bake sales, thrift sales, calendar sales, pancake suppers, etc. to pay for repairs to their meeting place, fund a mission trip, etc. These practices are common, but they are also contrary to New Testament Christianity. As Willimington (p. 204) noted, a local congregation "is to be supported by its members, and not through bake sales, raffles, bingo parties and oyster stews!" Had we been with the first century church, we would have never heard of things like "camel rides," "auctioning off a scroll of Isaiah," or something else, in the name of the church, to raise money. In fact, 3 Jn. 7 specifically says, "taking nothing of the Gentiles" (Christians did not seek financial aid from non-Christians). If Christians do not believe in the church enough to fully fund their local needs, why should non-members be asked or expected to contribute anything?

In many congregations there are those who could be good givers but these Christians do not give as they have "been prospered" (verse 2). Some fail to give as they should because they have not been properly taught. If people are ignorant about New Testament giving, we need to teach them what the Bible says on this topic (compare Acts 17:30). Others are poor givers because they lack faith. People in this category may see verses like Lk. 6:38 ("*give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again*") and think: "That may work for some, but it will not work for me." Those who reason in this way need to know that God is not pleased with unbelief (Heb. 4:2, 11). Others fail to give as they have been prospered because they are covetous (filled with greed). These people need to hear that greed is in the same category as idolatry (Col. 3:5 and compare Mk. 10:17-22 and 1 Tim. 6:9-10). There are also those who fail to give as they should because they have a wrong attitude (see the story about Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 and compare the information about Judas in Jn. 12:3-6).

We have several Bible examples that can help Christians use their money in a good way and teach people how to be good givers. These examples include Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37), a Christian who is called a "*good man*" (Acts 11:24). There is also the example of a poor widow (Mk. 12:41-44), a woman who "cast in all she had." The first century saints in Jerusalem were liberal givers (Acts 2:44-45). David (2 Sam. 24:24) said he would not give an offering to God that "cost him nothing." The Hebrew people were taught to offer God the "firstfruits" of what they received (Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:10; Deut. 26:2). Jesus warned that we can be "faithful" or "unfaithful" with our resources (Lk. 16:10-11).

Warren Wiersbe (First Corinthians, p. 622) said the "trouble is, too many saints, as they earn more, involve themselves in more and more financial obligations; and then they do not have more to give to the Lord. Instead of finding a suitable 'level' and remaining there, they keep trying to 'go higher,' and their income is *spent* rather than *invested*." These observations are true and they are especially accurate for those in the United States. Christians in America could do a lot better in the area of giving and just a little more effort in this area would accomplish an unbelievable amount of good.

If there are 2 million New Testament Christians in the United States who give a weekly offering, and each contributor increased his contribution by just $2.00 per week, the churches in America would have an extra 4 million dollars per week to spend on good works such as missions. If this were done for a whole year, an extra two hundred and eight million dollars would be raised. If our giving was increased to a sacrificial level, the extra contributions could easily exceed a billion dollars a year. God directs us to give "bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6), with "purpose" (intent—2 Cor. 9:7), without a "grudging" attitude (2 Cor. 9:7), without a feeling of "compulsion" (2 Cor. 9:7), and "cheerfully" (2 Cor. 9:7).

God has not told Christians exactly how much to give, but we can consider what our lives would be like if God gave us 10-15 times what we contribute to His work on an average Sunday. Stated another way, would we be satisfied with our income if it was 10-15 times our contribution? If God multiplied our contribution by 15, a $1 contribution would mean we receive back $15. A $20 contribution would mean we receive back $300. A $50 contribution would mean we receive back $750. A $100 contribution would mean we receive back $1,500.

Christian giving starts in the heart and sometimes it is also stopped or hindered by the heart. There have been cases where Christians "withheld" their weekly contribution because they disagreed with a decision that was made or because they disagreed with a fellow Christian at their place of worship. When people try to use money to force or manipulate others into

doing what they want, they "rob God" (Mal. 3:8), they act in a childish way, and they give Satan a foothold in their local congregation. Unless a congregation is involved with false doctrine, or there is financial mismanagement (funds are being stolen or misdirected), a Christian's obligation is set forth by the principle in 1 Cor. 16:1-2: Christians give on a weekly basis to help meet the needs associated with their local congregation.

A church treasury, "special contributions," and "the proper use of church funds":

Some have asked if a *church treasury* is a Biblical concept and the answer to this question is *yes*. What we read about in 1 Cor. 16:1-2 is not a "church treasury" in the modern sense, but we do find our concept of a "church treasury" in the Scriptures. Jesus and the apostles had something like a treasury (Jn. 12:5-6; 13:29). A church treasury is also suggested by Acts 4:34-35 and 1 Tim. 5:9 (the "enrolled" widows would have received their support from something like a modern church treasury).

Christians have also asked about "special collections." Does the Bible ever refer to special contributions? If it does, is it right to take up a "special contribution" on a day other than Sunday, the "first day of the week"?

The information in 1 Cor. 16 is an example of a "special collection" (this contribution was for the "saints" who needed financial assistance in Jerusalem, verses 1, 3). In this case the "special collection" was taken up on *multiple Sundays*. There also seems to have been some "special collections" soon after the church was established (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37), but there are not enough details about these collections to draw any firm conclusions. A third passage related to this topic is found in Gal. 6. Since Paul said Christians are to help people as "opportunity" arises (Gal. 6:10), and there are often opportunities on days other than Sunday, it would not be wrong to take up a "special collection" on a day other than Sunday if such is necessary.

The final point involves the proper use of treasury funds. Some have understood 1 Cor. 16:1 to mean that "for the saints" in verse 1 means "for the saints *only*" (i.e. treasury funds cannot be used to help non-Christians). This belief is somewhat odd because Paul did not say "saints *only*." If we are justified in adding the word *only* in 1 Cor. 16:1, why not add it when Paul speaks about faith in places like Rom. 5:1? Too, in Gal. 6:10 Paul spoke about helping "all men" (Paul specifically mentioned Christians—the "household of faith." He also made reference to everyone else—the unsaved).

Being concerned about the proper use of church funds is good and

right, but the information in 1 Cor. 16 is not a treatise on how to use church money. A passage that does offer a useful principle for spending treasury funds is Rom. 13:7 ("Render to all their dues"). If a church (a congregation of people) owns property, they will have utility bills and the principle in Rom. 13:7 says these bills must be paid. The church may also spend money on the poor (Gal. 2:10) and the work of evangelism (Mt. 28:19). It is also right to pay preachers (1 Cor. 9:14) and even elders (1 Tim. 5:17, "double honor"). Older preachers tried to summarize the work of the church with three categories (edification, evangelism and benevolence) and this is a pretty good overview of how church funds are to be spent. Contributed funds should help maintain and promote the work of a congregation in its local area as well as help take the gospel throughout the world.

16:3: *And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem*:

Paul was not hesitant about telling the Corinthians they needed to be collecting funds (verses 1-2) for needy Christians in Jerusalem (verse 3), but he did not give any "orders" (verse 1) about who should actually accompany this contribution to Jerusalem. He said the Corinthians could decide this matter for themselves ("*whomsoever ye shall approve*"). The word "*approved*" (*dokimazo*) is also used in 11:28; there Paul said each Christian should "examine" himself when it was time to take the Lord's Supper. Here *approved* means "Reputable, honest, trusted individuals were to be picked by the Corinthians to carry these funds to the Jerusalem church" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 485). Outside the New Testament the word *approved* was "used to indicate a government approved doctor" (Rienecker and Rogers, p. 446). Paul surely knew that if he tried to take the collected money to Jerusalem, or if he tried to tell the Corinthians who should do this task, people could have accused him of wrongdoing.

Paul did not believe he needed to be part of the delegation "approved" by the Corinthians, but he did want "*letters*" to accompany the contribution. The ASV expresses the thought quite well with this translation: "*whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters*." Bengel (2:270) said the "contributors choose the carriers; but Paul, the author of the collection, sends them *with letters*."

