

1Corinthians 19-01-27a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 27th of January, 2019, and it is a historic day.

We are as far forward in time as anybody has ever been in the history of mankind, and I'm excited to see what the day is going to bring forth, being that unique and that special. We are going to continue our study this morning in the Epistle to Corinth from Paul, the first of the two that we have preserved. This is one of a number of letters that was sent.

We know of letters that were not preserved. This particular one was. We have come to the ultimate chapter, chapter 16, and we are looking at Paul's anticipation of visit, the collection for the saints.

Let's take a moment as we approach our study this morning to ask God's blessing on it and on our fellowship and on what we will hopefully be able to do with what we learn this morning in the days ahead. Father, we are grateful for the provision and the plan that has brought us to this point in time. We're privileged and grateful to be in the church age, to be able to see so much of your plan as it has unfolded in history, to look at the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in retrospect, to have the presence and power of your Holy Spirit to lead us, to guide us, to enable us, and to motivate us for the future that is so near at hand with the return of the Lord Jesus and our entrance into future things and greater and expanded possibilities.

We thank you for this portion of Scripture. We know that all of what you have given to us in our Bible is inspired and profitable, and we pray that we will find that doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in what we look at this morning that will thoroughly furnish us for all good works. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. We began this chapter after the wonderful extended treatment of the resurrection, its importance as the core of our Christian faith and the declaration of the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

That's, of course, in a different letter. But having concluded with a quote from Hosea, O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? And we have to correct that, because if you look at Greek, depending on which text you use, those verses are reversed. And they're different in the Septuagint of Hosea than they are in the New Testament.

So by the time you've looked at the New Testament in two or three different manuscripts, and you've looked at Hosea in the Septuagint, this is my excuse for making sure I got the sting and the victory in order. And, of course, it's neither sting nor victory in the Hosea passage. It is two different words in Hebrew.

So that would be a fascinating study in and of itself. But we have covered what is essential to us about the resurrection, the order of it, the anticipation of it, the encouragement at the end of

the chapter that tells us that because of it, we should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. And in the Lord is in that verse twice, because that should be our frequent gut check.

Am I doing what I am doing in the Lord? We should be abounding in the work of the Lord, because labor in the Lord is not in vain. That brings us to chapter 16. Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also on the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as you may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

And when I come, whoever you approve, by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. That's as much as we have covered thus far.

I want to get my Greek text, which I don't always use because I have it here on the computer. However, I have not got it with me, so I'll defer that. I'll use what I have in front of me instead.

In the first case, I mentioned last time that concerning the collection, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. And this audience of Corinth is basically in the broad area known as Achaia. Paul is currently at the town of Ephesus, and so he is looking to go into Macedonia.

From there, you have Achaia, you have Macedonia, and this is the area in which he is going to be collecting for the saints. We know about this. Paul had done this once before.

If you turn back to the book of Acts, chapter 11, real quickly, Paul had come back after Peter's news about the sheet being let down and so on, beginning at verse 27. In those days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. Now this is early on. This is the first relief effort.

This they also did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. He's still being called Saul at this point. And that is Paul's initial experience with collection and delivery for those who are in need.

This is a second and much later collection that we have in 1 Corinthians. It is mentioned in a number of places. It is given extended treatment in the next letter, 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and chapter 9. It is also mentioned in Romans chapter 15.

So let's take a look at Romans 15 right quick to fill in the details. And the reason we're doing this is the Corinthians already had this information. You remember when we see Paul saying, now concerning in his letters, he's often responding to points from a letter that he has received.

And you know, now concerning what you wrote me about. And evidently Paul had written an earlier letter where he gave more detailed justification perhaps for making this collection. And they wrote back and they said, well, how exactly do you want us to do this? And so he is saying now concerning the collection, here's what I want you to do, because there is a peculiar absence of justification.

He just says, well, concerning the collection as though they already know about it. Well, we need to fill ourselves in because we don't have that background necessarily that they had. So if you turn to Romans chapter 15, just a few pages back, you will find that he discusses this gift there.

If you begin in verse 22, talking to the Romans, he says, for this reason I've been much hindered from coming to you, but now no longer having a place in these parts and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey and to be helped on my way there by you. If first I may enjoy your company for a while.

