

10/24/10

## Something Worth Fighting For -- 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

- How many things do you have in your life that fit under the heading of “it’s better to get a new one than to try to fix the old one?”...
  - and is that list getting longer or shorter?...
- my guess is, it’s getting longer...if that thing breaks, we would just get a new one...
  - when I was growing up, our next door neighbor owned a TV repair shop...
  - and that was just the way it was...when your TV broke, you either fixed it yourself...or you took it to the shop...
  - I’m sure some of the older folks here remember taking the back off your TV, pulling out one of those tubes that had gone bad, taking it down to the shop and matching it up with a replacement, coming back home and popping the new one in and you were back in business...
  - or letting them come and pick it up and take it back to the shop for a few days and then deliver it when it was fixed...
  - in fact, our neighbor had a delivery van that he drove back and forth for that very purpose...
  - the thought that you would just replace your TV when it stopped working wasn’t part of the way many of us were raised at all...
  - well, for a variety of reasons, you just don’t fix things like that anymore...it’s not worth fighting for...you just get a new one...
  - in fact, I would be stunned if there were more than a handful of people in our services today whose primary TV is over ten years old...
- and I’m not saying that’s there anything necessarily wrong with that...it’s more of an observation...we live in a throwaway society...
  - and one of the upshots of that is...we have fewer and fewer things in our life all the time that are really worth saving...are worth fixing...are worth fighting for...
  - and the corollary to that is – whatever items fit into that category become all the more valuable to you...because they’re so rare...
- for long-time residents of our town, we faced that as a community back in the early 1990’s...and it had to do with the renovation of our courthouse...
- **pic #1** – Did you know that the first courthouse was built in our county in 1829?...that’s 181 years ago...
- **pic #2** – that was replaced by this building in 1845...the cost of that structure was a whopping \$5000...
- **pics 3-7** – The courthouse as we know it today was built in 1882...in fact the cornerstone was dedicated on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1882...so we’re coming up on the 128<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that event—who says you never learn anything in church...
- but, back in the 1980’s...around the centennial of the current courthouse, the building was falling in disrepair...
  - it’s expensive to fix roof problems on a building like that...
  - there were all sorts of heating and air conditioning issues...
  - you can imagine the plumbing and electrical challenges...handicapped accessibility...technological needs...
- our community had a really important decision to make...was the courthouse worth saving...was it worth fighting for...was it worth fixing?...

- the bids came in at over 13 million dollars...(back in the old days, that was a lot of money)...
- also at that time our community had a couple of people who used to write humorous letters to the editor on a regular basis...
  - one of them wrote in and said, instead of spending 13 million dollars to renovate the courthouse, let's just demolish it, replace it with a pole barn for \$250,000, and send the rest of the money to the Cubs with hopes that they'll beef up their roster and finally go out and win a pennant...
- and he had a very humorous way of making the point---of course we have to renovate the courthouse...
- **pics #8-18**
  - and there was a group of community leaders who were fiscal conservatives...but who also were visionaries and saw the importance of that building for our town...
  - and they took whatever heat they had to take and provided the kind of careful leadership that was needed...
  - and today we have a courthouse that many of us, when we have out of town guests who want to see the community – that's one of the places we're going to show them for sure...
  - and most people in Lafayette would say – that one was worth saving...that was worth fixing...that one was worth fighting for...some things just are...
- now, here's my question...in general, is the church of Jesus Christ like that to the people of God?...and in particular, is this church like that to you?
- with those questions in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 16...page 139 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- here's some words you seldom hear from me, so please listen carefully – today we're finishing a series...we started studying the book of 1 Corinthians back in January...and today we're going to land the plane in chapter 16...
  - we've organized all of this around **Taking the Next Step...with Joy...**
  - and I hope you can look back over this past year and point to specific steps of growth you've taken as a result of studying the various topics that Paul raised with his brothers and sisters in Christ in Corinth...
- now, the question is – how is Paul going to land the plane?...
  - there's no doubt that this church is riddled with problems...and he has systematically, and sometimes forcefully addressed their questions and his concerns...
  - then he gave us the most comprehensive discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ found anywhere in Scripture...
  - so what's the final verdict on their church...on the church...on our church?...
    - is it like one of today's TV sets – if it stops working, just go get a new one?...
    - or is it like the county courthouse...it's worth saving, it's worth fixing, it's worth fighting for...
- let's listen in – **read 1 Corinthians 16:1-24...**
- we're talking this morning about how the church is **Something Worth Fighting For...**