The Corinthians seem to have known what these letters were, but we do not have this information. Some think these documents were designed to explain the contribution to the Christians in Jerusalem. Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 762) suggested these letters were intended for Paul's friends "in other congregations which lie on the route to Jerusalem; and these would be written in order that the committee may secure safe lodging

and be assisted on its way." Whatever these documents were, they have not been preserved for us and this implies we do not need them as part of the completed Scriptures. The Bible never says we have every letter written by the apostles. It does, however, say we possess "*the faith*" (Jude 3) and this is all we need (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

This verse also shows us that Paul was very careful when dealing with church funds and modern Christians should also behave in this same way (any person who is even remotely associated with church money should use great caution). It is rarely if ever wise for preachers to have access to church money without prior authorization and this includes accepting a reimbursement without proper documentation. Congregations should use at least two men who are "above reproach" to help count and spend collected funds. Careful financial records should be maintained, the money should be kept in a secure place such as a bank account, financial statements should be prepared and made available, and accusations of financial wrongdoing should not be made without credible proof.

**16:4:** *and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me.*

Some think this verse means: "If the collection is large enough to justify me, an apostle, to be present, I will go." This explanation is possible, but this interpretation portrays Paul as arrogant and proud, qualities he denounced in 1 Cor. 13. It seems more likely that Paul meant: "I will go along with the group that takes the collection to Jerusalem if the circumstances necessitate it." Paul was willing to go to Jerusalem and accompany the "collection for the saints" (verse 1), but he did not feel it was absolutely necessary for him to make this journey or be personally involved in delivering these funds. If he did not go, he would send letters (verse 3) with those who did. If he did go, he would have probably helped introduce the delegation to the proper people in Jerusalem. If Acts 20:4 describes the men who took the collected funds to Jerusalem, Paul did *not* go to Jerusalem with the collected funds.

16:5-9: *But I will come unto you, when I shall have passed through Macedonia; for I pass through Macedonia; 6 but with you it may be that I shall abide, or even winter, that ye may set me forward on my journey whithersoever I go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now by the way; for I hope to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; 9 for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*

Some of Paul's opponents (compare 4:18) did not believe he would

return to Corinth so Paul wanted the Corinthians to know his future plans. Paul said he intended to visit Corinth after he had passed through Macedonia (verse 5). "*Macedonia*" (*makedonia*) was a Roman province north of Greece (it bordered the Adriatic and Aegean Seas). Paul had previously visited this province while on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:9f).

Paul was at Ephesus when he wrote this letter (verse 8); it seems members of Chloe's household brought him a "firsthand report of the divisions within the assembly (1 Cor. 1:11). They were followed by three members of the Corinthian church (Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus) who brought Paul a financial gift (16:17). Perhaps they also carried to Paul a letter from the church in which questions were asked about various doctrinal and moral issues (7:1). Thus, through personal conversations with Apollos, the Chloe household, and the three church emissaries, plus the content of the letter, Paul learned about the troubled state of the Corinthian church. Unable to leave Ephesus at that time (16:3-9), Paul did the next best thing; he wrote this letter to resolve the many problems. It was probably written near the end of his ministry at Ephesus, for he states that he had already made plans for leaving the province of Asia (16:5-7). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that it was composed during the fall or winter of A.D. 55, because he said that he would stay at Ephesus until Pentecost (16:8)" (Gromacki, p. xiv). The following map may help readers visualize Paul's travel plans.
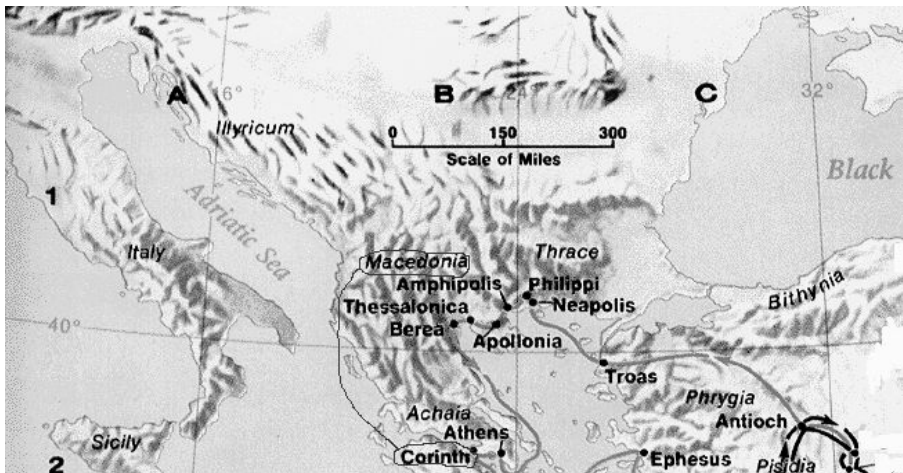
If Paul's plans went as he intended (he would visit the province of Macedonia, verse 5, and then visit Corinth), he would be able to "abide" with the Corinthians for a while and possibly spend the "winter" with them, verse 6. Paul had some definite hopes, but his future plans were not absolutely certain.

The itinerary described in verses 5-6 would have allowed Paul to visit congregations in Macedonia (i.e. churches such as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) during the summer months and collect their "funds for the suffering saints" in Jerusalem (16:21, 3). Then he could come to Corinth and stay for a while, perhaps the entire winter (verse 6). Verse 7 specifically says Paul did not want to see the Corinthians "*by the way*" (in passing). He wanted to "*tarry a while*" (7b) at Corinth, if the "*Lord*" permitted. The CBL (First Corinthians, p. 487) noted how "Paul was above all a servant, and he went where his Master, the Lord, directed."

The proposed itinerary in this chapter is different from the one found in 2 Cor. 1:15-16. In the Second Corinthian letter Paul said he first planned to visit Corinth, then go to Macedonia, and then return to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:15-16). Since the plan here in 1 Cor. 16 describes only one trip to Corinth (Paul hoped to leave Ephesus, enter into Macedonia and then go to Corinth for the winter months [November—February]), some of the Corinthians said Paul was fickle (2 Cor. 1:17). Paul answered this charge in the Second Corinthian letter; he told the Corinthians he was not fickle or indifferent to their needs.

Since the New Testament describes two separate itineraries, which one did Paul use? This question is answered in Acts 20:1-3 (Paul used the one described here in 1 Cor. 16). Since the Corinthians had so many problems, it seems Paul hoped that the plan described here would give these Christians some extra time to correct some of their problems before his visit (compare 2 Cor. 1:23).

Paul based his desires on God's will ("*if the Lord permit*," 7b) and this should be our attitude as we go through life. We may have many ideas, hopes and plans, but our attitude should always be: "If this is the Lord's will." A Christian might actually say, "If the Lord wills" (compare Acts 18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19), but *if the Lord wills* is really an internal attitude instead of a spoken phrase.

When Paul came to Corinth he wanted the Corinthians to "*set*" him "*forward*" on his "*journey*" (verse 6). Some authors believe this means Paul expected the Corinthians to fully or partially fund his trip or give him the things he needed. These explanations are possible because the word translated "may set me forward" (*propempo*) has several nuances, including "to send someone with provisions." Paul may have meant the Corinthians were to fund his trip, but this author prefers to think he was asking the Corinthians to accompany him for a little ways as he departed

(see Acts 15:3; 17:15; Rom. 15:24 where *may set me forward* has this meaning). The Corinthians may have provided some supplies for Paul, but this was surely a voluntary act (compare 1 Cor. 9:15).

Verse 9 provides another reason for Paul delaying his trip to Corinth: The gospel was spreading rapidly in Ephesus. Paul had an "open door" in the area where he was (people were very receptive to the truth) and he wanted to continue to use this great opportunity. The word "*door*" (*thura*) is a metonymy for *opportunity* (compare Acts 14:27; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). Since "God opens doors of faith for the apostolic message to be delivered (Colossians 4:3; Acts 14:27)" (CBL, GED, 3:130), it "is a wise man's part to watch opportunities" (Bengel, 2:271).