Notice he is on his way somewhere, but he hopes to sort of get his big send off from Rome as he heads west to Spain. And we're going to see this same idea, just a few verses ahead of us in Corinthians. But now verse 25, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

For it pleased those, here are the areas, for Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. Notice here, we have explicitly mentioned the poor. You could ask yourself the question, well, how did they get to be poor? Why are they poor? Well, we have the clue, the first clue back in Acts 11, it appears that there continued to be crop failures and famine in that land.

We know also from the earlier chapters of Acts that there were apparently an inordinate number of widows. Remember, they had to make special arrangement care for the widows. Why so many widows? Well, we don't know the details, we have to guess.

But with the number of unsupported families there continuing, this wouldn't change. Their husbands aren't going to do the first Corinthians 15 and come back from the dead. So with a scarcity of men able to support with famine, some of the men may have been persecuted and driven out, leaving their families behind because they had no means of transporting them.

We also know that there was persecution in Jerusalem of various kinds, not only from the Jews as Saul himself had participated in, but also Romans were getting nervous about insurrection and rebellion and were clamping down with a heavy fist. So there could be a number of reasons why there is a need in Jerusalem that doesn't prevail in other places. But it doesn't say it in Corinthians, but it says it here that this collection is not just for Jerusalem, but for the poor.

So I'm going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints, and we're going to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. Now, this is not only a worthy

charitable effort in the sense of love for the brethren and an echo of the Old Testament concern that God expressed for widows and orphans and the poor, but this is part of an agreement and a mutual understanding among the prominent leaders in the early church, which include the apostles Peter and John, the half-brother of the Lord James, and Paul himself. We find this out from the book of Galatians, and if you'll turn over to Galatians chapter 2, you have the account of Paul going to Jerusalem after 14 years with Barnabas and Titus, and in verse 2 it says, "...communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run or had run in vain." You have the story of Titus and circumcision, and in verse 9, this is Galatians 2.9, "...when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised." Notice, they shake hands on this agreement.

It's a literal handshake deal. Right hand of fellowship, we go to the Gentiles, they to the circumcised, they desired only, verse 10, "...that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." Remember the poor. This is a pretty important conclusion to this initial meeting.

They meet, they say, let's not step on each other's toes here in doing the work of the Lord. Here's where we will minister, here's where you will minister, and please remember the poor. This is the background for what we have in our chapter 16.

He says, "...the instructions that I gave to the folks in Galatia, I am giving also to you. So, on the first day of the week, and I did some more work on this because it's Mia to Sabbatu, which as I said is the first, Haste Mia Hen. It's one of the things you learn your first day in Greek.

It's like when they teach you Uno Dos Tres in Spanish. Well, the three forms of the number one in Greek are Haste, Mia, and Hen. Haste and Hen are actually related, but one in Greek, Mia, can also be an ordinal, which would be first.

And then you have to Sabbatu, and it threw me, and I mentioned last time that I wondered why this was in the plural, and could it possibly be a reference to the weeks of Pentecost since he mentions Pentecost later on. But in digging around subsequently to find uses of this, in Mark and in Luke, right after the crucifixion and burial, when the ladies go back to the tomb on the first day of the week, it is this exact phrase. It's Mia to Sabbatu.

So, I'm now back in the fold and comfortable that this means the first day of the week, but it's accompanied or introduced by the preposition kata. Kata means according to, according to the first day of the week. And in this particular sense, the technical term is that it's distributive, and it means each.

And that's where the word each comes from. So, kata, Mia, Sabbatu. And this is important to us because this is the earliest witness to the shift in the day of meeting or the day that is important to Christians as opposed to the Jews.

The Jews, it's the last day of the week, the Sabbath. But this is the first day of the week. And this is the earliest hint we have that the church did things on the first day of the week, perhaps in honor of the resurrection.

It doesn't specifically say that they gathered for worship, but it does say that on the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside. And we saw that this was to set aside, to put or place, to tithemi beside themselves, and this is at their home. And I was gratified to see that the International Critical Commentary is very emphatic on this point that this was not a collection taken up by the church.

Collections at the church do not occur until centuries after this. There is no early witness of money being collected at church in New Testament days. So, these somethings, these potential gifts are to be set aside by individuals on the first day of the week.

And it says, storing up as he may prosper. Storing up is from the same word that we get thesaurus. A thesaurus is a treasury, and this is treasure, lay aside this collection, this treasury, this gathering, set it aside as he may prosper.

