

1 Corinthians 16:1-11 The Resurrection Community Falls Ch. AM 9/1/2024

The highlight of the letter was the lengthy and beautiful chapter 15, which focused on the most pivotal event in human history, the Resurrection of Christ. The biggest event has the biggest impact.

Because Jesus rose again, there is a permanent impact on our Christian community.

1. What we have, we share for the needs of others, and for kingdom advance. (v.1-4)

Verse 1, the first two words “*now concerning*” signal to us a new topic, “.. *the collection for the saints.*”

Verse 1 – Paul instructed them to collect money in the church in Corinth in the same way that Paul directed them to collect money over in the churches of Galatia. What did resurrection living in Corinth have to do with financial inequality in the churches over in Galatia? A famine in Galatia had created a financial squeeze for some but not for others, which resulted in a climate of inequality. These instructions from Paul were to become the standard operating procedure in all churches, whether in the region of Galatia or the city Corinth, whether in famine or not in famine, whether rural or urban, whether currently struggling with finances like Galatia, or whether currently struggling with unity like Corinth. Paul gave *three steps, collect consistently, share proportionally, share deliberately.*

Step one – they were to collect consistently – We see this in verse 2, “*on the first day of every week*” (each Sunday!) Sharing did not come naturally to the divided church in Corinth any more than it comes naturally to us. The growth pattern for Corinth toward making sharing become a more natural part of their hearts and behavior, was to commit themselves to sharing regularly. Same for us.

Step two - share proportionally – also written in verse 2, “*each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper*” The more God gave each of them, the more they each have resources with which to share! Please note that this does not mean only the wealthy were expected to share, and the non-wealthy were exempt from sharing, because their proportional amount was so small. No. Notice in verse 2 the phrase “*each of you.*” Paul taught that sharing proportionally was true for each of them. God knows the smallness of the proportional amount for some, and the largeness of the proportional amount for others.

God’s Word counteracts the supposed logic that goes through the mind of a person struggling financially. He or she thinks, “I am so tight on resources, hey, will it make any difference if I don’t share?” Yes, it will make a difference. First,

you would not be living as you should, as a member of the resurrection community. And second, you need to start believing that your behavior will also impact the community. Let me illustrate that with a true story.

SI – a doctor who had served the poor in a little French village for many years, announced his retirement. The village leaders decided to have a retirement party, although many in the village were poor. What could they do? God caused grapes to grow around them there in France, so the poor villagers each had wine. So, the village leaders asked each villager to bring one pitcher of wine from their own wine cellar to donate toward a barrel of wine for the retiring doctor. On the day that the village gathered, each brought a pitcher, and in a ceremony they honored him with speeches and presented the gift of the village to him, a barrel of wine. That evening the doctor at home decided to sample his gift. He drew a glass from the barrel and found that the whole barrel was pure water! Every villager had brought a pitcher of water, each thinking that one pitcher of water would go unnoticed when mixed with a whole barrel of everyone else’s wine.

This illustrates that when we are financially struggling Christians, we ask the wrong question when we ask. “Will it make any difference if I don’t share?” Rather, the correct question to ask is, “What does God want me to do, since I am a part of the resurrection community?” The answer is God wants each of us to share. Step 1. Share consistently. Step 2. Share proportionally. There is a third step.

Step 3. Share deliberately – “*so that there will be no collecting when I come.*” Sharing cannot be only an afterthought. This is what Paul was getting at with these words in verse 2, “*so that there will be no collecting when I come.*” What would be the drawback if that were to happen? What was Paul guarding against? It is a spiritual concern about our purposefulness, our deliberateness, and our true priorities. When each of us focus on my money and my belongings, our focus turns each of us inward and away from each other. The only antidote to selfishness resulting in isolation is for each of us to decide to deliberately share my money and my belongings. This sharing that we each do, is the means by which we become connected to each other, rather than remaining separated from each other. It is the way by which we become generous together rather than selfish and alone.

Verses 3-4, Paul even included basic instructions for the organization to operate well according to sound financial principles. Paul knew how important it was that all the money arrangements were done in a trustworthy manner with full integrity.

Proper sharing and proper handling and distribution of funds is what builds trust and love. So, the community of the church perpetually guards itself against

any mishandling of money, so that our trust and our love can continue to be built up.

Over the last 2,000 years since this was written, good money integrity was one of the necessary elements that has propelled the kingdom to advance around the world from the days of Paul to our days, with Christian churches now in every nation of the world.

The issue of money within churches is tied to the church community's integrity, trust, and love. The justice issue of money touches on equality vs. inequality and the privileged vs. the underprivileged. But the issue of justice goes much deeper than money. The issue of justice touches on integrity, trust, and love. And the church has the answers for the deeper issues through the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Which brings us to our second point.

2. We are friends sharing life. (v.5-9)

Paul was a friend to them. Paul did not just desire financial sharing in the churches. Paul desired them to be kept as his friends, and as friends to each other. In verse 5, Paul desired to visit them. In verse 6, Paul stated that he wanted to stay with them, perhaps spending all winter there, and to do so, Paul was open to receiving their financial help for his missionary journey. Notice what Paul wrote in verse 6, "*perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me.*" Paul knew that friendship is a two-way street. Friendship is both giving and receiving. Paul received as much as he gave.

