



Last week, we finished chapter 15 with Paul’s words: **Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not vain.**¹ When you hear these words to “always abound” and to be “steadfast, immovable,” what comes to your mind? I can’t help but wonder if many people interpret these words through the our current lens movie star lens. Meaning, you might think of the Avengers or even John Wayne or Rambo or pick your superhero, and when you hear that Jesus rose from the dead; so, be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding,” you think that Jesus rose from the dead to put some cape on you so that you can do amazing, superhuman feats.

But I personally think that couldn’t be further from the truth. Jesus didn’t save us so that we would be super-human. He saved us so that we could glorify God and love others – as humans. It’s intriguing to me that there’s another view of “hero” in our world that doesn’t rise to super hero status. There are books written and movies created to celebrate people who simply love *in real life*. They sacrifice. They give of themselves. I mean, even the story of Santa Claus actually came to be because the original Nicholas was extremely giving with his wealth. Patrick of Ireland is known today because he went back to those who had enslaved him and he preached the gospel to them. Whether a person lived 1,500 years ago or this century, we can be utterly amazed by sacrificial love. And when we hear that the person does this because of a greater love – the love and sacrifice of Jesus – we realize that something miraculous has actually taken place.

So, when you hear the words “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding,” I actually think Paul is giving a broad conclusion to all that he’s said throughout his letter. The Corinthians we creating factions. They were taking people to court. They didn’t know how to relate to their spouses with love and care. They were creating “super-spiritual” categories amongst members within their church – dividing the congregation. At the Lord’s Supper, some were getting drunk while others were getting nothing. These are all *everyday life* issues – and Paul has determined to know nothing but our risen Jesus and him crucified. He has applied the gospel to all these scenarios. Now, in coming to the topic of the resurrection, he concludes and states that because Jesus is coming again and we will be raised, then those who trust in Jesus should be shaped by the gospel. We should change in these *everyday life* situations.

I find this to be extremely encouraging because this reveals to us that God doesn’t simply care about us if we do something we think is phenomenal. God actually cares for us in all of life – from the big to the very small and mundane.

I say all of this because in some ways it feels like Paul should have ended his letter with chapter 15. You enter verse 1 of 16, and you might think, “What is the point of this?!” These verses are reminiscent of maybe the announcement time in church. Some of you value that because you want to know the

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 15:58.

specifics. Others of you might think, “Ok, whatever. Let’s just move on to the other stuff.” But again, isn’t it amazing that God cares about the details of our lives? Be steadfast, immovable! Now, let’s talk about giving towards the Christians in need and also about fellowshiping with Paul and Timothy. The gospel gets *this* practical, and to the Jerusalem church that was suffering, these words were probably immensely meaningful. In looking at these 12 verses of chapter 16, I actually think we get a very down-to-earth example of what it means to labor in the Lord. So, let me give you the main idea of the sermon today: **The work of the Lord manifests itself in practical care and acceptance of fellow followers of Jesus.**

The gospel leads us to do the work of the Lord and the work of the Lord manifests itself in practical care and acceptance of fellow Christians. All I’m going to do today is break down this main idea into two points. We’ll focus on the practical care piece and then the acceptance piece. So, let’s start with the practical care.

1. Practical (i.e. – financial) Care (vv. 1-4)

Let’s read verses 1-4 again: Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.²

When Paul uses the phrase for “Now concerning,” it usually means that what he’s about to talk about is something that the Corinthians asked him about in a previous letter. Here’s a final answer to one of their questions: How do we go about giving towards the needs of the Jerusalem church? This reminds me of when we were going through the shut-downs in March and April. Ventura’s elders had multiple people asking *how* they could give towards any needs that may arise from people losing their jobs or potentially being out of work due to COVID. What did we do? We then explained how we were going to take an offering for Benevolence and then the Benevolence team would dispense as appropriate. This also reminds me of a conversation I had just this past week with Bob and Marlene Ross. They expressed to me just how immensely grateful they are for the Meal Train in our church family. Marlene said that to others, it might not seem like a lot that they’re making them a meal, but to them, it is huge. Bob and Marlene’s abilities are very limited, but to have people bring them food is such a nourishment to their body and also to their soul. They have experienced such love from you!

Honestly, there are a number of stories I could tell about how the practical care of people within Ventura has helped encourage other believers in need – and I’m often humbled and grateful for my church family here who gives financially and sacrifices by making meals. Do you know that these actions towards people who are brothers and sisters in Christ, when done because of Jesus, matters to God?