Paul not only saw an opportunity, he saw a *continuing* opportunity (the verb "opened" in verse 9 is expressed with the perfect tense). This tense tells us this "door" had been opened in the past and it was staying open. Paul also said this opportunity was "*great*" (*megas*); this greatness is seen in the fact that Paul stayed at Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31), his longest recorded stay in any single place. The word "*effectual*" in verse 9 (*energes*) is an adjective that is "used almost exclusively for the work of divine or demonic powers. In 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul implied that it is God who ultimately makes the work effectual; He was opening a 'great and *effectual*' door of ministry" (CBL, GED, 2:437). For more information about Paul's work at Ephesus see Acts 19:1-20.

Although Paul was having great success at Ephesus, he also had "*many adversaries*" (compare Acts 19:21-40; 2 Cor. 1:8-10). *Adversaries* (*antikeimai*) is a present tense verb that occurs 8 times in the New Testament. In Gal. 5:17 this word is translated "*contrary*." Here Paul implied that he wanted to stay and *refute* his adversaries (he was not someone who ran at the first sign of trouble).

Some pay little attention to Paul's travel plans and missionary journeys because they think this information has little to no value for their lives. Studying Paul's plans and journeys can be very profitable. Gromacki (202) noted how "On the second missionary journey God had forbidden Paul to preach in Asia (Acts 16:6), but on the third journey God had opened the closed door (Rev. 3:7-8). Paul knew that his responsibility was to go through opened doors, not to fret about closed doors. He also knew that it was God who did the opening and the closing (II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3)." This information reminds us that God still sometimes *closes doors* in our lives and we need to accept these times. We must also remember that *closed doors* are sometimes opened; if this happens, we should also act accordingly.

16:10-11: *Now if Timothy come, see that he be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do: 11 let no man therefore*

despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come unto me: for I expect him with the brethren.

Paul realized that he would not be making an immediate trip to Corinth (verses 8-9), but others could. Christians such as "*Timothy*" (compare Acts 19:21-22) could come to Corinth. Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 767) said, "Timothy was already on his way, but via Macedonia, so that he would stop at the various churches along his route, which would delay his arrival at Corinth for some time. The letter which Paul is writing will be taken to Corinth by the direct sea route, and Paul expects it to reach Corinth before Timothy's arrival. All that Paul has heard about Corinth after he had sent Timothy away makes him anxious regarding the reception which his messenger will receive." There was no guarantee that Timothy would come ("*if*"), but if this young man did visit the Corinthian congregation, these Christians were to treat him well (10b-11).

Most agree that Timothy "is shown as timid (2 Timothy 1:7) and liable to be discounted (1 Corinthians 16:10ff.) because of his youth (1 Timothy 4:12). He was frequently ill (1 Timothy 5:23)" (CBL, GED, 6:294). If Timothy came to Corinth and tried to help set things in order (1 Cor. 4:17), he may have been shocked and very discouraged by what he found. Thus, Paul said Timothy was to be "*without fear*" if he came to Corinth.

Without fear (*aphobos*) occurs only four times in the New Testament: Here; Lk. 1:74; Phil. 1:14; Jude 12. With the exception of Jude 12 where this term means "without reverence" or "shamelessly," *without fear* means "fearlessly." The Beacon Bible Commentary (8:479) noted how the instructions in verse 10 "were designed as much to protect Corinth from wrongdoing as to save Timothy from hurt." Timothy deserved the love, respect and support of the Corinthians because he "*worked*" (present tense) the "*work of the Lord*." He was engaged in the same type of work as Paul ("*as I do*").

It was so important to treat Timothy well that Paul repeated this point in verse 11. Paul specifically said it was wrong for anyone at Corinth to look down on this young evangelist ("*let no man therefore despise him*"). The word *despise* (*exoutheneo*) meant "to think absolutely nothing about a person. Paul knew that the carnal Corinthians could take advantage of Timothy's youthful sincerity, deep humility, and lack of experience" (Gromacki, p. 202). The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (2:9) defined *despise* as "have a low opinion of, scorn, reject contemptuously." Other passages use the word *despise* to describe Jesus (Mk. 9:12; Lk. 23:11); fellow Christians (Rom. 14:3, 10); and the gift of prophecy (1 Thess. 5:20). The Corinthians should have realized that trying to "freeze out, snub or disdain a messenger of the Lord is carnal and unchristian. The Corinthians were to accept Timothy as having full authority from God to

do the work of an evangelist" (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:479).

The end of verse 11 says Paul eventually wanted Timothy to return to him and the Corinthians should set him "*forward on his journey*" (this expression is discussed in the commentary on verses 5-9) and they should do this in "*peace*." The reference to "*brethren*" apparently includes Erastus (Acts 19:22).

16:12: *But as touching Apollos the brother, I besought him much to come unto you with the brethren: and it was not all (his) will to come now; but he will come when he shall have opportunity.*

The words *as touching* "come from the same connective (*peri de*) used to point out the various questions submitted in the church's letter to Paul. Apparently, the church asked about Apollos and his next visit to their city. Maybe they wanted him to come to cope with their ecclesiastical problems. In any case, Paul respected Apollos and regarded him as a genuine brother, not as a threat to his ministry (cf. 3:4)" (Gromacki, p. 203). The Beacon Bible Commentary (8:480) noted how Paul "was well aware of the dissensions in Corinth centering around himself and Apollos. The apostle wanted to show the Corinthians that there was perfect fellowship between the two of them. The quarreling factions at Corinth had not been able to drive a wedge between these evangelists" (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:480).

Apollos had previously worked at Corinth as well as Ephesus (Acts 18:24-19:1) and Paul wanted him to return to Corinth ("*I besought him much to come unto you with the brethren*"). In fact, the "aorist 'I urged him' makes the impression that Paul did this at once after receiving the letter from Corinth, and also that at the moment of Paul's writing" (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 771). Paul made a strong appeal for Apollos to go to Corinth, but this Christian did not want to make this trip. We are not given a reason for Apollos' refusal, but some believe he was concerned over people using his name to divide the church (1:10-13; 3:3-6).

The reference to "*the brethren*" in this verse as well as verse 11 is somewhat vague. Verse 11 describes Timothy ("*he*") and others, perhaps the same people described in 2 Cor. 2:12-13. Paul was apparently hoping to meet Titus, Timothy and perhaps others who had gone or were on the way to Corinth. The word *brethren* in verse 12 refers to a different group of people, perhaps those who took this letter to Corinth.

Paul had confidence that Apollos would come to Corinth when there was an "*opportunity*" (*eukaireo*). Spicq (2:118) said *opportunity* may mean "he will go [to see you] when he has time" or "when he finds either the occasion or the opportunity." It is also possible that this "opportunity"

would come when many of the problems, including the division, had been eliminated or at least significantly reduced.

There are some simple but valuable lessons in verse 12. The Corinthians seemed to view Paul and Apollos as rivals (see 3:4), but Paul did not see Apollos in this way. Paul and Apollos were coworkers so Paul did not hesitate to think about asking him to go to Corinth. Today some Christians, and this includes preachers, try to compete with one another. This type of activity is wrong. Verse 12 also provides some insight on how to handle disagreements that do not involve doctrine. Paul had a "democratic attitude in matters of procedure. He had no criticism of Apollos for not coming to Corinth immediately. He gave in to the desires of his co-worker, stating that Apollos would visit them when it was **convenient** for him to go. Paul was more concerned with fostering Christian fellowship than with forcing his will on a fellow evangelist, or with criticizing Apollos for not following his recommendations" (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:480).

Verses 13-24 form the conclusion to this letter. Here we find a list of exhortations, references to specific people, and personal greetings.

16:13-14: *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14 Let all that ye do be done in love*.