In verse 7, Paul did not just desire to spend time with them in passing while he received the needed financial support from them, but rather Paul wanted to spend significant time with them in gospel friendship of the resurrection community there, if the Lord permitted such fellowship time. In verse 8, Paul revealed and explained his travel schedule to them, which was subject, of course, to the Lord's providential rearranging. In verse 9, Paul opened his heart to them about the gospel work he was doing – both the encouragement and discouragements of it. Paul wanted to share life together with them.

Friendships need to be protected. One aspect back in verse 3, was that Paul was wisely taking steps to protect their friendships by sending trusted people along with the delivery of gifts of money from one church to another church, so that their trust relationships get built up. Another aspect back in verse 4, was that Paul was willing to go personally himself, if it was wise to do so in order to maintain and deepen his friendships with them. The church that Christ was building up, by His resurrection power, was a community that did not merely provide funding for projects, but also provided strong brotherly and sisterly relationships that steadily

moved toward deep and abiding friendships. In verses 3-9, Christians were being taught by Paul not merely to share their money, but to share their very selves. Christians share their hearts, we share our lives together.

A community like this was what the city of Corinth needed, and what the area of Galatia needed. It was what the whole world was searching for, without knowing it, whenever and wherever people were found to be crying out for justice! What do they really desire? They desire what God gives us within the church – within the resurrection community – people with whom to walk through life together.

This truth informs our outreach, and our welcome of new people. The poor need us to share both our money and our lives with them. The rich need to be taught to share their money and their lives with us and with others. The poor need to be taught to share, no matter how few resources they have. We go through life together.

We share our property and our goods JUST AS MUCH AS we share our hearts, our time, and our lives.

What we often get wrong is leaving distance between donors and recipients.

The donors and the recipients need to be connected, to become friends.

The poor are not objects of our charity – they are people.

We don't minister to a category known as 'the poor,' rather, we minister alongside of our new friends, and they learn to both give and receive.

The poor persons that come to us are sent by God to help us to avoid the deceitfulness of riches, and in turn, when we give to them, we are helping the poor persons to avoid the powerlessness of poverty. Those with much do not have too much, and those with a little do not have too little.

We become friends by the resurrection of Christ. Friends are friends forever!

3. We welcome everyone, across all dividing lines. (v.10-11)

Up to this point, we have considered one resurrection bridge that connects over the economic dividing line.

There are other resurrection bridges. What about a resurrection bridge for racial differences? Those financial gifts from ancient churches were also going from Gentile churches to the church in Jerusalem, with a lot of Jewish Christians. Jews and Gentiles, who were divided racially, were crossing racial barriers with resurrection sharing and befriending.

What about a resurrection bridge for educational differences? Some have schooling, others do not. Paul made that concept personal in verse 10. "*When Timothy comes...*" The community that Christ was building must be taught how

to receive Timothy. Why? Because Timothy was not as well-educated as Paul was. Timothy was not as credentialed as Paul was, and Timothy did not have the same status as Paul had.

Still, Corinth would need to give a resurrection welcome to Timothy, just as they had welcomed Paul, because both were doing the work of the Lord. Listen to verse 10, “*When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am.*”

Another resurrection bridge was needed for a status difference.

The culture of Corinth was similar to the culture of America – very interested in credentials and status. What is your occupation? What is your experience? What is your degree? Where did you go to school? How much money do you make? Where do you live? And by asking these status questions, people size each other up quickly.

Paul had the success of having started 14 churches, and some of those churches were themselves now starting churches. Paul was a big ministerial success. Verse 11, “*So, let no one despise [Timothy].*” Despise is a very strong word, even in English. The Greek word Paul originally wrote here communicated intense hatred. Don’t let anyone hate Timothy. What?

Building resurrection brides is what Christian church culture is like. We reach across divides. We share our lives, and we open our hearts.

It is a beautiful thing that this call for resurrection community building resurrection bridges came right after the powerful chapter 15 about the resurrection. Because we can look to The Resurrected One who has gone before us, and who swallowed up our sin and death. We can look to The Resurrected One, who rose in triumph over dividing points of all kinds. Whatever was causing divisions in Corinth, was overcome and mended by the Resurrected One.

We can look to the Resurrected One, who keeps on walking with us on this pathway of building community. Jesus shared His belongings with us, and shared His life with us. Jesus even gave away His own life for us on the cross. When we look to ourselves, we cannot do what is needed to build a community like this. But when we look to Jesus the Resurrected One, we find hope that we can work together to build God’s designed resurrection community within His Church.

Conclusion: We summarize with 3 practical steps for the resurrection community.

Step 1 – we share our money until we become generous. We share consistently, proportionally, and deliberately. We set aside a portion of our income every paycheck, and we and share it. Our first step is to share and share again, until it becomes natural for us, because Jesus changed our nature.

Step 2 – we share our lives until we are true friends. We get to know people who are different from us within our church community and beyond our church community. We connect with people on the other side of various dividing lines. We share our hearts and lives. We keep going until we are friends.

Step 3 – we bridge dividing lines with only Christ's love to lead us. Whenever we go outside the church and we find troubled persons, and we start to help them. We work toward having a true friendship with those in need.

We do all of this in the light of the Risen Lord, who has already won our victory. Let me end by reminding us of the end of the previous chapter, “...*thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*”