So, it seems as least possible that the Corinthians were wanting to give to the church. It doesn’t seem like they were trying to get out of it. What’s interesting here is that Paul doesn’t go into great details to convince the Corinthians to actually give. And, that’s actually *very* interesting for a couple of reasons. First, with the Romans, Paul takes more time to explain to them the necessity. Yet here, Paul assumes the Corinthians will give and he tells them how to do it. Second, from a Greek perspective, giving was for the purpose to receive honor. Did you hear that? They gave in order to receive. If there wasn’t personal

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 16:1–4.

benefit, then they wouldn't give. In many ways, it's the same motivation for many people today. I have heard people say they do nice things because it makes them feel good. I know of people who express that if they do something, they expect a "thank you" for what they did. Why? Are they doing their action for affirmation or honor? Or, are they doing their action out of love for the Lord and love for others? But in the Greek mindset, Aristotle stated that "Honor is the due reward for virtue and beneficence," and Plutarch wrote, "Rulers should show philanthropy to their friends and the friends should shower them with love and honor" (both quotes in Garland, p. 752). Yet, with Corinth, they really aren't going to receive honor from the Jerusalem church. The distance is too great. Plus, this leads to the third interesting detail. As we know, Jews and Gentiles had strained relationships. For a Gentile to essentially serve a Jew or for a Jew to honor a Gentile would be unheard of. Yet in this situation, we see Gentile Christians giving and serving Jewish Christians. Why? Because they're now Christian first! They are family now.

What a beautiful picture of reconciliation amongst ethnicities, right? It's not merely that the Jews and Gentiles were Christians and that there was the first Jewish Church over there and the First Gentile church over here. But, even across distance, they sought to serve and care for each other. How many times Paul talks about Jesus tearing down ethnic divisions. No matter your citizenship on this earth or the color of your skin, if you have turned to Jesus alone for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, then you and I are reconciled, too! May we live like this.

By the way, this affirms Jesus' own words when he talks about a day when he will judge and declare that some gave food and drink to Jesus. Jesus then says that his disciples will ask when they did that. And then Jesus said, "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" ³ Many interpret this as Jesus simply talking about doing these words for anyone. While God commands us to love everyone, the specific application here, according to Jesus is towards his "brothers." This is a specific reference to caring for fellow Christians.

Ventura, when you hear of needs of brothers and sisters in Christ, what's your response? When you receive updates from missionaries in other countries? When you hear about Christians starving? Do you feel like that's just other people's problems? Ventura, we are part of God's family. To do the work of the Lord, we get to take financial resources he's given to us, and we can give to others as they have need!

Paul now moves on to lay out how the Corinthians will give. And these statements can serve as helpful principles for us. Look at verse 2 again: ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.⁴ In this verse we see the principles of giving **regularly, proportionally, and deliberately.**

By the way, this isn't a verse commanding giving 10% of your money. The concept of a tithe is a topic for another time. This seems to be willful giving to the Jerusalem needs. Yet, for the Christians in Jerusalem, they were experiencing hard circumstances – like expressed in 2 Corinthians 9:12 – and they were also experiencing persecution according to 1 Thessalonians 2:14. So, what do we do when we hear of Christians having needs?

Let me first state that these are principles stated directly to Corinth for a specific need in Jerusalem; so, the application to us comes in principles. We may not always be giving towards a need as individuals,

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 25:40.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 16:2.

but I do think that as a church family, we ought to always be considering the needs. That's why a percentage of all general giving in our offering goes to global missions. Having said this, Paul doesn't exclude people from giving. He says "all of you." Every Christian ought to want to give as God has given to them. Note Paul says "proportionally." A person who only has 5 dollars, but gives \$2 away has given more than a person with a million dollars and they give \$100,000. This statement convicts me because it reveals my own love for money and things. There's a level of comfort I can attain to when I have a certain amount of money. I have to ask where's my trust when it comes to money? I also have to ask, "Is this money meant for me or for the immense needs for believers in this area or around the world? Why has God given this to me?" I think we all ought to be asking these questions.

Finally, when Paul says "first day of every week," the point is that they are regularly giving. I believe this is a good habit for Christians to get into. Whether it's first day of the week or once a month, I think we ought to have a plan of regularity in our giving in order to help those in need. And it should be deliberate. Paul doesn't want there to be collecting when he arrives. He wants it to be accumulated beforehand so that taking an offering isn't the focus when he arrives. That said, the Corinthians needed to be deliberate if they were going to do this.

So, for us, I think these are good principles to follow as well. May we be cheerful givers to fellow believers in need – no matter the social or ethnic divides, we are family in Christ! So, Christian, ponder how you can give regularly, proportionally, and deliberately. To do the work of the Lord, we care for fellow Christians in their practical, tangible, financial needs. So, let's keep doing this and pray for ways to do this more, Ventura! Let's ask God to convince us of his good design in this and ask for open eyes to see how provision of us as well, as we give.