There are five exhortations in these two verses and the first four of them are based on first century military imagery. Just as soldiers were involved with "watching," so the Corinthians were told to "*watch*" (*gregoreo*). Jesus associated this word with His second coming (Mt. 24:42). He also used this same term to describe the "watching" people would do if they knew a thief was coming (Mt. 24:43). Paul told the elders at Ephesus to "watch" (same word, Acts 20:31). Peter used this term to say *watchful* vigilance is necessary because Satan is a very dangerous adversary (1 Pet. 5:8). The Beacon Bible Commentary (8:480) defined *watch* as "keep awake, do not go to sleep, do not take a vacation from the work of the Lord. Paul was not speaking against taking time to rest and relax one's body and mind. Rather, the idea is that a person can never let down, or turn aside even briefly from the holy calling of the Christian life." Deceivers and false teachers have always been a constant threat to Christians, so we are to watch "against enemies or hostile influences" (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 773). The importance and seriousness of this command are seen in the fact that Paul used the present tense and imperative mood (i.e. this is an on-going command).

In addition to always being watchful, the Corinthians were to "*stand fast in the faith*." The word *stand* (*steko*), which is also a present tense verb, tells us that Christians must avoid alternating between belief and

unbelief, morality and immorality, faithfulness and faithlessness (compare Jas. 1:6-8). Kittel (7:637) said, "In his life a man may either stand or he may have no stability, i.e., he may fall or be pushed aside or change his position." Moreover, "This standing does not result from secular securities such as health, power, property, or connections" (ibid). Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 773) wisely added that this does not mean we are "like a dead post that has been driven into the ground, but as a living tree that fixes its roots ever deeper into the ground. The connotation is growth and increasing firmness. Its opposite is to depart from or to fall away from the faith, I Tim. 4:1, 'forsaking the right way,' II Pet. 2:15; compare Demas II Tim. 4:10." Just as faithful soldiers obey their orders and maintain their position, even during the heat of battle, so Christians are to *stand fast in the faith* (compare 15:58).

The "phrase 'in the faith' is compact and includes both the faith which we believe (objective, doctrine, *fides quae creditur*) and the faith by which we believe (subjective, confidence, *fides qua creditur*)" (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 774). Our objective faith, as explained in the commentary on 13:8-13, is found in the completed Scriptures (the New Testament provides people with a specific pattern to follow). If we fail to stand (abide) in the faith God has given, we will not be saved (2 Jn. 9).

The third quality is expressed as "*quit you like men*" in the ASV and KJV. This expression comes from a verb (*andrizomai*) that occurs only here in the New Testament. Brown (2:562) defined this word as "behave in a manly way." Just as soldiers need to be courageous and brave, such is also true of Christians. God's people need to do what is right, even if others do not approve. This quality means Christians refuse to flinch, even if people try to intimidate them (1 Pet. 3:14b). Christians can live in this manner because they have "sanctified Christ as Lord" (i.e. Jesus reigns supreme in the hearts, 1 Pet. 3:15). Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 774) noted how the Greek text means "'Be men constantly!' or: 'Show yourselves men always!' Paul refers to the virtue of Christian manliness with its strong connotation of bravery and unflinching courage, but it is used here in connection with maintaining the faith. The opposite is to be cowardly, fainthearted like women, timid like children, Eph. 4:13, 14." The CBL (First Corinthians, p. 491) noted how the Corinthians had failed in this area "because of their entanglement with heathen society and influence. The fight over sin and opposition of every sort is not one for children; it is for men."

The fourth quality is translated as "*strong*" in the ASV and KJV. This term (*krataioo*) is also a present tense verb and it occurs only here; Lk. 1:80; 2:40; Eph. 3:16 ("strengthened"). This word means Christians need to "*grow strong*" (Gingrich and Danker (p. 448). Brown (3:718) said this term "clearly refers to manly strength in 1 Cor. 16:13, which is a quotation

(cf. Ps. 31:24; 2 Sam. 10:12)." The word *strong* was a way of telling the Corinthians they needed to conquer whatever hindrances stood in their way. Just as Paul had some "adversaries" (verse 9) and he had to be *strong*, such was also true for these saints. Today there may still be cases where we may not feel strong or we may not be strong enough by ourselves so we need to seek help from others (compare Gal. 6:2). Satan and his helpers want Christians to be weak, but God wants us to be *strong* and He has given us all the necessary tools to accomplish this (Eph. 6:10-18).

The militaristic traits in verse 13 are necessary, but these qualities plus all the other things involved with Christianity must "*be done in love*." The word *love* is "*agape*," a word defined in the commentary on 13:1b. Since Paul commanded that *all things* "be done" (a present tense imperative mood verb—an on-going command) in love, love must govern all our actions. If the Corinthians had practiced agape love, they would not have said, "*I belong to Paul*" or "*I belong to Apollos*" (1 Cor. 1:12). Neither would they have been involved with sexual sin (1 Cor. 5:1), lawsuits (1 Cor. 6:1), disregarded "weak" Christians (1 Cor. 8:11), allowed congregational division (1 Cor. 1:10), or had problems with spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12; 14). Since so many of the Corinthians' problems stemmed from a lack of love, Paul said, *let all that ye do be done in love*.

In love means this is "the realm and atmosphere within which the Christian thinks, moves, and lives. It is the fountain out of which all proper action flows (1 Peter 4:8)" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 491). Too often people say they have love, or their lives are based on love, but their actions deny these claims. For instance, many claim to "love the church," but they do little to support it. People claim to love God, but they are lax about coming to or participating in worship. People also claim they love the idea of having heaven as their home, but their lives indicate they are in love with this world.

A final point is found in the fact that Paul spoke of "standing fast in the faith" (verse 13) before speaking about "love" (verse 14). Perhaps Paul did this because true love is always joined with truth (1 Cor. 13:6). Today many speak about love but they have little regard for doctrine; this idea is contrary to true Christianity. True Christians know that people cannot have true love unless they first have the right doctrine. Just as we cannot have true "godliness" without the right doctrine (1 Tim. 6:3), so we cannot have true "love" without the right doctrine (faith).

16:15-18: *Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints), 16 that ye also be in subjection unto such, and to every one that helpeth in the work and laboreth. 17 And I rejoice at the*

coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they supplied. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours: acknowledge ye therefore them that are such.

"*Stephanas*" and his "*house*" are also mentioned in 1:16 (he was one of the few people baptized by Paul). Here *Stephanas* and his household are described as the "*firstfruits of Achaia*" (i.e. this man and his household were among the first people converted in Achaia). Since Paul had preached in Athens before going to Corinth (Acts 18:1), it is likely that Stephanas was converted in Athens.

In 1 Cor. 3:12 Paul said some converts are like "gold, silver and costly stones" (i.e. some converts turn out to be dedicated Christians). Stephanas and his household were like gold, silver and costly stones; they were Christians who were truly seeking the kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33). Paul said this man and his household "*set*" (*addicted,* KJV) "*themselves*" to "*minister unto the saints*." Rienecker and Rogers (p. 448) said these Christians "had appointed themselves to the service of their fellow Christians. It was a self-imposed duty." We do not have specific information about the works of *Stephanas* and his family, but Paul's description leaves no doubt that these brethren were fully committed to Christ. These Christians saw things that needed to be done and they got busy (compare Mt. 23:11). The word *ministry* has the sense of "service" instead of the modern idea of "preacher."

Holman (7:287) noted how the word "*firstfruits* derives from the ceremonies of the Old Testament in which the first portion of a harvest was given to God as a representation of the entire harvest to follow (Deut. 26:1-11). Paul used this metaphor to indicate that not only Stephanas and his household were the first converts, but also that they were organically united with all who were converted after them."

