

1 Corinthians 16:1-11

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Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Turn with me and your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 16. We have come to the last chapter of this great epistle of Paul.

While you're turning there, I'm going to turn on a fan so I can feel a little bit of breeze like you do. All right, let's read.

I'm going to read the last verse of chapter 15, verse 58, and then the first 12 verses of chapter 16. So let's read together. 15, 58, 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.

Now concerning the collection for the saints. As I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On 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.

And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me. I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey wherever I go.

[1 : 38] For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord as I am. So 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.

Now 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.

So how do you deal with uncertainty? Uncertain circumstances, potential transitions. Some of you may have just arrived in New Haven. Maybe you're trying to figure out what your life is going to look like in this new environment.

Maybe you're preparing for a new school year, or perhaps new rhythms with your kids. Some of you may be eagerly anticipating a new stage of life, post-college life, or married life, or parenthood, or being an empty nester, or retirement.

[2 : 51] Some of you may be feeling anxious, facing deadlines at work that you can't see how you'll meet, or health issues, or financial worries that keep you tossing and turning at night.

Maybe you're picking up the pieces and wondering how to go on after a relational conflict, or a breakup, or a divorce. You know, when we face an uncertain future, we can respond in different ways.

I think some of us can tend to be paralyzed by our fear. And so, we retreat from anything that involves risk. We immediately think of the worst possible outcome and make it our primary goal to avoid that.

We trust our own perceptions and our own instincts, and so we withdraw from any relationships and distrust others' advice. Now, others of us aren't paralyzed by fear.

Others of us tend to be naive in our hopes. And so, we instinctively say yes to new opportunities that come our way before we count the cost. And we always give other people the benefit of the doubt despite their apparent flaws and weaknesses.

[4 : 05] And we assume that we'll just sort of keep on going the way we've been going, and it'll all work out somehow in the end. But sometimes that path leads to overcommitment and burnout and disappointment when things seem to fall apart.

Now, the Apostle Paul in the passage we're looking at today acknowledges uncertainty. Notice some of the words Paul uses. Verse 4, if.

Verse 6, perhaps. Verse 7, I hope. Verse 7, if the Lord permits. Verse 12, when he has opportunity. Paul isn't quite sure exactly how all these things will turn out, and he acknowledges that contingency, that uncertainty.

But in the midst of uncertainty, the Apostle Paul is summoning us to be not paralyzed by fear, not naive in our hope, but steadfast.

Steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. Because Paul says, in this uncertain world, there is one thing of which we can be certain.

[5 : 14] As Christian believers, he says, your labor in the Lord is not in vain. In light of what Jesus has done for us on the cross and in the resurrection and in the promise that he's given us, that he will one day raise us with him, your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

And so, he says, in the midst of uncertainty, be steadfast. Now, when you first read chapter 16, it might feel like a sort of a laundry list of random details and tasks.

Sort of all the things that Paul wanted to say, but didn't fit into the really important sections of his letter, which we've already read. But I think chapter 16 is more than that. It flows out of chapter 15 and flows out of that call to be steadfast in the work of the Lord.

Chapter 15, if you've been here the last month, it's about the bodily resurrection of Jesus in history and how that guarantees the bodily resurrection of those who believe in Jesus in the future.

And at the end, Paul says, therefore, in light of the resurrection, hope and promise, be steadfast.

And what we see in verse 16, today in the first half of the chapter and next week in the second half of the chapter, is some practical instructions and concrete examples of how we can do just that.

[6 : 31] Today, I want to look at two areas that Paul mentions, that Paul focuses on, our resources in verses 1 to 4, and our relationships in verses 5 to 12, and how we can be steadfast in both of these areas in the midst of uncertainty.

So first, steadfast in managing our resources, verse 1 to 4. Now, in these verses, Paul talks about a collection. You might say, well, what exactly is Paul collecting for?

Well, he's not collecting money for himself. Verse 1, he says he's collecting money for the saints.

And verse 3, he mentions Jerusalem. We can learn more about this collection from Romans 15 or 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, where Paul describes it in more detail.

But here's a little bit of the background. For whatever reason, the church in Jerusalem had fallen on some hard times. We don't know exactly why. There are some hints in the book of Acts.

So, Acts 6, we know that there were many widows from different ethnic groups who were involved in the Jerusalem church. And the church organized a daily provision of food for these widows.