And the root in the middle of that word is hadas, and it originally meant a prosperous journey. It's like, you know, go with God or Godspeed, but it came to be used in generally for anything that goes well. If it goes well, if it goes rather than you going.

And so, you know, somebody's leaving and we say goodbye, which is short for God be with ye. This was the original idea in the word, but he says, setting up as it goes well. This was to be over and above.

So, notice the perhaps three pertinent points about this offering. A, it was determined by and set aside by individuals at home. B, it was voluntary and not compulsory.

And C, it was no set amount, i.e. not a tithe. Not a tithe, not compulsory, not collected by the church. Why on the first day of the week? Well, if you're going to do your charitable giving, do you want to do it right after you get your paycheck or right after you've paid all of your bills? It is better to make that something of a priority at the beginning of the week before you have spent down and you're at the end of the week.

So, the notion is, look at where you stand at the outset and set aside what you are going to contribute to the needy saints in Jerusalem as you are looking forward to the coming week. Make that something you think about at the beginning, not at the end. So, there's an implication here of it being a priority.

You'll be at the market later this week, but if you've already set that aside, you're not going to be waiting to see if there's leftovers. So, it's as the table is set, take a few things and set them aside, not as you're cleaning up and, oh, here's a few bones that haven't been quite picked clean. That's what we can observe here without much effort.

So that there be no collections when I come. Again, if Paul shows up and says, hey, what can we give to the saints at Jerusalem? That's pressure, and that's having to make these decisions without forethought, without looking to see what the situation is. Paul says, let's do this in a planned manner over time in advance so that we don't suddenly put a bunch of pressure on.

You see the opposite of this a lot of times if a church undertakes a building program, and every single one of these is violated. It's not for others, it's for us, it's not to say that you can't do both, but look at the thermometer on the wall, it's not quite full. What else? I know some of you that have given already, go back and see if you can give a little bit more.

I've seen other churches that say, it looks like we're outgrowing our facilities. Let's begin to set aside something in the and we'll watch, and if the building fund reaches a certain point, we'll do it in cash. We're not asking you to obligate yourself to a monthly contribution so that we can make payments on a note, we'll do it on a cash basis.

As God prospers us, as we're able to set it aside over and beyond the other things that we do, we'll do it that way. So then he says in verse 3, when I come, whomever you approve by your letters, I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. And I don't know if this struck your ear a little funny last time, but Paul is writing from Ephesus and he says, you know, send me back a letter and tell me who it is that's going to take the gift, but then he's going to come to Corinth, so why does he need a letter? Why can't they just... and I went back and looked at the Greek in this and what he's basically saying is, when I come, whomever you approve, I will send with letters to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

These guys will be entrusted with however much you have collectively put together, thesaurized, and then I will give letters of introduction to those men as they carry the gift to Jerusalem. So I will send with letters is how it works. Now, why is this important? Wouldn't you think that the people in Jerusalem, we don't care where the money comes from.

If the money's coming in, that's great. Paul says, no, I want these individuals to have apostolic authority as they bring this gift, that they are recognized as conveying something that was done under an apostolic initiative. This is from Paul.

These are men who are acting as his proxies, if you will, and it establishes the genuineness and the legitimacy of the gift. And it tells me that Paul wanted to ensure that in the desperate situation in Jerusalem, he didn't help to sponsor just any old, we'll take money from any source. This would be seen as something that God has provided through his apostolic and pastoral and church structure, not we're grabbing any old shekels we can get because we're poor.

And there is a right way to be provided for, and there are other ways that are not right. And Paul, by sending these men potentially with letters, establishes the gift. It's okay to take this.

It's not illicit gains. It hasn't been given with bad motives. This has been overseen and all will be to the glory of God.

If you have a church raffle because you're trying to add on a wing and you bring in unbelievers, or you have a movie night and charge admission for the tickets, or if you go off and sell cookies and take the profits or whatever, that's a different way of fundraising and that's not what's happening here. These are voluntary gifts motivated by what people know about the need. It is super intended and administered by legitimate church authority.

So although it was not collected by the church or by the apostle, it is going to be delivered for use. And this is helpful to remember that regardless of the way collections are taken up, how it is applied, where it is sent, needs to be a thoughtful process by those who have been recognized as having some knowledge and having leadership and having some God-given authority to do so in the church. So this is an apostolically directed destination for the gift.

And that's established by these letters or, as you see in the next verse, perhaps by Paul's presence himself. If it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. So Paul says, I don't know if I'm going or not.