The word translated "*subjection*" (*hupotasso*) in verse 16 (the KJV says "*submit*") is a present tense verb. Paul also used this term in Eph. 5:22 to describe a wife's *submission* to her husband. Other places that have this word include Rom. 13:1 and Jas. 4:7. It seems the Corinthians were hesitant to *submit* to each other, even during times of worship (compare 14:27-31). Because there was some hesitation in this area, Paul asked "for willing submission to the direction of those willing and able to lead in profitable and excellent work. Such extensive work and sacrifice deserves respect in the Church as a whole. Paul included in this sweeping statement not only the house of Stephanas, but also all who helped and labored in the church" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 491).

The word "*labor*" (*kopiao*) in verse 16 is a present tense verb (Paul also used this term in 4:12 and 15:10). Since this word described the kind of work that left people feeling weary (here this term means "work to the

point of exhaustion," Rienecker and Rogers, p. 448), God warns us that some "church work" is tiresome. Finding people who really want to work in God's kingdom is usually difficult, but finding people who are willing to truly "labor" is especially hard. When we find people who want to labor for the Lord, we should "submit" to them (i.e. we should cooperate with them and help them in every possible way).

Paul said he "*rejoiced*" (present tense) at the "*coming*" (*parousia*) of *Stephanas*, *Achaicus* and *Fortunatus* (verse 17). In some places (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:28) the word translated *coming* refers to Jesus' next and final coming. Barclay (New Testament Words, p. 22) said this term was a "technical word" in "Hellenistic Greek" for "the arrival of an emperor, a king, a governor or famous person." Here this word may indicate *Stephanas*, *Achaicus* and *Fortunatus* were part of an official delegation from the Corinthian congregation.

Some think these three men brought a letter from the Corinthian congregation (compare 7:1) and they returned to Corinth with Paul's reply, the letter we call First Corinthians. If these men came to Paul on their own, the Corinthians might have been angry with them for coming and telling Paul about the conditions at Corinth. The Church's Bible (p. 290) suggested the Corinthians were "angry with these men since they are the ones who came to Paul and informed him about the discord, for it was through them that the congregation had presented their written questions about virgins and married couples (1 Cor. 7:1). Accordingly, see how Paul soothes their anger. At the beginning of the letter he says, *For it has been reported to me about you by Chloe's people* (1 Cor 1:11), thereby concealing the other group, and bringing Chloe's people to the fore, who had probably made their disclosure through Stephanas and the others."

Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 782) said these "three may or may not have had other business in Ephesus in addition to bringing the letter; we are constrained to assume that they brought the letter. Then also they are the ones who will return to Corinth with Paul's reply; and they are the ones to whom Paul refers in v. 12, they are the ones with whom Apollos might have returned to Corinth if he could have found the time just then." Whatever the exact circumstances surrounding these men, we do know that the names *Achaicus* and *Fortunatus* are found only here in the New Testament. The CBL (First Corinthians, p. 493) said *Fortunatus* "was a common Latin name" and *Achaicus* "was a rare Greek name."

At the end of verse 17 Paul told the Corinthians he missed them. Paul felt a "*lack*" (*husterema*), an absence. Paul felt a similar void when he was unable to be with the Philippians (compare Phil. 1:8; 4:1). Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 780) said, "Paul would like to have the Corinthians where he can talk to them instead of being obligated to write to them from a distance." Although Paul longed to be with the Corinthians, the presence

of Achaicus and Fortunatus "*supplied*" (*anapleroo*) Paul with what he needed. Some commentators believe *supplied* refers to money or provisions, but the context indicates Paul meant "the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus made up for being separated from the Corinthian church" (Brown, 1:741).

Paul's visitors not only provided him contact with the Corinthians, these men "*refreshed*" (*anapauo*) his spirit (verse 18). In Classical Greek the word *refreshed* described the finishing of a speech, telling an army to "halt," or "taking a break" to feel refreshed. Jesus used this term in Mt. 11:28 to say He would give "rest" to those who desire it. Philemon was someone who "refreshed" the saints (Phile. 7, same word). This term shows that Christians may "refresh one another through a godly example and Christian hospitality" (CBL, GED, 1:238).

When the Corinthians learned how *refreshing* these visitors had been to Paul, they would have been "refreshed" as well ("*For they refreshed my spirit and yours*," verse 18). Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 781) said: "If Paul and the Corinthians could have met, both his mind and theirs would have been put at ease regarding all of the questions that had arisen. Through the presence of these three representatives this was actually accomplished in a way. By their presence these three furnished easement to Paul's spirit and at the same time, by enabling the congregation to confer with Paul through them, furnishing a like easement to their spirit."

The end of verse 18 is where Paul asked the Corinthians to "*acknowledge*" (*epiginosko*) *Achaicus*, *Fortunatus* and *Stephanas*. Perhaps these men had come to Paul at their own expense. Perhaps their trip was taken at an inconvenient time, or it involved some hazards. These men had undertaken and accomplished a noble task and their effort was to be recognized. Today this principle is still true. When people, especially Christians, do things that are noteworthy, they should be commended.

16:19-20: *The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Prisca salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren salute you. Salute one another with a holy kiss.*

Paul wanted these Christians to know the "*churches of Asia*" (Christians in the Roman province of Asia—the western portion of modern Turkey) "*saluted*" (greeted) them. Most believe these greetings came from congregations in Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colosse, Hierapolis and possibly other places. Paul had spent time at the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10) and this work helped spread the gospel throughout Asia and start these congregations.

Although the New Testament church is to be self governing (Acts 14:23 and see the study on New Testament Christianity at the end of this

commentary), verse 19 implies that congregational independence does not prohibit congregations from having fellowship with one another or from working together. Today there should still be a spirit of warmness and love for Christians in sister congregations and Christians should seek to know their brethren in other places. The word translated "*church*" (*ekklesia*) is used twice in verse 19. For a study of what this word means, see the commentary on 11:16.

In the middle of verse 19 Paul spoke of "*Priscilla* and *Aquila*" (this couple is mentioned six times in the New Testament). "Originally from Rome, Aquila and Priscilla had been a large part of Paul's life. Priscilla and Aquila had been forced to leave Rome in A.D. 49 when the Roman Emperor Claudius banished all Jews from the city of Rome. This edict was lifted in A.D. 50, allowing the Jews to return. When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in A.D. 54 Priscilla and Aquila were once again residing in Rome (cf. Romans 16:3). When Paul first came to Corinth, he worked and lodged with them. They had been generous to him. Because they, like Paul, were tentmakers by trade, they worked together in this craft to support themselves" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 493).

Aquila and Priscilla had a "church" (a congregation of people) meeting in their home and this is not surprising. As noted in the commentary on 11:20b, the first Christians did not have "church buildings," so believers met in places such as houses. Nymphas and Philemon (Col. 4:15; Phile. 1-2) also had a "church" meeting in their homes.

Paul wanted to express greetings from many Christians (20a) so he "added a comprehensive salute and then indicated the proper response" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 493), a "*holy kiss*." As noted in this author's commentary on Rom. 16:14-16, this kiss was not a sensual or sexual act. It was a common greeting in Eastern culture that expressed friendship (we might compare it to shaking hands). Rienecker and Rogers (p. 448) noted how in "the ancient world it was customary to give a kiss as a greeting both at the meeting and at the departure." Other New Testament books also refer to this practice (compare 1 Pet. 5:14 and 1 Thess. 5:26), but this custom did not begin with Christianity. In Gen. 29:11-13 we read of kisses among relatives. We also find kisses associated with greetings (Ex. 4:27) and farewells (Ruth 1:9, 14). The word translated *kiss* in 1 Cor. 16:20 (*philema*) is even used to describe the *kiss* Judas intended to give to Jesus (Lk. 22:48). Today we should use whatever "*pure*" (*holy*) greetings are typically found in the place where we reside and we should extend this greeting to everyone who is a Christian.