- and perhaps the central part of the argument is found in verse 13...there's no question about what Paul thinks about the Corinthian church...
  - even the people who had divided up among different groups...I'm of Paul...Apollos...Cephas...Christ...
  - or of the carnal Christians who could only be med milk when Paul really wanted to give them meat...
  - or of those who would not elevate purity in the church by dealing with incestuous man...
  - or of the people who were taking one another to court...or using their bodies in an ungodly fashion...
  - or those who didn't care about pleasing their spouses sexually...or those who weren't valuing single people in the church...
  - you could march your way logically through the entire book and think, surely Paul is going to wash his hands of the entire matter...just start over – it's easier to give birth than the raise the dead...
  - but that's what he says in this central part of the argument...
  - instead he pleads with them... **1 Corinthians 16:13-14 - Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.**

- there it is in a nutshell...the church is something worth fighting for...even with all of its challenges and weaknesses...be on the alert, stand firm in the faith...
  - function in God's house in a way that is both careful and compassionate...

- now, with the time we have remaining, let's look for **4 ways we show that we value our church...**

### **I. By Practicing Financial Integrity**

- it's interesting and instructive that right after an extended discussion of the resurrection, Paul immediately turns to the issue of how we handle our finances...
- now, let me just say a couple of things about that...
  - I talk about giving very rarely in this church...
    - I had a counselee say to me last week that he and his buddies have watched this church grow and develop over the years and they used to like to justify their unbelief by saying – well, that church is only interested in your money...
    - and now his life is a mess and he's asking for counseling and he said – you know, I'm embarrassed, because you're not charging me a dime and I've learned so much about what it means to be a follower of Christ, and how God's Word has direction and answers for daily living...
    - it's obvious to me now that what I used to say about this church simply isn't true I'm ashamed I used to say it without having any idea what I was talking about...
  - also, the Bible actually says a lot about money, but about much more than simply giving to the church...
    - that's why next week we're going to begin Stewardship Month, which is an annual emphasis at our church...and Pastor Green will explain more of this next week...
    - but the word stewardship is a very big word...that covers all aspects of life...anything that God has entrusted to us and whether we're being faithful to the trust...
    - and then when you start boiling that down...what Scripture says about money is much broader than just the issue of giving...

- God's Word has principles for how we earn money, and how we spend money, how we save it...what place it should have in our lives...
  - and this year, because of everything that is happening in our economy...
  - and the pressure and concern that many people in and outside our church have...we are going to focus on various aspects of our financial lives during the entire month...
  - now, don't process that through your grid and think that Steve just said we're going to have 4 messages on giving – we're not...
  - what I said was – we realize that there are a lot of questions out there about money, and a lot of concerns, and fears, and confusion...
  - we want to open the Word and find as many helpful answers as possible...and I would encourage you to invite a friend to come along with you – we'll organize it around **Taking the Next Step in our Financial Lives...**

- now, back to this text...one of the ways we show that we value our church is by practicing financial integrity...in other words, we're the real thing, and one of the things that proves that is the condition of our checkbooks...
- now, what motivates that kind of generosity?...the answer in part from this text is...

#### **A. A concern for the needs of others.**

##### **- v. 1 – Now concerning the collection for the saints...**

- there is a historical setting to this passage with which you may not be familiar...
- you need to understand it at least in seminal form to really be impacted by all of this the way God desires...
- one of the amazing aspects of the church is that it was multi-ethnic...God was bringing Jews and Gentiles together...
- and people were in the process of paying a huge price for opening declaring that they were followers of Christ...
- that was especially true of Jewish men and women who were often ostracized from their families as soon as they trusted Christ...
- compounding that was the fact that a famine had hit Jerusalem and the surrounding area...
  - so the Christians in the church at Jerusalem were especially suffering...and Paul was in the process of organizing a love offering to be given to the Jewish Christians...
  - you can read more about that in places like **Acts 11:27-30** and **Romans 15:25-26**
  - now, there a lot more we could say about that – in the providence of God, there was a marvelous opportunity here to bring these two groups of people together...it was a perfect way to put feet on verse 14 – Let all that you do be done in love...
- and Paul is now instructing the men and women in Corinth...be the real thing...don't just talk about the way you love others...but take out your checkbook...
  - not out of obligation, or duty...but because you really care about the needs of others...
  - now, let's add another detail from verse 2...

