PAUL'S COLLECTION AND A SLAVE'S DILEMMA:
GIVE TO THE POOR OR SAVE FOR FREEDOM?

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First Corinthians 16.1-2 reads, 'now concerning the collection for the saints, just as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you are to do also. On the first day of the week, each of you should set aside and save as he or she may prosper, so that when I come no collections need be made.'[1] This is the first time in the surviving correspondence to the Corinthian church that Paul mentions his collection. When this letter was read to the church, there would have been an economically-mixed group listening. Bruce Longenecker describes them as 'a community comprised of [*sic*] slaves, freedmen, artisans and families', which would have ranged from those with moderate surplus to those living below subsistence level.[2] In this church, we have textual evidence that some of the members were slaves: Paul directly addresses slaves in the church (1 Cor. 7.21-22), and he speaks of their baptism into the church (1 Cor. 12.13). While New Testament scholars often acknowledge the presence of slaves in the early church congregations, they seldom consider their life within those congregations. Therefore, in this article, I focus on the slaves who heard Paul's directive. In order to explore this topic, I discuss Paul's collection, present the reality of a slave's life in the first-century Mediterranean world, and then consider how a slave who was a Christ-follower might have responded to Paul's appeal. I propose that some slaves would have had the financial means to contribute to Paul's collection, but their contribution would have

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1. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
2. Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 294.

come at the great cost of sacrificing money they were saving to purchase their freedom.

Paul's Collection

Paul specifically mentions his collection in three of his letters: 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8–9; and Rom. 15. Multiple churches were involved in the effort, including churches from Galatia (1 Cor. 16.1), Corinth/Achaia (1 Cor. 16.1-4; 2 Cor. 9.1-3; Rom. 15.25), and Macedonia (2 Cor. 8.1-4; Rom. 15.25). Richard Ascough comments, 'Paul's collection for the Jerusalem church was one of the major activities of his ministry during the 50s.'[3] According to Rom. 15.25-27, it is for the purpose of delivering this collection that Paul goes to Jerusalem before his planned trip to Rome and Spain. Most scholars associate this trip with the account in Acts where, upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Paul is soon arrested, ultimately appeals to Caesar, and is sent to Rome for trial (Acts 21–26). However, in Luke's account, there is only one obscure mention of the collection: 'After many years, I came bringing alms to my nation and to present offerings' (Acts 24.17).[4] This silence of Luke regarding the collection has led many scholars to speculate that it was not well-received by the church in Jerusalem.[5] While Paul does seem to indicate some anxiety about the how the Jerusalem church would respond (Rom. 15.30-31),[6] there is

3.   Richard S. Ascough, 'The Completion of a Religious Duty: The Background of 2 Cor 8.1-15', *NTS* 42 (1996), pp. 584-99 (586 n. 6). Longenecker attempts to pinpoint the beginning of these efforts to 53–54 CE (*Remember the Poor*, p. 344).

4.   Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), pp. 124-25; David G. Horrell, 'Paul's Collection: Resources for a Materialist Theology', *Epworth Review* 22 (1995), pp. 74-83 (75); S. McKnight, 'Collection for the Saints', in Gerald F. Hawthorne *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 143-47 (144). Georgi notes, 'without the benefit of Paul's letters, modern historians would have no knowledge of Paul's collection' (*Remembering the Poor*, p. 69).

5.   Horrell, 'Paul's Collection', p. 75; A.J.M. Wedderburn, 'Paul's Collection: Chronology and History', *NTS* 48 (2002), pp. 95-110 (107).

6.   Horrell, 'Paul's Collection', p. 75; Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (Studies in Biblical Theology, 48; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), pp. 14-15.

simply not enough evidence to know how the story of the collection actually ended.