Owen Albricht (Woman: A Biblical Quest, pp. 18-19) said: "Are customs ever binding? Some people have concluded that the 'holy kiss' was only a custom and is not binding. Based on this example, they have sought to dismiss other commands of God as nonbinding customs. The

statements concerning the 'holy kiss' (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26) and the 'kiss of love' (1 Peter 5:14) regulated the way the greeting kiss was to be given; the kiss itself was not the command. Since people in that society commonly greeted each other in this way already, Paul did not need to command Christians to greet each other with a kiss. The injunction was given to govern the *kind* of kiss they were to give each other. It was to be a 'holy kiss,' a 'kiss of love,' not a sensual, lustful kiss." A "parent may say to his son, 'Drive safely.' The emphasis is not on 'drive,' but on 'safely.'…The same was true with the holy kiss" (ibid). These "kisses" were given on the forehead, the beard, the hands, the feet, and not the lips (ibid).

16:21-24: *The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. 22 If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

"It was Paul's custom to dictate his letters to an amanuensis. But to mark the letter's genuineness he would, at the end, sign and close it himself. This was what he did now. This was his letter and personal greeting" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 495 and compare Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17).

The information in verse 22 is unusual. Paul spoke about loving the Lord and he used the word *phileo* (the "love" people have for friends) instead of *agapao* (the most comprehensive word for love). It seems Paul chose *phileo*, a lesser word for love, to describe "human affection" for Jesus. In other words, all should have *agapao* love for the Lord, but if this level of love does not exist, people should at least find some "pleasure" in or "have a friendly feeling" towards Jesus. Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 786) described the thought as: "If anyone does not even like the Lord." If a person cannot find some basic joy in Jesus (the story of His birth, His willingness to help people, His willingness to die on a cross to save man from sin, and the story of His resurrection), Paul said: "*let him be anathema.*" If a person refuses to have the most elementary type of love for Jesus, he is in a hopeless state unless he eventually changes His mind about Jesus.

The word "*anathema*" (*anathema*) described something destined for divine wrath or something dedicated to destruction. Aside from here this term is found only in Acts 23:14; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 1:8-9. In verse 22 this word "refers to the one upon whom the curse was laid" (CBL, GED, 1:219). Paul did not use this term to say he hoped someone would be cursed by God and destined for divine destruction. Paul simply stated a fact: Anyone who does not find some type of pleasure in Jesus

Christ will stand accursed by God and die in his sins. Rejecting Jesus means rejecting our only hope of salvation (Acts 4:12). There is, of course, more to salvation than having a "friendly love for Jesus" (Jn. 14:15; 15:14). However, Paul also knew that those who do not have the most elementary type of love for the Lord will be eternally lost unless they have a change of heart (repent). Just as heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, so hell is a prepared place for all who never had any love for Jesus and those who did claim to love Him but did not obey His word.

The word "*maranatha*" in verse 22 is an Aramaic word that is *transliterated* (i.e. the Greek letters are given their English equivalents). Gromacki (p. 207) noted how "'*Mar*' means 'Lord'; '*an*' is 'our'; and '*atha*' is the verb 'to come.'" Gromacki also (p. 207) noted how in "this context, it could have three possible translations. First, it could refer to Christ's incarnation, meaning 'Our Lord has come.' Second, it could be a prophetic declaration, 'Our Lord is coming.' Or third, it could be a prayer: 'Our Lord, come.'" Even though *maranatha* was an Aramaic word and the Corinthians were from a Greek background, it seems they understood this term because *maranatha* was a commonly used word.

The ASV separates *anathema* and *Maranatha* by a period, but the KJV has no punctuation between these two words. Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 787) believed the KJV rendering "is mistaken" because it makes this appear to be "a curse." *Maranatha* "is a sentence by itself" (ibid).

In verse 23 we see that Paul wanted the "*grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*" (verse 23) to be with the Corinthians (this expression suggests Paul wanted to conclude this letter in a positive way). Even though these Christians had many problems, Paul still wanted them to know they were the recipients of God's unmerited favor and these saints were still his spiritual children (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul also knew these saints were still "*in Christ*" (verse 24). Though far from perfect and part of a congregation that was rife with problems, this congregation was part of the church built by Jesus (Mt. 16:18). Paul truly loved these Christians and he wanted the very best for them ("*My love*," verse 24).

Although it does not appear in the best Greek manuscripts, there is a subscript that says Paul wrote this letter from Philippi. It is thought that a scribe added this because he misunderstood the information in 16:5.

An overview of New Testament Christianity:

The expression "New Testament Christianity" simply means doing things as the New Testament describes. God has a "pattern of sound words" for the Christian faith and we are to "hold" to this pattern (2 Tim. 1:13). God's pattern is part of the "narrow gate" that leads to life (Mt. 7:13-14) and this pattern, if people will use it, eliminates religious confusion and religious division (compare 1 Cor. 14:33). When people are ignorant of God's pattern or they reject some part of it, there will be hundreds or thousands of different religious groups that all profess to be "Christian." The true followers of Christ know that God has a specific way of doing things and it is essential to "hold to the pattern" (compare 1 Cor. 4:17).

One of the most elementary parts of God's pattern is found in conversion (the way someone becomes a Christian). As demonstrated by the following chart, God's pattern for conversion requires *faith* (belief), *repentance* (a turning from sin), *confession*, and *baptism* (immersion in water) for the forgiveness of sins.

Bible verse	God's command	God's command	The blessing
Mark 16:16:	Believe	*and* be baptized	Saved
Acts 2:38:	Repent	*and* be baptized	Remission of sins
Acts 22:16:	Arise	*and* be baptized	Wash away sins

The information in Mk. 16:16 has been compared to a train; just as boxcars are joined together with a coupling pin, so the word "*and*" joins together the commands of "belief" and "baptism" (Jesus said a person must *believe* and be *baptized* before he can be "saved"). Since those in Acts 2 had heard and believed the facts of the gospel (Acts 2:37), they were told to "repent and be baptized" so they could receive the "forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38). The information in Acts 2 also offers an excellent illustration of *repentance*, a word that meant "to change for the better." People who had formerly hated Jesus (Acts 2:36) *repented* (they began to love and follow Jesus). After people believe and repent, they are to be *baptized*, an act that "washes away sins" (Acts 22:16).

In addition to the passages in the preceding chart, the Bible also explains the purpose of baptism in Gal. 3:27 (Paul said baptism puts people "into Christ"). If a person is old enough to be accountable for his

actions, he is either "in Christ" or "out of Christ." If a person is old enough to be responsible for his actions and he is "out of Christ," he has no spiritual blessings, one of which is salvation (2 Tim. 2:10). Those who are "in Christ" have all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), one of which is salvation. According to Gal. 3:27, a person does not enter "into Christ" until he has been properly baptized.

In addition to Jesus and Paul saying that baptism is part of the salvation process, there is the information in 1 Pet. 3:20-21. Peter described how water served as a dividing line for Noah and his family (God used a flood to separate the saved from the lost, Gen. 6-7). Water lifted the ark and those in it to safety and water caused the unsaved to drown. In fact, Peter said Noah and his family were "*saved through water*" (1 Pet. 3:20). Peter also said there is a "true likeness" for people today and this "true likeness" is "*baptism*" (1 Pet. 3:21). In other words, just as water separated the saved from the lost in the ancient world, so water (baptism) now divides the saved from the lost under the Christian era (see again the preceding chart). Peter further noted how baptism is not for the "*filth of the flesh*" (it is not a process to remove physical dirt), 1 Pet. 3:21. Baptism is for spiritual filth—sin—as explained in Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16.

There was no special power in the flood waters that separated Noah from the unsaved and there is no special power in the water that is now used to baptize people. Our justification from sin comes through Jesus' blood (Paul made this point in Rom. 5:9 and he explained how this process works in Rom. 6:1-4).