[7 : 42] That was no small project to continue, probably, on an ongoing basis for people who had no other resources for basic needs. We also know in Acts 11, and from other historical sources, there was a severe famine that afflicted Judea and Jerusalem in 46 and 47 A.D.

Now, Paul was probably writing about five years afterwards. But if you've been to a place that has been decimated by a catastrophe, you know, if you went down to New Orleans to help out, you could go down there five years after Katrina, and there was still plenty of work to do.

And so, Paul was...so, the Jerusalem church was probably facing sort of the long-term effects of that two-year catastrophe. There might have been other reasons as well, but what we know is that many of the Christians in Jerusalem were in a situation that we might call chronic poverty.

And so, the Apostle Paul made it a priority at this point in his ministry. He spent about two years organizing and then later transporting, along with other people, this collection of relief funds from several other churches throughout the Roman Empire and bringing it all the way to Jerusalem.

And it's fascinating that Paul spent almost two years in order to do this and delayed some of his other plans to bring the gospel to unreached peoples, actually, in Spain in order to do this.

[9 : 12] So, he saw it as a priority. And then when he got to Jerusalem, he got arrested, and he got held in jail for five years before the court rendered a verdict. So, this took up a lot of Paul's life, and Paul sort of knew it was going to be trouble when he went to Jerusalem.

But anyway, so why did Paul do this? Why did Paul bother collecting all this money and spending all his time to do this? Well, this collection was a powerful expression of the Christian message.

So, it was a way for the churches that had been planted throughout the Roman Empire to express their gratitude to the mother church in Jerusalem, because that's where they had all come from.

That's where it had all began.

That's where Jesus died and rose again, and the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles at Pentecost, and they sent out the first missionaries from there. And so, it was a way for them to acknowledge how they all... where they came from.

It was also a sign of unity between Jewish and Gentile believers. And in those days, that was one of the deepest ethnic and cultural divisions in the world.

[10:21] These groups were often hostile to one another or at the very least indifferent. Sort of, all right, we'll do our thing, you do your thing. But Paul doesn't say, all right, we'll do our thing in Corinth, and, you know, these people in Jerusalem, maybe they got themselves into this trouble, and they're far away, and they're different from us, and they should deal with their own problems.

No, Paul says, no, we're one body of Christ throughout the world, and so we need to help each other. And so, Paul says, because we're one body of Christ, it's entirely appropriate to share our resources across ethnic and national and geographical boundaries.

So, that was what Paul was doing with this collection. And now, what he's telling the Corinthians here is how he wants them to participate, what it looks like for them to be steadfast in giving and in managing and using their resources for these gospel purposes.

So, there's... so, Paul says it looks like giving regularly and proportionally, and then it looks like the church managing the money faithfully. So, we'll look at these things, giving regularly, proportionally, and then managing faithfully.

So, verse 2, on the first day of the week, Paul says, each of you is to put something aside and store it up. So, Paul says... it's very interesting, Paul says, on the first day of the week, he doesn't just say you should give when you feel an overwhelming emotional desire to give to something, right?

[12:00] He doesn't say you should wait until you sort of feel that, oh, that empathy and compassion. He says, no, on the first day of the week, you do this. Now, why the first day of the week? Well, I think it's the... the only reason it could be is that's the day when the Christians met together, because that's the day when Jesus rose from the dead.

And there's a spiritual significance. On the first day of the week, we gather together, we remember how Jesus Christ has laid down His life for us to make us eternally rich, and then we put that faith into practice by giving away some of the material provisions that God has provided us with this past week in order to bless others who need them more than we do.

So, it's an act of worship. And Paul says, you know, if you give regularly, you're going to, in the end, give more than if you just give sort of sporadically and in response to emotional needs, right?

Paul says, when I come, I don't want to do a collection. I don't want to come and start a big fundraiser and try to gather as much money as we can as quick as we can. Paul says, no, I want you to lay it aside week by week as an act of worship and devotion to God so that when I come, it'll be ready to go.

So, a couple of practical things. You might say, well, does this mean that there's a command that each of us should give something in the basket when the basket passes every single Sunday? I would say not necessarily.

[13:38] Maybe you only get paid once a month, so you only give once a month. Or maybe you set up online bank transfers so that you don't forget to write your check. Because who writes checks for many things anyway, right?

And you can do that. But here's the thing. When the offering basket goes by every Sunday, it's a good opportunity to ask yourself, how has the Lord blessed me materially, practically this week? And how can I share some of what the Lord has blessed me with, with others? With others in our church, with missionaries, and others in the global church, right?