Chronology and Terminology of the Collection

Some scholars point to Paul's statement in Gal. 2.10 to establish the beginning of the collection.[7] There, Paul comments that the leaders in Jerusalem ask that he and Barnabas 'remember the poor'. However, there is nothing in the context of this statement that serves to limit 'the poor' to those in Jerusalem. Longenecker observes that 'the earliest interpretations of Gal. 2.10 in the second through the mid-fourth centuries CE' did not understand 'the poor' in this manner.[8] Most scholars concur that, in Galatians, Paul is simply agreeing to continue the particularly Jewish practice of taking care of the poor in general;[9] there is consensus that Paul's statement in Galatians does not refer to his later collection.

The first time Paul specifically mentions the collection in his extant correspondence is in 1 Cor. 16.1-4. In vv. 1-2, he describes the work using the term λογεία, which 'is the general term for any kind of voluntary, or com-

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7.   In addition to Holl and Joubert mentioned previously, see also Abraham J. Malherbe, 'The Corinthian Contribution', *ResQ* 3 (1959), pp. 221-33 (222); Richard Last and Philip A. Harland, *Group Survival in the Ancient Mediterranean: Rethinking Material Conditions in the Landscape of Jews and Christians* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 143.

8.   Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, p. 159.

9.   Longenecker comments that taking care of the poor is 'one of Judaism's most socially distinctive features' (*Remember the Poor*, p. 203). David J. Downs observes that 'for the most part, there was greater concern for the welfare of the poor among Jewish and Christian communities than one typically finds among pagan associations' (*The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* [WUNT, 248; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], p. 110). While both Cicero and Seneca do acknowledge that money should be used to help those in need, 'the "needy" in question in both Cicero and Seneca's thought are respectable citizens, and not the most desperate members of their society' (see Anneliese Parkin, '"You Do Him No Service": An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving', in Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne [eds.], *Poverty in the Roman World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], pp. 60-82 [62]). Philip A. Harland concludes that 'we do not know of any associations gathering funds for the poor' ('Associations and the Economics of Group Life: A Preliminary Case Study of Asia Minor and the Aegean Islands', *SEÅ* 80 [2015], pp. 1-37 [35]).

pulsory, monetary collection'.[10] Inscriptions and ostraca, however, indicate that this term was often used to describe collections taken up for religious purposes.[11] In v. 2, Paul goes on to say that 'on the first day of the week, each of you should set aside and save as he or she may prosper.' Paul does not ask for a specific donation, but that each person set aside funds according to their means. In v. 3, Paul refers to the collection as 'your gift'. The term used, χάρις, is one Paul uses repeatedly in reference to the work of the collection in his further correspondence, so we will discuss the significance of this term shortly.

The next time Paul discusses the collection is in the letter we call Second Corinthians, which is likely his fourth letter to the church in Corinth.[12] He allocates a considerable amount of time in this letter to the discussion of the collection—chs. 8–9. In these two chapters, Paul no longer refers to this work as a λογεία or collection, but instead uses several other terms: χάρις (8.6, 7, 19), διακονία (8.4; 9.1, 12, 13), εὐλογία (9.5), λειτουργία (9.12), and κοινωνία (9.13)—generous work, ministry, generous gift, service and sharing. James Harrison notes that these terms represent 'an impressive range of benefaction terminology and motifs'.[13] However, as Harrison notes, Paul is not simply urging the Corinthians to continue participating in the wider Greco-Roman system of reciprocity. We see this by his unusual focus on the concept of χάρις.[14] Julien Ogereau observes that 'no less than eight times is the term χάρις indeed employed to refer to either the collection per se, or to God's

10.   Julien M. Ogereau, 'The Jerusalem Collection as Κοινωνία: Paul's Global Politics of Socio-Economic Equality and Solidarity', *NTS* 58 (2012), pp. 360-78 (363); these two verses are the only time Paul uses this term to describe the collection.

11.   Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R.M. Strachan; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 4th edn, 1965), p. 105; Last and Harland, *Group Survival*, pp. 124-25.

12.   I hold the view that Second Corinthians was sent as one letter. But this view is not necessary to the following discussion.

13.   James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (WUNT, 172; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), p. 300.