And why would this be? Well, Paul, of course, is an apostle. What's his primary function? What did God stop him on the Damascus Road in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ to do? Is he a courier for offerings and gifts? No. If it is fitting, he doesn't know if he yet should go with this thing or not.

It could depend on the amount. If the contributions when he arrives there are relatively small, then should he be pulled off of apostolic duties? Should he be taken out of the field to go back to the barracks, as it were, or should these other guys take it? But if it is something substantial, he might need to go and talk to the apostles on the other end and give it a more fulsome analysis. What should be done with this? How should it be distributed? Maybe be there to ensure that he can have a say in where it goes and so on, if it's a large amount.

It could be based on the amount. It could be based on leading from the Holy Spirit that he's not yet gotten. Should he go or not? And he hasn't made up his mind at this point.

I may send it with letters via men that you designate, or I may go with it. He doesn't know at this point. An interesting situation.

That brings us to verse 5. Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia, for I am passing through Macedonia. And it may be that I will remain or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey wherever I go. Remember Romans 15? I'm going to come to you at Rome.

I'd love to spend some time with you and then have you send me on my journey to Spain. So we've seen just in our brief look, we've seen two cases where Paul is going to go somewhere, but he is going to stop on the way with believers for refreshment, for encouragement. He doesn't say, you know, and if you could set aside a little something for me to speed me on my journey, he doesn't say that to the Romans or to the Corinthians.

What is he looking for here? As you go, you have the opportunity for fellowship. He is on the way, but he's not going to get so caught up in the mission that he doesn't take time for fellowship, for association. Paul does a lot of traveling.

He does a lot of evangelism as an apostle. And many times he's just got a small group of believers with him. So when he comes to a place, if he passes through a place that has got an established church, what does he want to do? Stop and spend some time.

And this is quality time. This is extended fellowship. I would like to stay with you.

It may be that I will remain. I may even spend the whole winter with you. Even Paul the Apostle, with all of the power of the Holy Spirit, all of the ministry that his close companions provided, thrives on extended fellowship with believers.

And I would suggest that all of us do. And wherever we may go, whatever we may be doing, it is something to think about. Can I plan a way to spend some time with believers that maybe I'm not ordinarily with? But there can be mutual refreshment, restoration, fresh speaking the truth to one another in love, and celebrating the work that God has done, the blessings that God has bestowed, the provision that God has made, the things that encourage us as we share them can encourage others.

So once again, just as we saw in Psalm 23, with that allusion to being in the encampment and in the place where rest is taken, God leads us there. And Paul is watching for that. And he looks to exploit it and to avail himself of it.

We are not isolated. We are not lone marbles rolling down some garden hose from birth to death. We are brethren.

We are a body with many parts that are associated and have contact. And it is important to look for and exploit opportunities that we have to be with each other, to potentially be a blessing to each other, to receive blessing from each other. Spiritual gifts are pointless for edifying the body if you're never in contact with the body.

So you can see here Paul's focus, as in Romans, on getting with believers and being refreshed and providing refreshment in it. You can see this many other places in his letters. He says, I do not wish to see you now on the way.

I hope to stay a while with you if the Lord permits. And of course, all of this is predicated on God's plan. And as we know from Ecclesiastes, there is a time for one thing and there is a time for its counterpart.

There is a time for fellowship and there is a time to be busy undertaking our task and carrying our burden and participating in life as God sees fit. So is God going to allow fellowship then or later? Is he going to permit rest and refreshment or does he have a task at hand? Well, it depends. And you can see here also Paul's sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, God's

arrangement of circumstances.

He doesn't say, I have made a plan to stay through the winter. I have made a plan. He's watching for the circumstantial guidance of God.

He is waiting. The Holy Spirit doesn't speak to him in the night every single time and say, go to Macedonia. Don't go to Macedonia.

Stop in Corinth. Don't stop in Corinth. Paul is figuring this out by looking at factors in his circumstances.

God evidently, as we look at Paul's example, certainly leads through circumstances. How does he do this? He says, I'm going to tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. And this isn't because he is necessarily planning to celebrate Pentecost in Ephesus.

I don't know that there was a Pentecost celebration. You know, Pentecost is an assembly feast. Why is he waiting until Pentecost? Well, we know from Isagogix that travel across the Mediterranean Sea was not typically undertaken in the winter.