Who have needs to care for the poor. And it's an opportunity to ask ourselves, am I giving God the first and the best, or am I just giving God the last and the leftovers? The stuff that I haven't figured out how to use after I spend what I want to on myself.

You know, this is partly why we collect an offering as part of our Sunday worship. Some churches don't do this. Some churches just have a box in the back, and they say, you know, if you want to give, just give as you come or go.

[14:43] But the reason why we pass the baskets every Sunday, it's not to put pressure on people who are visitors, or if you're not a Christian, we just want you to come and hear the message that we're talking about.

You don't have to feel like you have to pay to come to church. If you don't have any money, you don't have to give anything. And that's fine, right? And if you give more, you know, once a month or whatever, then just pass the basket, right?

We don't want you to feel any weird feelings because of that. But the reason why we do it every Sunday is to remind us that our worship can't be disconnected from how we use our money.

And so, it's a good check for us every week to be thanking the Lord and examining ourselves. So, first, give regularly. Second, give proportionally.

Paul says, verse 2, each of you should give. Each of you should put something aside as he may prosper. Now, you know, Paul asked each of us to give what we can.

[15 : 45] He doesn't just say, I know some of you in the Corinthian church are really well off. And so, if, you know, the top 10 or 20 percent, if you all could just give generously, then you know what? The church will be just fine.

And you know what? The rest of you, we know you're struggling, so you don't need to participate in this. Paul says, no. Paul says, every gift counts, no matter how large, no matter how small, because it's an offering to God.

And because we're all in this together. And in Corinth, there was a problem because some of the wealthier people thought that because they had more money, that they should have more power in the church.

And Paul says, oh, no, no. We're one body of Christ together. And we're all in this together. So, Paul says, give as you may prosper.

Now, again, some practical questions. Many Christians have pointed out that the Old Testament commands the Israelites to give 10 percent tithes to God. Other Christians have pointed out that the New Testament doesn't command tithing.

[16 : 50] And then it's more complicated because there were multiple tithes for multiple purposes in the Old Testament. So, what should we say? Let me say a couple things.

I think for most of us, 10 percent is a good place to start. I mean, should we really intentionally choose to give less under the new covenant of grace in Christ than the Old Testament Israelites were commanded to give under the old covenant under Moses?

I mean, and besides, most of us do a better job giving when we have a concrete goal to start with, like 10 percent of what you earn, rather than just relying on our own subjective impressions.

Now, on the other hand, second thing to say is 10 percent should not be an upper limit. Paul instructs us to give, as we heard earlier in the service, following the pattern of Christ.

Christ became poor for our sake. He was rich and He became poor. He emptied Himself. Christ didn't just tithe and stop there. So, to give as Christ has given to us means to give until it hurts us, until it constrains what we spend on ourselves, and that will often look like more than 10 percent.

[18 : 03] But having said all that, let me say another thing. If for whatever reason you have accumulated major debt, now I'm not talking about home mortgages or car loans or student loans that you're paying off regularly at a reasonable rate, but things like credit card debt or overdue bills that have gone to bill collectors or people that you've promised to pay back and you haven't paid them back in the time frame you've promised.

You need to take that seriously because you can't give what you don't have. And if the only way you're giving is by going deeper into debt, you're not giving as the Lord has prospered you.

You're giving and perhaps spending what is not yours to give and spend in the first place. So, if that's where you are, I think you should prioritize paying off your debts, which is commanded in the New Testament, let no debt remain outstanding, over 10 percent giving, which is not strictly commanded in the New Testament.

And in the process, examine your heart and examine your budget. I mean, maybe you faced extraordinary hardship. That's why we have a DBF. We want to come alongside you.

We don't want you to go through that alone. You know, sometimes, and in the course of life, probably many of us will be in a situation where we need the help of the community of believers in practical and even financial ways.

[19 : 30] There's nothing wrong with that. And the deacons are here to help with administering that, and the elders and pastors are here to help help you find some good counsel in the process.

So, maybe you face hardship. Maybe you realize you made some bad financial decisions in the past, right? Maybe you took out a mortgage or a loan that was way too expensive, that was much

more than you should have taken out.

Maybe you can't sell the car or the house because of how the market works. Maybe you need to sort of re-examine your heart and your priorities, even if you can't fix your financial situation right away.