14.   Harrison observes that 'while the range of circumlocutory terminology that Paul applied to the Jerusalem collection would not have occasioned surprise to readers of the honorific inscriptions, the profusion of χάρις as the leitmotiv of the collection certainly would' (*Paul's Language of Grace*, p. 343).

favour enabling [believers] to give' (2 Cor. 8.1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 19; 9.8, 14).[15] By shifting the focus away from the obligation inherent in the system of reciprocity, Paul provides an 'alternate vision of social relations by means of his theology of grace'.[16] John Barclay suggests that there are 'renegotiations of power and obligation that accompany the giving and receiving of gifts *in Christ*'.[17]

The final time Paul mentions the collection is at the end of his letter to the believers in Rome. Here he describes this work with the terms διακονέω (15.25), κοινωνία (15.26), λειτουργέω (15.27) and καρπός (15.28). Only here, as the collection is being brought to completion, does Paul describe it as the fruit of his churches.[18]

Purpose of the Collection
Scholars have long debated why Paul initiated this collection and what the purpose of it was. It is beyond the scope of this article to engage the arguments, but the main suggestions are as follows: (1) financial relief for the

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15. Ogereau, 'Jerusalem Collection', p. 364. Georgi comments that 'χάρις becomes the very *leitmotif* of chapter 8 and 9' (*Remembering the Poor*, p. 72).

16. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, p. 311 (see also 311 n. 86, 324)—contra Ascough, Peterman and Verbrugge who argue that Paul saw the collection as a religious obligation or duty (see Ascough, 'Completion', p. 599; Gerald W. Peterman, 'Romans 15:26—Make a Contribution or Establish Fellowship?', *NTS* 40 [1994], pp. 457-63 [460]; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, 'The Collection and Paul's Leadership of the Church in Corinth' [PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1988], pp. 234, 263).

17. John M.G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), p. 574 (emphasis original).

18. Grant R. Osborne explains that 'the offering is a *fruit* that the Jewish Christians will receive, possibly meaning that it is the "harvest" from the spiritual legacy that the Jewish people have given the Gentiles (Murray 1968; Moo 1996) or the visible demonstration of the *fruit* of Paul's mission (Morris 1988; Fitzmyer1993b; Cranfield 1979 takes both as possible' (*Romans* [The IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004], p. 398 [emphasis original]). Robert Jewett, however, suggests that Paul is simply using the language of commerce, so that 'to seal the fruit of the Jerusalem offering is rather to guarantee its delivery against theft and embezzlement' (*Romans: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007], p. 932).

poor believers in Jerusalem;[19] (2) a religious obligation placed upon Paul by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Gal. 2);[20] (3) a theological obligation of the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers from whom they inherited their faith (Rom. 15);[21] (4) an attempt to establish unity between the Gentile and Jewish community of believers;[22] and (5) a symbol of the eschatological gathering of the nations to Jerusalem.[23]

It is important to note that the conversation concerning the purpose of Paul's collection continues because Paul himself never directly identifies the purpose, other than to help alleviate the poverty of the Jerusalem believers (2 Cor. 8.4, 14; 9.12; Rom. 15.26). In his letter to the Roman churches, as the collection nears completion, Paul does mention a type of material reciprocity for spiritual blessings (Rom. 15.27). However, we have no knowledge of what Paul communicated to his various churches—while the collection was in process—as to a wider purpose for the collection. This lack of knowledge concerning Paul's purpose is important to note: for when Paul asked his

19.   Downs, *Offering of the Gentiles*, p. 161; Horrell, 'Paul's Collection', p. 79; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, p. 177; McKnight, 'Collection', p. 144; Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), p. 159; Nickle, *Collection*, p. 142; Verbrugge, 'Collection', p. 233. Ogereau goes further, focusing on the term ἰσότης (2 Cor. 8.13, 14). He proposes that Paul is arguing for 'a certain equality or fairness in the distribution of wealth within the early church' ('Jerusalem Collection', p. 364).

