

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

—MESSY (BUT BEAUTIFUL) CHRISTIANITY, WEEK 58—

1 Corinthians 16:5-18 (NIV)

I. _____, NOT FRUSTRATION

⁵ After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. ⁶ Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

II. WELCOME, NOT _____

¹⁰ When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. ¹¹ No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

III. _____, NOT COMPETITION

¹² Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

IV. LOVE, NOT _____

¹³ Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.

¹⁴ Do everything in love.

V. _____, NOT REBELLION

¹⁵ You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, ¹⁶ to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. ¹⁷ I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. ¹⁸ For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

THE BOTTOM LINE

_____ Christian _____ Despite _____

...by expecting all kinds of _____, _____, and _____.

...by realizing community can be most _____ when most _____.

...by following Augustine: “_____, and _____ you _____.”

On Paul's Comments about Apollos in 16:12

(Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 911-12)

This is a particularly important text in our piecing together Paul's view both of his own ministry and his true relationship to the church. There can be little question that for him several of the issues spoken to in this letter in various ways pose threats to his apostolic authority in this community. At times he takes up this challenge in such vigorous ways (e.g., 4:18-21; 9:1-27) that one could get the impression that Paul, as so often happens in the church, had so identified the gospel and the church with his own ministry that a threat to the one (his ministry) is a threat to the other (the gospel). At times this seems to be precisely what he says. But in two earlier passages (3:5-23; 4:1-13), he puts all of this into perspective. The gospel is God's thing, and God's alone, and so too, therefore, is the church. The church, Paul argues strenuously, belongs neither to himself, nor to Apollos, nor to them. The church belongs to God through Christ, and all of its ministers, including the founders (!), are merely servants. This final word about Apollos is living evidence that Paul is as good as his word. If the church in Corinth were Paul's, the last person in the world he would want to return would be Apollos. Indeed, the real pressure would be to keep him away for some time while things cooled off. But not so Paul. Apollos watered what Paul had planted (3:6); and “all things are theirs” in Christ Jesus, including Apollos (3:21-22). So for the sake of the growth of the community he can urge Apollos to return, despite some of the inherent difficulties that would entail. Here is another piece of clear evidence, along with another, later moment (Phil 1:12-18), of the incredible bigness of the apostle to the Gentiles—far greater than that of many of his later detractors, one is wont to add.