Maybe you need to sit down with someone or go to the class that's happening starting in a couple weeks, Financial Peace University, about making a budget and all kinds of other very practical things about getting your finances in order.

And the way the class ends is get your finances in order so that you can give faithfully and generously. So, let me acknowledge that and mention that. So, steadfast and regular giving, and also Paul mentions in verse 3, the church needs to manage those finances faithfully.

[20 : 46] If you notice, Paul says, when I arrive, I don't want there to be any collecting. And then he says, I'll send those whom you accredit to carry your gift to Jerusalem. Paul doesn't say, you know, trust me.

Give me the money and I'll handle it. I mean, don't you trust me if you wouldn't... If you don't... If, you know, why wouldn't you let me handle the money if you really trust me as your church leader? Paul says, no.

You choose people who you approve as a church to handle your money. I'm not going to handle it. And that's what... That's the principle that we follow here at Trinity.

The pastors do not count the offering. In fact, I have no idea what you gave in the baskets this morning. And there's no way that I'm going to find out.

The deacons take care of that. They count the offerings. They give you the contribution receipts at the end of the year. It's a way that we can... Because we want you to be confident that when you give to this church, that your money is going to be handled well and accounted for properly.

[21 : 59] And Paul's concerned about that. And we're concerned about that. And it's an appropriate question to ask if you're going to give money to somebody or some organization to know that it will be handled in a trustworthy manner.

Paul cared about it, and we should care about it too. So, that's how Paul calls us to be steadfast in managing our resources. Steadfast in giving regularly and proportionally.

And steadfast in giving in managing finances in a trustworthy manner. Because the way we give is a sign of the gospel to the world. All right.

The second section of our passage is Paul calls us to be steadfast in prioritizing our relationships. Verse 5 to 9, Paul lays out his travel plans, mentions three places, and in verse 10 to 12, he mentions two people.

So, we're going to look at the places, and then we'll look at the people, and what we can learn from these about Paul's relational priorities. Verse 5, Paul says, I will pass through Macedonia.

[23 : 07] Now, Macedonia was the region that included the cities of Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica. Paul had established churches in those cities on his second missionary journey.

And so, we see that Paul's committed to the churches he has established. He's committed to encouraging growing Christians. Now, as far as we know, these churches didn't have any big problems.

But Paul was committed to encouraging them by visiting them and by equipping them and mobilizing them to participate in this collection for the saints, which they did very generously. Verse 6 and 7, Paul says, I want to spend time with you in Corinth. He says, perhaps I'll stay with you or even spend the winter. I don't want to see you just in passing.

I really want to spend time with you. And the reason Paul gives in verse 6 is he says, so you can help me on my journey. In other words, that was a word used for sort of sending out missionaries from a church, supporting them financially and logistically on the next leg of their journey.

[24 : 07] When Paul had been in Corinth, he actually had refused to receive money from the people in Corinth because the situation was basically like if Paul received money from certain people, then people would have thought, oh, well, Paul is now indebted to that person.

And so, he is going to conduct his ministry in Corinth in a way that favors that person. And Paul says, I don't want... I want to be very clear. I'm not participating in favoritism.

That was a real danger in Corinth. And Paul didn't accept any money from the people while he was there because he wanted to guard against that danger. But Paul is sort of saying, okay, I know you want to... Here's how you can help me.

You can help me get along to the next place. If you want to support me, help me in my mission to another city. And that way, I don't have to deal with favoritism problems because nobody in the next city is going to know where the money came from, and you're not going to follow me, and it's not going to be in your home city, right?

But so, that's partly what he's doing there. But I think Paul also wanted to spend extended time in Corinth because this church had issues, right?

[25 : 23] As we've read through 1 Corinthians, they have a lot of problems. And Paul knows that if a church has a lot of problems, you're not going to come in real quick and fix everything in two weeks.

And so, Paul says, I want to spend time with you. Now, he's tactful. He doesn't say that. He doesn't say, I want to spend time with you because you're so messed up. But I think, you know, he's already said, when I come, I'm going to give you more instructions.

Paul wants to come and spend time with them so he can instruct them and help Christians who are confused and troubled. But the third place he mentions, verse 8 to 9, he says, I'll stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work is open for me, and there are many adversaries. Richard Hayes wrote, the place of greatest risk may also be the place of greatest opportunity in proclaiming the gospel. So, what do we take from this section about these three places?

I think we see three priorities that should inform our relationships. Number one, we see that we should encourage growing Christians, what Paul did for those in Macedonia.