20.   Karl Holl, 'Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem der Urgemeinde', *Sitzungsbericht der Berliner Akademie* (1921), pp. 920-47; Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection* (WUNT, 124; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); contra Craig L. Blomberg, *Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), p. 116; Downs, *Offering of the Gentiles*, p. 72; Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, pp. 17-18; Wedderburn, 'Paul's Collection', pp. 96, 99.

21.   Ascough, 'Completion', p. 599; Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), pp. 22-39 (32); Peterman, 'Romans 15:26', p. 460; Verbrugge, 'Collection', pp. 233, 263.

22.   Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, pp. 177, 315 n. 38; Nickle, *Collection*, p. 142; Peterman, 'Romans 15:26', p. 461; Verbrugge, 'Collection', p. 233; Last and Harland, *Group Survival*, p. 143.

23.   Nickle, *Collection*, pp. 138-39.

churches to contribute financially to this project, the *rationale* for the project would have been a significant motivator (or demotivator) for the believers to give.

Motivation to Give to the Collection

Rather than an extended explanation of the purpose for the collection, what we have instead is a record of how Paul chose to ask and/or motivate his churches to give to it. In 1 Cor. 16.1-4, Paul simply directs the Corinthian church to gather the funds. The NET translation renders Paul's directive as a polite request: 'with regard to the collection for the saints, please follow the directions that I gave to the churches of Galatia.'[24] However, Paul chooses the verb διατάσσω to describe this directive, which carries the authoritative tone of command, and he uses imperatives in both verse one and two (ποιήσατε, τιθέτω).[25] Verlyn Verbrugge observes that Paul 'made no attempt to motivate them, nor did he cite any reasons why they should participate in this project. He felt his relationship with them was strong enough that he as their leader could take this authoritative approach with them.'[26] So while the collection in 1 Cor. 16 may have been presented as voluntary in regards to how each person prospered (and we will explore this in more detail to follow), the project as a whole was presented as something expected to be completed.

Paul's approach in Second Corinthians regarding the project is notably different from that taken in First Corinthians.[27] Scholars generally conclude

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24. Here, the translators have rendered ποιήσατε as a 'request' type of imperative, adding 'please' for further politeness. The imperative initiates an event and is direct (2nd person), not indirect (3rd person). According to Joseph D. Fantin, the imperative in this context would not meet the 'qualifications' for a request imperative (*The Greek Imperative Mood in the New Testament: A Cognitive and Communicative Approach* [SBG, 12; New York: Peter Lang, 2010], pp. 263-70). Fantin explains that 'the imperative is strong-force unless there exists some feature to weaken the force' (p. 218); in the case of 1 Cor. 16.1, no such features are present.

25. See also Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), p. 677 n. 1.

26. Verbrugge, 'Collection', p. 79.

27. Malherbe notes that 'in 2 Corinthians Paul never uses the imperative in his discussion of the collection' ('Corinthian Contribution', p. 227). Verbrugge comments that 'Paul displays extreme hesitancy to tell the Corinthians to get on with the

that this letter was written only about a year after First Corinthians,[28] but since the Corinthians and Paul had been embroiled in difficult matters Paul addresses the church in Second Corinthians in a different manner than he did in First Corinthians.[29] In 2 Cor. 8, rather than with directives similar to those in 1 Cor. 16, Paul chooses to motivate the believers by way of example. He speaks first of the churches of Macedonia, who despite their deep poverty (βάθους πτωχεία) begged to participate (8.1-6); Paul identifies this work as the grace of God (8.1).[30] He then speaks of 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' as the second and ultimate example (8.9). Paul reminds his listeners that though Jesus 'was rich, he become poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich'. As mentioned previously, in this chapter Paul repeatedly uses the term χάρις to describe the collection itself (8.6, 7, 19). And in ch. 9, he reminds the Corinthians that 'God is able to make all grace abound' to them, so that they 'may abound in every good work' (9.8).

