

Paul's Instructions And Information

Chapter 16 of 1 Corinthians, in addition to other things, gives much information and instructions about various brethren with whom the Corinthians were acquainted. Thus the following simply examines and comments briefly on statements made by Paul regarding them.

"Now if Timothy come, see that he be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come unto me: for I expect him with the brethren" (1 Cor. 16:10f). While Paul was alone when he first came to Corinth on his second journey (Acts 18:1), he was joined sometime thereafter by Silas and Timothy who had been visiting the churches in Thessalonica and Berea at the behest of Paul. Earlier in this letter Paul had apprised Corinthian brethren that he had sent Timothy to them that he "should put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). Still, there was some uncertainty that Timothy would actually travel to Corinth prior to arriving there with Paul at the conclusion of his third journey (Acts 20:1f). After the letter had been dispatched to Corinth from Ephesus (Titus being the bearer of it), Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia ahead of him (Acts 19:22) but whether Timothy actually made it to Corinth is uncertain. We do know that he joined Paul somewhere in Macedonia and that when Paul wrote his second letter to Corinth, Timothy's name is included with his in greeting the brethren there (2 Cor. 1:1).

"But as touching Apollos the brother, I besought him much to come unto you with the brethren: and it was not at all his will to come now; but he will come when he shall have opportunity" (1 Cor. 16:12). The Corinthians had first become acquainted with Apollos when Ephesian brethren sent letters to Corinth recommending Apollos to them. Apollos had proven very helpful to the Corinthians in their exchanges with Jews for Apollos "powerfully confuted the Jews and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:27-28). Some Corinthians called themselves after Apollos (as others called themselves after Paul, Cephas, and Christ (1 Cor. 1:12), and were roundly rebuked for this partyism and division (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul used himself and Apollos as examples to the Corinthians, showing they were only servants of Christ and that the allegiance of the Corinthians should be unto Christ, not to them or other men (1 Cor. 3:4-9). Paul's use of himself and Apollos was to teach the Corinthians "not to go beyond things written, that no one be puffed up for the one against the other" (1 Cor. 4:6). Apollos had apparently made his way back to Ephesus (or at least into Asia) before Paul had finished his first letter to Corinth and Paul had besought Apollos to

go back to Corinth with those who carried the letter to them. Doubtlessly Paul felt Apollos could be greatly beneficial in rectifying some of the problems existing there. Despite Paul's request that Apollos go, "it was not at all his will to come now." Since the word "his" is in italic letters (thus a supplied word) there is uncertainty whether the statement should be "it was not at all his will" or else "it was not at all God's will". Still, since both the KJV and ASV give "his" those translators favored the thought that Paul was saying it was not "Apollos' will" to come to Corinth at that time. It would be sheer conjecture to suggest why Apollos refused to go to Corinth when Paul sent the first epistle to them. Still Paul did add that Apollos would come sometime in the future. The last record we have regarding Apollos (if it is indeed this same Apollos) were instructions Paul gave Titus who was in Crete (Titus 1:5) that he should "set forward Zenus the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them" (Titus 3:13).

Next Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas that it is the first fruits of Achaia and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints) that ye also be in subjection, and to everyone that helpeth in the work and laboreth" (1 Cor. 16:16). All that is known about Stephanas and his family is learned from this first epistle. We know that the house of Stephanas was the firstfruits of Paul's labors there and that he had personally baptized them (1 Cor. 1:16). Sometimes before the letter was written, Stephanas (and Fortunatus and Achaicus) had visited Paul in Ephesus, for which coming Paul rejoiced for "that which was lacking on your part they supplied" (1 Cor. 16:17). They "greatly refreshed" Paul's spirit (1 Cor. 16:18). Perhaps they had added testimony to that of the household of Chloe who had sadly informed Paul of the divisions among brethren as well as other irregularities in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:11). Stephanas' household was greatly given to ministry to the needs of the saints and Paul admonished brethren to be in subjection to them i.e., help them in the work they did.

To the Corinthians Paul sent salutations from the churches of Asia. Perhaps some of those churches were the ones John wrote some 35-40 years later in the book of Revelation — certainly Ephesus was. But in addition to these seven letters would be churches like Colossae and Hierapolis (Col. 1:1; 4:13). And, from that Ephesian church comes greetings from a couple well known in Corinthian circles: Priscilla and Aquilla, for this couple had been in Corinth when Paul first arrived there and were tremendous help to Paul in his labors there.

Not all Paul's letters have references to saints then living (2 Corinthians has no such references, nor does Galatians) but such references help us to identify with early saints in their struggles and labors.

Jim McDonald