[26 : 31] You know, one of the things that we, that the elders at Trinity would love to see more and more is mutual encouragement among believers. After I graduated from college, I lived with three other guys in a two-bedroom apartment, and for the first year, we met every Sunday night at 10 p.m. to pray together.

And you know, if we didn't set that time, we probably wouldn't have prayed together very much. But because we set that time, it, it was really helpful.

It made a difference. We didn't spend a real long time, but we did it every week. And so, let me encourage you, if you live with other Christians, maybe your, whether it's your family or roommates, or if you live near other Christians or work with another Christian, find ways to mutually encourage one another.

Right? We want it to be a very common thing that people say, yeah, I call some, I call my prayer partner every Thursday morning at 7 a.m. and we pray on the phone for 20 minutes. Because that's how we can encourage one another.

Not just respond when somebody's in crisis, but positively encourage one another as we grow.

Second, Paul makes it a priority to spend time, extended time, with troubled Christians.

[27 : 52] Right? The church in Corinth. Sometimes Christians are confused or conflict-ridden or immature like the people in Corinth. And Paul would remind us, don't give up too quickly on your brothers and sisters in Christ who are confused and have a lot of issues.

You know, most of us, if we walked into the church at Corinth and we saw what was going on, we'd walk across the street and say, I'm going to plant another church. And the gospel is going to grow through a new church plant.

And Paul says, not so fast. Don't give up on the body of Christ even when it's messy. Do what you can. And each of us have different roles.

But this is part of what God calls us to do, to come alongside people and help to mediate conflicts, to speak the truth in love, to bear with people who have many obvious flaws.

Paul encourages us. That's what it means. That's another relational priority. But third, Paul's not just concerned about only investing in other Christians. Paul says, persevere in proclaiming the gospel, in bearing witness to Christ in the world, right?

[29 : 10] In Ephesus. He says, I'm going to stay in Ephesus. There's a wide and open door for the gospel. He was concerned about loving and investing in people who hadn't yet become Christians as well.

And he knew that that wouldn't be easy. So, let me encourage you. If the Lord has opened a door for you to proclaim the gospel, don't be surprised if you also face some kind of opposition.

The most valuable things in life are sometimes the most painful things in life. And sometimes we have to embrace the risk in order to gain the reward. So, these are the priorities that we see from Paul's travel plans in verses 5 to 9.

Now, before we go on to 10 through 12, I need to tell you an interesting fact that at first I wasn't quite sure what to do with. Paul actually doesn't follow the travel plans he lays out here, specifically in verse 6 and 7.

And notice, that's why he said, perhaps, and I hope, and if the Lord permits, right? He's not making promises and then breaking them, right?

[30 : 19] He's acknowledging the uncertainty. But if you turn over the page in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 1, you can read in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 15.

He says, because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first. Verse 16, I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea.

So, what Paul did is for some reason, he changed his plans. Instead of going first to pass through Macedonia and then for a long visit in Corinth, he went first for a short visit to Corinth and then to Macedonia with the hope that he would then come back to Corinth for a second, probably longer visit.

Unfortunately, that all backfired. 2 Corinthians tells you some of that story. Paul describes the first short visit as a painful visit, which resulted in him leaving for Macedonia and then calling off his second visit.

And it took two more letters from Paul and two visits from Titus, who seems to be one of those guys who was willing to step in the middle of a messy situation and promote reconciliation and holiness as Paul's representative in visiting Corinth.

[31 : 41] Now, what do we make of all that? Well, I think here's what we can take away. Paul was steadfast in his priorities, wanting to encourage growing Christians, wanting to help struggling Christians, wanting to persevere and sharing the gospel despite opposition.

Paul was steadfast in those priorities, but he was willing to change his plans. Paul realized that things don't always go the way you think they're going to go, and sometimes you have to flex, and sometimes you have to change course in the middle of things and make the most of a situation that isn't ideal.

Paul wasn't paralyzed by fear into doing nothing, and he wasn't naive in his hope and thinking that everything would always go smoothly. But Paul did all this.

He encouraged and helped and evangelized, not on his own, but as part of a network. Verse 10 to 12, we see two of Paul's trusted friends and co-workers, Timothy and Apollos.

Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted co-workers. Paul was willing to send Timothy to Corinth ahead of him. Basically, he's saying, I can't be there, but I trust Timothy to be there in my place.