2. Relational Acceptance (vv. 5-12).

The work of the Lord manifests in relational acceptance of fellow believers. What would you say to someone who says, "Sure, they're a Christian. That's fine! But I don't have to be around them"? The apostle John says, "**14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.**"⁵ John is stating that one of the miracles that God does in believers is that he gives them a *love* for other believers. That includes patience, sacrifice, care, fellowship, forgiveness, and more. I see some of these ideas even here in verses 5-12. Let's read verses 5-9 first: ⁵ I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, ⁶ and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.⁶

Do you hear Paul's desire here? At the time of writing, Paul says in verse 8 that he is in Ephesus. The "wide door for effective work" means that the gospel message is making inroads. People are turning from their sins and trusting Jesus! But there are also many adversaries to Paul. This adversity is probably what eventually led to the situation in Acts 19, where the people who made idols were losing business because so many people in Ephesus were turning to Jesus. Thus, people were losing work because idolatrous hearts were changed! Isn't that amazing? Ventura, as a side note, this is always how Christianity is to spread. I've been so concerned on many occasions when I hear people speak as though

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 3:14.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 16:5–9.

political change is what's going to change this nation (or any nation). Politics and laws matter, but nowhere near as important as the gospel changing hearts. This should compel us to evangelize. If you're social media feed is more about legal means of change, and if you don't witness to people, you're squelching the power of God unto salvation – which is the gospel! Go, proclaim Jesus! And if you're listening to me right now, wondering what I mean here or wondering what it means to be a Christian, I ask you to talk to someone. Talk to me. Or, maybe you could right now simply cry out to the Lord to forgive you and save you from your sin *right now*. Jesus lived the perfect life in the place of sinners. He died the death sinners deserved to die – taking the punishment we deserve. And, he rose from the dead, conquering sin and death! Now, the only right response is to turn to him for forgiveness and reconciliation with God!

And, if we are reconciled to God, then we have a relationship like Paul speaks of here with the Corinthians. While Paul writes them a letter in response to something they've written to him, he hopes to come to them to spend maybe even a winter with them. Do you realize Paul didn't just want to write a letter, confronting them? Paul loves the Corinthian people. He desires to be with them. And he welcomes them to participate in helping him in his future journeys. They can participate in giving towards his mission work.

It's so interesting to me that Paul assumes they're going to want him to be there! After all he's said? Paul must be confident that the Lord is working in them and will work to reunite them together. What beautiful realities of great fellowship.

Now, Paul talks about Timothy and Titus. In verse 12, Paul writes, ¹²Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.⁷ We don't have many details with regards to Titus, but we know Paul wanted Titus to spend time with the Corinthian Christians, but it just wasn't the right time. That said, Paul expresses his love for the Corinthians even by mentioning this and by giving them hope that they'll see Apollos someday.

But there is another who is coming: Timothy. Let's read verses 10-11: ¹⁰When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.⁸

There is some interesting translation work going on in these verses, and it's interesting because you could come to complete opposite translations. Either Timothy is timid and they need to not put Timothy down *or* Timothy is fearless and they need to recognize that. Whatever the case may be with Timothy, the emphasis of Paul here is on the Corinthians receiving Timothy. In ancient culture, a person like Timothy would be representing the one who sent them. In this case, that's Paul. Will the Corinthians receive the message (which is God's message) or will they reject? Paul calls them to accept Timothy. Why? Because he's doing the work of the Lord, just like Paul is. So, they ought not to despise Timothy. Instead, they are to help him on his way "in peace."

What does that phrase "in peace" mean? I think it's referring to the Corinthians being at peace with one another and living in peace. There have been so many issues. Paul's addressed them and given them gospel hope! Now, live it out. Let Timothy arrive seeing this church sacrificially loving and serving one

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 16:12.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 16:10–11.

another. Ventura, I can tell you this emphatically: the greatest joy of the elders is seeing sacrificial unity towards each other that flows from great love for the Lord. There have been, and continue to be, ample opportunities to show that love and patience in our midst. May we recognize that the work of the Lord is to manifest itself in relational acceptance and love for each other! Let's live in peace, pursuing Jesus together. God didn't save us to be super-human super-heroes. Jesus came to empower us to love God and love others as he has loved. By his grace, we can live in love. So, **be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Let the work of the Lord be manifested in practical care and acceptance of fellow followers of Christ! May God grow us in this, and may we depend on him always to live this way. Jesus is risen. We are victorious!**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Fee, Gordon. *TNICNT: The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.
2. Garland, David E. *ECNT: 1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
3. Um, Stephen. *Preaching the Word: 1 Corinthians*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.