As demonstrated by the following graphic, which is provided through the courtesy of *We Care Ministries*, sinners access the benefits of Jesus' blood by reenacting the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. After a person believes, he is *not* saved. The believer must experience a "death." This *death* is another description for repentance (people must turn from sin. Compare Col. 3:7; Acts 2:38; Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30). People must "die

to sin" (repent) so they do not "die in sin" (perish eternally in hell).
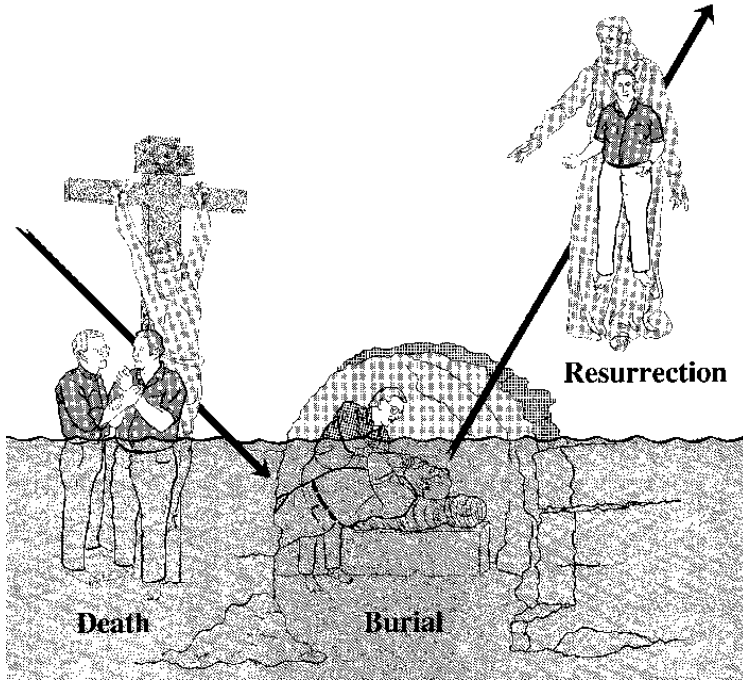
After a person has believed and repented (died to sin), he is ready to acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 8:37; 1 Tim. 6:12) and then be "*buried with Christ through baptism*" (Rom. 6:4). After a person has been properly baptized, he has "*newness of life*" (Rom. 6:4).

Many believe that "new life" (salvation, forgiveness of sins and all spiritual blessings) comes *before* baptism, but the Bible repeatedly says this is incorrect. Jesus said a person is "saved" *after* being baptized (Mk. 16:16). Peter said a person has the "forgiveness of his sins" *after* being baptized (Acts 2:38). Ananias said sins are "washed away" *by being baptized* (Acts 22:16). Paul said "baptism" *puts people into Christ* (Gal. 3:27). A person receives "new life" *after* baptism (Rom. 6:4). Jesus said a person must be "born anew" (Jn. 3:3) and this new birth *requires water* (Jn. 3:5). God has a specific pattern for salvation and this pattern requires people to have faith, repent of their sins, confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and be "buried with Christ" for the "forgiveness of their sins."

The description of baptism as a "burial" (Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12) tells us that Bible baptism requires *immersion* (we do not *bury* something by sprinkling or pouring dirt on it). A *burial* means someone or something is covered and this is what New Testament baptism requires (a person is submerged in and thus covered by water). When John was baptizing

people, his baptism required "much water" (Jn. 3:23). In fact, this verse says John baptized in this place "because" there was *much water there*.

Baptism for the forgiveness of sins is an essential part of God's pattern for conversion, but this is just one characteristic of New Testament Christianity. God has also created a special place called the "*church*" (this word describes the saved). Jesus promised to "build His church" (Mt. 16:18) and this promise required Him to die a horrible death (Acts 20:28). Jesus did build His church and He built only *one church* (notice that in Mt. 16:18 the word "church" is singular).

In Eph. 1:22-23 Paul described the "church" as Jesus' "body" ("*to the church, which is his body*"). Stated another way, Paul affirmed that the words *church* and *body* are interchangeable ("church" and "body" describe the same thing). The significance of this fact is seen in Eph. 4:4, a place where Paul said God has only "one body." Since there is only "one body" (Eph. 4:4), and this "one body is the church" (Eph. 1:22-23), there is *one church* that has God's approval. Many other churches can be found in the world, but these churches are not part of the church built by Christ. These other churches are counterfeit groups that have been built by men (Mt. 15:8-9) and Jesus said these groups will one day be destroyed because God did not build them (Mt. 15:13).

The problem with counterfeit churches is so bad that Jesus said: "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Mt. 7:21-23).

If we wish to truly love and serve God, we must identify and work with Jesus' one true church instead of a counterfeit group. The Bible helps us identify which church is right through the Scriptures; we can identify the right church by using the "pattern" (2 Tim. 1:13) found in God's word. The pattern for Christ's church includes things like how people become Christians, how Jesus' church worships, how the Lord's church is organized, and what its members do.

As already explained in the preceding information, one of the identifying marks of Jesus' church is found in how people are saved: People must believe (Heb. 11:6); repent of their sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30); acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). The Bible never speaks of things like "accepting Jesus into the heart," "saying the sinner's prayer," or "praying to receive Christ."

After a person follows God's pattern for conversion as discussed in the previous paragraph, the Bible says Jesus "adds" a person to His church

(Acts 2:47, KJV). In the churches built by men (counterfeit groups), people often "join" the church or they are "voted" into it. Acts 2:47 says the membership in Jesus' church is controlled by the Lord Himself. Stated another way, people cannot "join" the New Testament church. Neither can they be voted into it. People automatically become members of it after they follow God's pattern for conversion.

The New Testament church can also be recognized by what it does. After people became Christians on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38), Luke says they "*continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers*" (Acts 2:42). This passage shows that part of God's example involves meeting on a regular basis and doing the things listed in this verse. Most religious groups are committed to "prayer" and "fellowship," but most are not "stedfast" with the other two characteristics in Acts 2:42 (the "apostles' teaching" and "the breaking of bread").

Jesus' church can be partly identified by its strict adherence to the *apostles' doctrine* (the information we now have in the Bible). Instead of following the rules and dictates of men (Mt. 15:9), the members of Christ's church use the Bible as their only guide. New Testament Christians know that God has given the "*perfect law of liberty*" (Jas. 1:25) and this information gives them "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2 Pet. 1:3). Stated another way, the completed New Testament "*furnishes us unto every good work*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Thus, New Testament Christians (those who are part of Christ's church) solely rely on this "*form of teaching*" (Rom. 6:17) for the "*pattern*" (2 Tim. 1:13) they need to serve and worship God "*in truth*" (Jn. 4:24). Counterfeit churches rely upon creeds, information from their "church headquarters," church manuals, etc.

Acts 2:42 also refers to "the breaking of bread" (i.e. the Lord's Supper. The Greek text literally says "the breaking of the bread"). This statement tells us the first century Christians partook of the Lord's Supper on a "stedfast" basis. Other passages reinforce the fact that the members of Jesus' church took the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. For instance, Paul spoke of the Corinthian assemblies in 1 Cor. 16:2. The Corinthians were meeting on every Sunday (this point is expressed very well in the NASB) and the Corinthians were bringing the items for the Lord's Supper to their weekly assemblies (1 Cor. 11:20). Although the items for the Lord's Supper were being misused, the Corinthians knew they were to bring the elements for the Lord's Supper every Sunday. This was the practice for Corinth as well as all the other congregations that practiced New Testament Christianity (1 Cor. 4:17).

In Acts 20 we read of a time when Paul was with some fellow Christians and this group actually waited for the "first day of the week"

(Acts 20:6), Sunday, so the Lord's Supper could be observed (Acts 20:7). Even though Paul was in a hurry (Acts 20:16), he waited seven days so he could meet with fellow Christians on the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:6) and partake of the Lord's Supper (the Communion). This information corresponds perfectly with Acts 2:42, a text that says the first Christians "continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread." The members of Jesus' church partake of the Lord's Supper every Sunday. In the churches built by men, people may partake of the Lord's Supper once a year, twice a year, once a quarter, or once a month.