However, in ch. 9, Paul also brings into play the Corinthians' honor. Paul has boasted to the Macedonians that 'Achaia has been prepared since last year,' and this has 'stirred up many of them' (9.2). In light of this, Paul urges the Corinthians to have the collection ready so that when he and the delegation from Macedonia arrive, the Corinthian believers will not be put to shame.[31]

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project of the collection for Jerusalem … It is hard to imagine a greater contrast to what he did in 1 Cor. 16.1-2' ('Collection', pp. 216-17).

28. George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), p. 18; Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), p. 34; Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians* (ICC; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), p. 77.

29. David E. Garland writes that 'the problems encountering Paul as he writes this letter are complex … He must restore his relationship with the church so that he might continue to guide it in spiritual matters' (*2 Corinthians* [NAC, 29; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999], p. 29). Linda L. Belleville observes that this letter 'comes at the tail end of a long and stressful exchange' (*2 Corinthians* [IVP New Testament Commentary; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996], p. 14).

30. Guthrie notes that Paul offers 'the Macedonians as an example of how God has manifested his grace by doing a great work in, but also through, their churches' (*2 Corinthians*, p. 392).

31. Hans Dieter Betz mentions that the names of those who did not follow through on public pledges 'used to be published in the Athenian Agora' (Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle*

In summary, in this second correspondence, Paul states quite specifically that he does 'not say this as a command' (8.8), and he works carefully to inspire and motivate the Corinthians to give freely and generously.[32] He makes it clear that he desires that they offer what they give 'as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion' (NRSV), 'not reluctantly or under compulsion' (9.7). David Garland comments that 'Paul does not want the Corinthians to feel that this offering was somehow imposed upon them.'[33] Thus, his focus on χάρις is again significant. Nonetheless, Paul still communicates an expectation that the Corinthian church should participate.[34]

Slavery in the First-Century Mediterranean World

The Humanitarian View

Before we can consider how a slave who was a Christ-follower in the Corinthian church might have responded to Paul's appeal, it is necessary to briefly sketch the reality of a slave's life in the first-century Mediterranean world. There are some scholars today who argue for a humanitarian view of first-century slavery, especially in comparison to slavery in the American south. One New Testament scholar in a 2014 commentary on First Corinthians wrote,

> For the most part [slavery] provided generally well for up to one-third of the population in a city like Corinth or Rome. The household slave had considerable freedom and very often experienced mutual benefit along with the master. The owner received the benefit of the slave's services; and the slave had steady "employment," including having all his or her basic needs met—indeed, for many to be a slave was prefer-

Paul [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], p. 96). While he is referring to something that took place centuries prior to the time of Paul, the honor/shame culture exemplified by this practice was pervasive throughout the centuries in the Mediterranean world.

32. Horrell, 'Paul's Collection', p. 77.
33. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, p. 404.
34. Blomberg, *Christians in an Age of Wealth*, p. 114.

able to being a freed person, whose securities were often tenuous at best.[35]

Another scholar working on the 2011 ESV translation team made this comment,

> For the average English reader, the word "slave" has irredeemably negative associations and connotations. In people's minds it's a permanent condition, whereas in the OT and certainly in the time of the NT it's temporary, it leads to a freedom. And it was often voluntary, at least in the first century … It was often a situation that had status and carried considerable legal protections.[36]

This humanitarian view of first-century slavery was shared, for the most part, by classical scholars until the 1970s when a sea-change began to occur due to significant research in this area. The seminal works are by Keith Hopkins (1978), M.I. Finley (1980), Orlando Patterson (1982) and Keith Bradley (1984).[37] In 1984, Bradley wrote,

> The historiography of ancient slavery has been traditionally apologetic in one way or another and it is not until recent times that the realization has begun to set in among scholars that there is something distinctly unpalatable about slavery in antiquity. Indeed, in some quarters apologetic influences are still at work.[38]

As demonstrated above, these influences are unfortunately still at work in some New Testament circles even today. Thus, the need to consider here the life of a slave in the first century.

35.   Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. edn, 2014), p. 353.