#### **B. In a consistent fashion.**

##### **- 1 Corinthians 16:2 - On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.**

- the first day of each week – they certainly understood what that meant...the first day, Sunday...(like Hyundai)...when the church came together...part of their worship to God was to participate in a generous, financial offering to meet the needs of others

- you may know that many churches and other non-profit groups are really hurting this year...there was another article about that in the news this week...
- and that's serious – most missionaries would tell you that they are regularly hearing from their supporting churches with news that they are able to continue to provide the same level of financial support...so here's a missionary family on the other side of the world depending on the America churches that sent them and now they're stuck for sure...
- and you may have wondered...has that impacted our church?...and the answer, by God's grace, is no...our giving today is stronger than it's ever been in our history....
  - why is that...humanly speaking?...
  - why has the average person who attends this church, with very little fanfare or instruction from me, gotten in the habit of the first check they write (or transfer they authorize) is to their church?...week after week or month after month?...
  - it's because they care about the needs of people...and they want the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed brightly around the world?...
  - and does that mean they think their church is perfect...of course not...they're part of it...but the mission is worth fighting for...
- one other detail we want to bring into this discussion...even in the early church, there were...

### **C. With the appropriate checks and balances.**

#### **1 Corinthians 16:3 - When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;**

- did you see that – whomever you approve...
- Paul didn't say – just gather up the money and I'll take it...no, he was expecting financial integrity from them, and he welcomed it for himself...
- did you know that our church and all our associated ministries hires an outside accounting firm to perform an accounting review of how we function financially here?...
- and that company, by the way, which works with more non-profits than most if not all other accounting forms in our town, told us this year that we are in the strongest position of any other non-profit with which they do business...
- again – to God be the glory...
- also, did you know that our pastors have no direct access to money?...not a dime...I do not know any combination to any safe...we have 28 bank accounts--I am not a signatory on any of them...
- here's the overall point – if this church is a like a TV to you...there's not much commitment to keeping it going...
- but if it's like the county courthouse to you – you show that in part by the way you give...
- and I would just ask you straight up – what does your check-book reveal about how valuable you consider your Lord, and your church, to be?...
- a second way we show that we value our church is...

### **II. By Constantly Looking for New Ministry Opportunities and Challenges**

#### **- 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 - But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me...**

##### **A. Expecting God to provide wide doors for effective service.**

- see, even at this point in his life and ministry, Paul still believed that God was mediating his plan and program through the establishment of local churches...that was God's plan A, plan B, and plan C for this age...
- and sure there were challenges---we'll talk about that more in a minute...but Paul was plumb fired up about the open doors of ministry---there's no way around that...

- that's another reason I'm very thankful for this church...
- there are a lot of visionary people around here...constantly looking for the next ministry opportunity...
- At our November church family night, we'll be voting on whether or not to buy the old Smitty's property on Northwestern Avenue...
- we'd like to build a new Student Ministry Center there that would be the new home base for Purdue Bible Fellowship and all its associated activities...along with a biblical counseling center for the students and staff of Purdue and other residents of West Lafayette...the site is even large enough that we'll be talking to the government officials about some kind of ministry housing there...we're not sure yet...
  - but it was a great discussion with our pastors and deacons...who are anything but yes men when it comes to these kinds of issues...
  - but when the discussion as done...they voted unanimously to recommend that project to our church family...why?...because they value this church?...and each of them knows that if we move forward, it will require additional financial sacrifice on their part...
    - in fact, every one of our leaders has already made a commitment to the capital campaign which we'll talk about more formally after all the planning work is done..
    - but even with that in the back of their minds...they said, let's move ahead...this church and its associated ministries are worth fighting for...
    - this is another open door for ministry that God is giving us...
      - and by the way – I hope we never take that for granted...(cf. the discussion we had at the pastor/deacons' mtg regarding our attitude/stance toward working with the city – no reason to be nervous – God has already given us more than others, by far...we certainly already have much more than we deserve...)
- here's something I would like to ask you to put on your radar screen – our annual stewardship celebration on Sunday night, November 21<sup>st</sup>...we're going to be doing it differently this year...(develop the specifics)...
- but here's the headline for what that event will be about...
  - though this has been an unusual year in many ways...and honestly in a few ways, a frustrating year...when the dust settles...this may have been one of our most effective years in terms of what is occurring...or what has been set up to occur in the days ahead...
  - let me just give you a sampling of some of the kinds of things we hope to highlight...
    1. The number of men and women who have come to Christ...(develop those who have been baptized and some of the great stories we've heard...)
    2. The opportunities to connect others to opportunities for ongoing growth and service (will say more about that in a minute)
    3. Counseling Note rewrite (develop)
    4. Incredible openness on the part of our community leaders...
    - **play Tony Roswarski video...**
    - develop the couple that just came to Christ as a result of that kind of community impact – point is – we have an incredible number of open doors...[mention other videos]...