[33 : 03] And Timothy was going to be in a hard situation, right? Because there's some people in Corinth who don't like Paul, and Timothy's very closely allied with Paul. And so, Paul tries to clear the way for Timothy and says, receive him and send him on his way back to me in peace.

Paul wants to publicly support Timothy even as he had called him to a difficult task. And then verse 12, we see Apollos.

And this verse is even more interesting. You don't see... you don't think it's very interesting when you first read it. But look at the other places where Apollos appears in 1 Corinthians.

The first place where Apollos appears is chapter 1, verse 12. And we see that some people were saying, I follow Paul, and others were saying, I follow Apollos. And others were saying, I follow Cephas, and others were saying, I follow Christ.

But the two major groups were, I'm of Paul, and I'm of Apollos. And you see that again in chapter 3, verse 4. Here's what had happened. Paul planted the church in Corinth.

[34 : 06] He stayed there and preached for a while. He left and went to Ephesus. In Ephesus, Apollos was there. And it says, Apollos was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures, and fervent in the Holy Spirit.

And Ephesus wanted to go to Corinth. And so, the church in Ephesus blessed him and sent him off, and he went to Corinth. And it says, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed.

And he powerfully demonstrated from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. But, after Apollos left Corinth, some people start saying, that Paul guy, you know, he started things, but we don't really like him.

He's not such a good preacher. We don't want him to come back. We want Apollos. Apollos. Apollos. Apollos. Down with Paul. Apollos. That's what was going on.

So, it's very remarkable that Paul says in verse 12, and probably when the Corinthians wrote to Paul, they asked for Apollos to come. That's why Paul uses the phrase, now concerning, right? Responding to something in their letter.

[35 : 21] Now, it's very surprising that Paul says in verse 12, I strongly urged Apollos to visit you with the other brothers, because what it means is that Paul didn't let the Corinthians envy and rivalry and factions get in the middle of his friendship and partnership with Apollos.

Some of the Corinthians were exalting Apollos and putting down Paul. And Paul says, no, Apollos and I are teammates. Apollos were God's fellow workers.

And so, he encouraged Apollos to go as part of a larger team, because Paul says, Apollos, I trust you. Yeah, some people are saying all these crazy things about you being great and me being no good, but I trust you.

We're on the same team. So, you go with this team, and as part of the team, you can show that we're all on the same page. And then Apollos says, no, I'm not going to go.

It says, it was not as all his will to go. Apollos probably says, no, that's too dangerous. I don't want to pander to these people who are exalting me and putting you down, because we're teammates.

[36 : 33] You see, Paul has Apollos' back, and Apollos got Paul's back. This is pretty remarkable, right? Because sometimes Christian friendships and ministry partnerships especially can sometimes be challenging, and they can be sticky.

Sometimes Pastor Nick and Matt and I joke about this, because each of us has had people come to us and say something like, you're my favorite preacher. I mean, the other two guys are okay, but I really like your sermons the best.

And we joke about it, because, you know, it's normal for people to have their preferences. But we're a team here. So, you're going to hear all of us. And the most important thing is that we're all preaching the same gospel, and we're helping each other grow into who God has called us to be in Christ.

So, part of what it means to be steadfast in our relationships is stick up for each other. Stick up for the Timothys, the young but loyal people who have hard tasks ahead of them.

Stand with Apollos when other people compare you and consider him to be superior. Side with Paul when people are exalting you and demoting him, because if we're all servants of Christ, we're all on the same team.

[37 : 59] We're all part of the same one body of Christ. And when one part rejoices, every part can rejoice. And when one part suffers, we can all suffer together.

This is what Paul calls us to. In light of the resurrection hope that we have in Jesus Christ, be steadfast. Steadfast in managing our resources and being generous for the sake.

Of expressing the unity of the gospel. And be steadfast in prioritizing our relationships. In encouraging one another. In helping one another.

In evangelizing and loving our neighbors. And doing this all as a team. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you that you have given us the power to do these things.

Because you came. And you laid down your life for us on the cross. Though you were rich for our sake, you became poor. That we through your poverty might become eternally rich.

[39 : 11] Lord Jesus, we thank you that we can remain steadfast in our relationships in light of the resurrection. In light of the day when you will return.

And Lord, we... That reminds us what matters and what doesn't matter. Lord, we pray that by the power of your Spirit, whom you have given to us, that you would enable us to be steadfast and immovable and abounding in the work of the Lord.

Because our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Amen.