36.   'ESV Bible Translators Debate the Word "slave" at Tyndale House, Cambridge', *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mx06mtApu8k.

37.   Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking, 1980); Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

38.   Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, p. 19.

The Historical View

Entry into slavery was rarely voluntary. For much of Roman history, the two primary sources of slaves were conquered people and those born into slavery as children of slaves.[39] Babies could also be 'exposed' due to poverty or gender selection.[40] Some of these exposed infants were then taken by those who would raise them and sell them as slaves.[41] Walter Scheidel comments that 'this practice may conceivably have been the leading domestic source of freeborn slaves in the mature empire.'[42] Piracy, at times, was also a source of slaves.[43] If a family could not pay the ransom demanded for a kidnapped family member, the pirates then sold that person into slavery. Some have argued another source of slaves were people who sold themselves into slavery. This would have been the only voluntary method, and scholars debate just how often this actually occurred.[44] J.A. Harrill concludes his research into the question saying, 'there are, then, no grounds for seeing self-sale as a major source of slaves or as evidence for ancient slavery's relatively humane character.'[45]

In the later Roman Republic, slaves were not only used as manual laborers in the fields and mines, but they were also used for a variety of domestic chores to the point where a large number of domestic slaves was an indication

39. Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 32-33; Walter Scheidel, 'The Roman Slave Supply', in Keith R. Bradley and Paul Cartledge (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* (4 vols.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), I, pp. 287-310 (293-97); William L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1955), p. 29.

40. For example, a husband tells his wife in a letter that 'if it is a boy, let it be; if it is a girl, cast it out' (P. Oxy. 744 [Hunt and Edgar, LCL]).

41. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome,* p. 35; Westermann, *Slave Systems*, p. 30.

42. Scheidel, 'Roman Slave Supply', p. 298.

43. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p. 37; Scheidel, 'Roman Slave Supply', p. 297; Westermann, *Slave Systems*, p. 28.

44. Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 80-85; J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (HUT, 32; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), pp. 30-31.

45. Harrill, *Manumission in Early Christianity*, p. 31. Contra Morris Silver, 'Contractual Slavery in the Roman Economy', *Ancient History Bulletin* 25 (2011), pp. 73-132.

of luxury and wealth.[46] Domestic slaves were the Rolexes and luxury cars of that period, what we know as 'conspicuous consumption'.[47] This increased demand for and use of slaves created a slave population in 'proportions never before known in antiquity, and never to be reached again'.[48] Scheidel estimates that there were 'between 1 and 1.5 million slaves in Italy at the peak of this labour regime, equivalent to some 15-25 per cent of the total population'.[49] He goes on to estimate 'between 5 and 8 million slaves in the Roman empire' as a whole.[50]

Slaves were bought and sold as property. There was no regard for children or family affiliation at the auction block. Keith Bradley presents records of slave sales from Egypt from the first century BCE to the fourth century CE. Only a few records show that young children were sold with their mother. Females were sold individually as young as four and male children as young as two.[51] As evidence that they were being sold as bodies, slaves were inspected with no regard to their personhood. Seneca comments, 'when you buy a horse, you order its blanket to be removed; you pull off the garments from slaves that are advertised for sale, so that no bodily flaws may escape your notice.'[52] For a female slave the humiliation was greater. Publius Vinicus described one female slave as 'she stood naked on the shore to meet the buyer's sneers; every part of her body was inspected—and handled'.[53]

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46.   Westermann, *Slave Systems*, p. 100.

47.   Matthew J. Perry comments, 'Owners frequently used [male slaves] for "female" duties as a display of status. The underlying message of such staffing decisions was that owners were wealthy enough to use more expensive commodities (male slaves) than the work required' (*Gender, Manumission, and the Roman Freedwoman* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014], p. 185 n. 3). Hopkins notes that 'senators and knights maintained elaborate households staffed with hundreds of slaves, including cooks, scribes, librarians, doctors, name-callers, at once a mark of their culture, and of an extravagance which enhanced their status' (*Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 49).