5. BCC – some of the recent developments, NANC votes, December meeting in Chicago, pending launch next year...
6. Developments in Electronic communication – upgraded websites coming on-line in the next 6 months, blogs, twitter, FB, etc
7. Staff licensure...
8. Seminary Accreditation...
9. VOH Greenhouse – possibly being underwritten in part by a local company...

#### **B. Accepting the challenges that come with open doors.**

- what Paul says at the end of that verse is amazing...
- **1 Corinthians 16:8-9 - But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.**
- but notice carefully – it's not – there are many adversaries so I'm out of here...
  - there's many adversaries, so the church is a like a TV – trash it and get something else...
  - no, it's like the courthouse – there are problems, and we're going to face the problems head on...

### **III. By Looking Out for One Another**

- what we read in verses 10-12 is just a classic example of people who love each other watching one another's backs...

#### **A. Timothy's timidity.**

- there is no question about how useful Timothy was to the apostle Paul – it was a special and treasured relationship...
- **Philippians 2:19-22 - But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father.**
- no there was no question about his worth...but the Scripture also makes it clear that Timothy struggled with fear, with timidity...
- and so Paul had to decide what he was going to do with that...
- and you can tell a lot about how much a person truly loves someone else by the way they respond to their weaknesses...
  - some people exploit other people's weaknesses, or ridicule them, or expose or magnify them...
  - not Paul – Timothy was part of the church, and the church building team...and so he had his friend's back...
    - and there were times he talked to Timothy directly about his fear—we have examples of that in Scripture...
    - but he didn't let other people misuse his friend...
      - **See that he is with you without cause to be afraid**
      - **He is doing the Lord's work**
      - **Let no one despise him**
      - **Send him on his way in peace**
    - in other words – mess with Timothy, and I'm going to whack you upside the head (that's in the original Greek)

- he does the same thing regarding...

### **B. Apollos' schedule.**

**1 Corinthians 16:12 - But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all *his* desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.**

- it's not hard to figure that one out – some people had wanted Apollos to come to Corinth for a visit and Apollos decided that wouldn't fit his schedule...and so some folks were fussing about it...imagine that...

- and Paul had to decide what he was going to do with that criticism of his friend...

- and it's pretty clear what's happening here, isn't it?...

- he had his back...not excusing sin...no evidence of that at all..

- but remember, there were some people in the church who were doing the whole I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos...thing...

- this would have been a perfect opportunity for Paul to have thrown his friend under the bus and tried to attract all those people to him...

- no way – this isn't a game...that's why he said in verse 13 – act like men...

- Apollos didn't come because it didn't fit his schedule – get over it...

- (could develop the amount of activities around here – if everybody is expected to be at everything, we're in trouble...)

- (develop – you might say – I wish I had some people looking out for my back like that -- that's one of the great benefits of being part of a church – talk about next year's theme – steps you have to take to become part of the family – last 2 church family nights of the year...)

### **IV. By Cultivating Appropriate Thankfulness and Appreciation for the Team**

- did you notice that Paul ends this book by talking about people...

- **v. 15 - Household of Stephanas (the first fruits of Achaia)**
- **v. 17 – Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus**
- **v. 18 – churches at Asia greet you**
- **v. 18 – Aquila and Prisca**

- we value the church because it is filled with souls, with human beings---Jesus valued them, and we should too