The sea is too stormy. And we've seen what happens when people try to take journeys when the winds are too strong. And Paul himself suffers shipwreck.

So waiting in Ephesus until Pentecost is until travel conditions are better. And this was a happy way to refer to the time of year when travel was safe and much more pleasant. You would winter in one place or in another.

But back to the idea of how is Paul determining what he's going to do? Will he go to Jerusalem or not? Will he stay in Corinth through the winter or not? Look at verse 9. I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost, not only because that's when travel is more fortuitous, but a great and effective door has opened to me and there are many adversaries. A great and effective door. The word effective there is the word that means strength.

You know, you've got your five power words in Greek. And this is the one that means strength in the sense of its effectiveness. It is an energeo, an energeis, an energeis door, an energy door.

Great is megalay and energeo, this is energy is something that's put to effect. You know, your energy bill is what you use to heat to power things. So what is an energetic door? What is an effective door that has been opened? Great and effective door.

Well, obviously door here is used figuratively for opportunity, right? There is a great and not just power in the sense of potential. It's not great and potentially effective, but it is effective. It's great.

And it is something I am exploiting. This door has been opened and I've already, this opportunity has already been presented and it is being effectively exploited. So what do we

think about this? Divine guidance in circumstances, waiting to make decisions until, you know, we like to say as the Lord leads and we don't always find doctrines that we can extrapolate or interpolate to decide what to do.

There is guidance in circumstance. And here's an example in the life of Paul. Why has he made the decision to remain in Ephesus until after Pentecost? Because there is this great opportunity and he is being effective in it.

It's effective. The energy is being expended to good effect in this opportunity. So what kind of an opportunity is it? Is it a business opportunity? Is it a social opportunity? What is it? Obviously there is fruit being born from his evangelistic and teaching ministry.

There are people with whom he is communicating that are coming to the Lord, that are growing in grace and knowledge of the Savior. Paul can tell that his presence is having a beneficial effect. You remember when Jesus would go to a village and he would heal all that came to him? And then he would get up and say, let's move.

And the disciples said, but there's a lot more people here. He is there and a lot of people are being healed by him. But what is the effect? Are people being drawn closer to the Father? Jesus would realize that, yes, people were coming to him for a circumstantial benefit, but not a spiritual benefit.

And it was no longer a great and effective opportunity. It was more of the same for people coming for the wrong reasons. It's pretty easy to see the difference, right? So what are we looking for as we examine our circumstances and are looking for the leading of God? Well, here is a great example.

Is there effective spiritual benefit in operation? Pastor has been at a church a while and he says, well, should I stay or should I go? I've been invited to a different opportunity, bigger sanctuary, deeper baptistry, whatever it might be. There's somebody saying that there's some green grass over here on the other side of the fence. Should I stay or should I go? Should Paul stay in Ephesus or should he pull up stakes and go back to Corinth? They've obviously got a need in Corinth.

There's poor saints in Jerusalem. They've obviously got a need. Should Paul go there and help fill that need or not? He's got to make these decisions.

There is a need. I could go. I could put a shoulder under that load.

Should I or should I not? Why is he going to stay in Ephesus and not go to Corinth? And when he gets to Corinth, he'll look around in Corinth and decide whether or not he should go to Jerusalem. What's he looking for? There's a key here in verse nine. A great and effective door has opened to me, has opened.

It's already here. I'm not sticking around to see if a door opens. There's a great door here and

I'm waiting to see if it's going to open.

No, it has opened and there is great effectiveness in it. So one of the applications we can make here is if you are at a decision point to do something different, one of the things to pay attention to is, well, how effective am I where I am? What part of the work of the Lord is already being accomplished here? One in the hand is worth two in the bush. If I am bearing fruit and God is getting his work done in and through my presence and my particular spiritual gift right now, then I need to really give it a think if I'm going to change.

And Paul says, this great and effective door has been opened, so I'm staying here. As long as I can walk through this door and it's effective, it's clear that I need to stay here. So guidance and circumstances, interesting question, interesting level of perspicacity required to not misread or misapply what we see in our circumstances.

So, hope to stay with you if the Lord permits. Would love to come see you, but I'm staying here because, and we know who has opened this great and effective door, it's God, right? God has opened a door, so that determines whether I stay or whether I go. Well, we'll pick up here at verse 10, looking at Timothy.

Interesting reference to Timothy here coming up when we come back from the break.