If worshippers have the Lord's Supper less frequently than once a week, they "take away" part of what God intended for worship and thus alter God's divine pattern (compare Rev. 22:19). If people offer the Lord's Supper more than once a week, they "add to" God's divine pattern and are also guilty of sin (compare Rev. 22:18). If people do not have Sunday, the "first day of the week," as their special day to honor God in worship (1 Cor. 16:2), they also fail to follow part of the New Testament pattern and are thus not part of the New Testament church.

In addition to identifying the New Testament church through its pattern for conversion, the way that people become members of this church, the strict adherence to the Scriptures, and having the Lord's Supper every week, the New Testament church can be identified by its teachings on giving. Many religious groups appeal to non-Christians for funds or they engage in things like bake sales and car washes. The first century Christians, who were members of the New Testament church, "took nothing from the Gentiles" (the unsaved, 3 Jn. 7). Today members of the New Testament church still meet all their financial obligations through free will contributions from members; New Testament Christians do not want nor expect non-members to contribute anything to the Lord's work.

Christ's church may also be identified by the amount of money that people give. Many religious groups tell their members to "tithe" (give 10% of their income). If a religious group teaches tithing, this is a sure sign that it is a counterfeit church. Tithing is part of the Old Testament law that was given to the Hebrew nation. The Old Testament law contained various rules about giving, keeping the Sabbath day, animal sacrifices, special priests, etc., and this law was in force for about 1,500 years. After Jesus came into the world He said His death would bring about a new covenant (Lk. 22:20) and this happened. Jesus took away the entire Old Testament system by dying on the cross (Rom. 10:4 and compare Heb. 8:5-13). If people try to bind any part of the Old Testament law on people, and telling people to "tithe" is one example of this, the Bible says people are "fallen from grace" and are "severed from Christ" (Gal. 5:4, ASV).

Instead of tithing, members of the New Testament church make a personal decision on how much to give. In fact, the church that belongs to Christ is governed by two basic rules when it comes to giving: (1) Give "cheerfully" and (2) give as we have been "prospered" (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). Since the New Testament says *give as we have been prospered*, any church that tells people to "*tithe*" (give 10%) is a counterfeit church. Those who ask or tell people to *tithe* are teaching a "different gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9). This error is so serious that Paul said those who try to bind some part of the Old Testament law on people are like a woman who is married to two men at the same time (Rom. 7:1-4).

New Testament Christians know and teach that Jesus "nailed the old law to the cross" (Col. 2:14) and the removal of the Old Testament law includes the elimination of the Ten Commandments. Things like murder, theft and adultery are still wrong (Rom. 13:9), but these acts are wrong because they are forbidden by the New Testament. People can "learn" from the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4), but the New Testament is the law all are under now. Counterfeit groups often fail to distinguish between the Old Testament and the New (they teach that the Ten Commandments are still binding, people need to tithe, there is still a need to keep the Sabbath day, etc.), but these things are not taught by New Testament Christians. Members of the New Testament church know the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Because the members of the New Testament church correctly distinguish the Old Testament from the New Testament, they comply with God's will in the area of music. Under the Old Testament system of worship, people used instrumental music (Ps. 150; 2 Chron. 29:25). Under the New Testament system of worship, people are specifically told to "sing" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) and this is what New Testament Christians do. If the New Testament said "make music," we would be authorized to make music any way we choose. Since God has specifically said those who live under the New Testament are to make music by *singing* (compare Heb. 13:15), this is what His people do and this is another identifying mark of Christ's church. If we sing AND PLAY in worship, we add to God's instructions. Adding instrumental music to worship is an example of "will-worship" (Col. 2:23) and going "beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

Church choirs are another example of "going beyond what it is written." The Bible says Christians are to "sing to one another" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), but some use church choirs "because they like them." Worship is not about what we like; it is about following God's pattern (compare Jn. 4:24 where Jesus said we "must worship in truth"). If we do not do things in the way God has described, we go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6), we "no longer abide in the doctrine of Christ," and we "have

not God" (2 Jn. 9).

The subjects of salvation and worship are very helpful in separating the New Testament church from counterfeit groups, but these are not the only ways to recognize Jesus' true church. We may also determine which church truly follows God's pattern by studying what the Bible says about church organization. Every organization has some type of structure, including a headquarters or main office, and this is also true for the New Testament church. Jesus is the head of His church and He resides in heaven (Acts 1:11). Jesus' heavenly enthronement (Acts 2:30) tells us the "headquarters" for the New Testament church is in heaven. Stated another way, Jesus' church has no earthly headquarters; counterfeit churches, however, often do have an earthly headquarters. Jesus' church is also autonomous (self-governing).

As illustrated by Acts 14:23 and Phil. 1:1, each congregation of the Lord's church is to have local leaders known as "elders" (these men are also referred to as bishops, presbyters, pastors, overseers, shepherds. Each of these words describes a different aspect of an elder's work). Paul described the qualifications for these men in 1 Tim. 3:1-5 and he said elders "take care of" (they are the rulers for and in) a local congregation (1 Tim. 3:5). Titus referred to "elders" in Tit. 1:5 and then described them as "bishops" in Tit. 1:7.

We read of elders in Judaea (Acts 11:29-30), southern Galatia (Acts 14:23), Jerusalem (Acts 15:6), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), and Asia Minor (1 Pet. 5:1). There are implied references to them in 1 Thess. 5:12 and Heb. 13:17. In Tit. 1:5 we learn that elders were needed throughout the island of Crete ("every city").

Although God's pattern for church leadership does not extend beyond the local congregation, a high percentage of religious groups have a leadership structure that goes outside the local church (religious groups have a "church headquarters" in a well known city or another country, or there is some type of regional, national or world-wide board). Although these arrangements are common, they are contrary to God's pattern. Church organization is just one more way to separate Christ's church from the imitations built by men.

Jesus is the head of the church, elders are the local leaders, and Jesus' church has special servants known as "deacons" (Phil. 1:1). The church of Christ also has men who serve as preachers. Paul and Timothy were two first century ministers and these men are referred to as "servants" in Phil. 1:1. Unlike the churches built by men where preachers are the leaders and often the most important people in the congregation, the Bible says the preachers in Christ's church are *servants*. The remaining members in Jesus' church of the New Testament are simply called "saints."

The New Testament pattern for church organization described in the

preceding paragraphs stands in stark contrast to the "clergy-laity" system found in many denominations. In fact, in many man-made churches there must be an "official person" to baptize people or help with worship. God's pattern for Christianity says all the saved are "priests" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Instead of dividing people into "clergy and laity," Jesus said "all are brethren" (Mt. 23:8). Paul illustrated this point by noting how several of the Corinthians helped in and with worship (1 Cor. 14:26). The Corinthians knew their worship did not need to be carried out by a special priest or some type of "holy person" because all Christians are "priests" (Rev. 1:6; 5:10) and all Christians are considered to be "holy" (1 Pet. 1:15).

The only restriction when it comes to having a leading role in worship is a person's gender. Stated another way, women are not allowed to take a leading role in the assembly if men are present (1 Cor. 14:34-35 and compare 1 Tim. 2:8-13). In the church of Christ, any Christian male can help with worship, teach or preach. Churches that have women preachers are most definitely counterfeit churches because they violate what Paul said in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:8-13. God has given a "pattern" for the New Testament church (2 Tim. 1:13) and all need to use this pattern to identify and work with the "church of Christ" in their community.

Have we found and are we a part of the one church built by Christ? If the "church of Christ" (Rom. 16:16) does not exist in our community, we can start one and practice New Testament Christianity (i.e. do things just as the New Testament describes). We can begin a congregation in our home (1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 2) or use a rented space to start "worshipping in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24). We certainly do not want to be part of the counterfeit groups that "*leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men*" (Mk. 7:8). Remember, "*All the churches of Christ salute you*" (Rom. 16:16).

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