48.   Westermann, *Slave Systems*, p. 63.

49.   Scheidel, 'Roman Slave Supply', p. 289.

50.   Scheidel, 'Roman Slave Supply', p. 293.

51.   Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, pp. 53-57.

52.   Seneca the Younger, *Ep*. 80.9 (Gummere, LCL).

53.   Seneca the Elder, *Controv*. 1.2.3 (cited in Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 86).

Once they were sold or were born as a slave into a household, they had no 'independent social existence: they were the absolute property of their masters with no legal rights.'[54] It is difficult to comprehend the trauma of their situation, they were 'deprived of a past and a future, unable to claim natal family or legitimate offspring'.[55] Even if a slave owner allowed a slave to 'marry' and have children, he could split up the family at any point. And while slave owners may not have done this very often, the fact that these 'forcible separations … were possible and that from time to time they did take place was enough to strike terror in the hearts of all slaves and to transform significantly the way they behaved and conceived of themselves.'[56]

Slaves could be physically punished, sometimes brutally, without recourse. Ammianus Marcellinus reported that some slave owners 'are so strict in punishing offences, that if a slave is slow in bringing the hot water, they condemn him to suffer three hundred lashes'.[57] Sometimes a slave suffered from no action of his own. Plutarch records the story of a teacher who 'wanted to teach his students to be more frugal with their lunches, so he had a slave beaten during the afternoon lecture as a way to reinforce his message about the necessity of self-control'.[58] While these may be extreme examples, flogging was nonetheless a common experience for slaves. Slaves could also be branded, tattooed, and shackled.[59] If all this were not enough, 'enslaved girls, women, boys and young men were frequently sexual targets for their masters.'[60] Moses Finley comments that this sexual exploitation was 'treated as

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54.　Clarice J. Martin, 'The Eyes Have It: Slaves in the Communities of Christ-Believers', in Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *A People's History of Christianity: Christian Origins* (7 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), I, pp. 221-39 (228).

55.　Carolyn Osiek, 'Family Matters', in Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *A People's History of Christianity: Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), I, pp. 201-220 (209).

56.　Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 6.

57.　Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum* 28.4.16 (Rolfe).

58.　Martin, 'The Eyes Have It', p. 235, referring to Plutarch, *Mor.* 70e.

59.　Richard A. Horsley, 'The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars', in Allen Dwight Callahan *et al.* (eds.), *Slavery in Text and Interpretation* (Semia, 83/84; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), pp. 19-66 (43).

60.　Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 51.

a commonplace in Graeco-Roman literature from Homer on; only modern writers have managed largely to ignore it.'[61]

But the most significant difference between slave and free was that a slave lacked personhood.[62] While they lived in an honor/shame society, slaves could neither acquire honor, nor suffer shame. In addition, the absolute power an owner had to beat, sell or even kill his or her slave led to the dehumanization of the slave; Bradley comments that slavery 'was viewed in many ways as a state of living death'.[63]

Peculium and Manumission

At this point, it is important to comment on two areas of first-century slavery that often cause the modern reader to assume ancient slavery was more humanitarian than subsequent forms of slavery: peculium and manumission.

Roman slaves were given a *peculium*, a fund which legally belonged to the owner but was 'spoken of as, *de facto*, the property of the slave'.[64] A slaves could increase his or her *peculium* in a variety of ways, such as selling part of a food allowance (Seneca the Younger, *Ep.* 80.4), selling left-over food from the owner's table (Apuleius, *Metam.* 10.13-14) or receiving profits or earnings from business done for the owner (Dig. 2.13.4.3). The *peculium* could include non-monetary items such as farms, houses, slaves, and cattle (Dig. 15.1.57; 33.8.6), and thus could be quite valuable in some cases.[65] While there may have been some slaves who had such financial resources, these resources were never truly their own—they legally belonged to the owner, and both slave and owner were always aware of this reality.

Manumission takes place when a slave is set free by his or her owner. Both the Greeks and Romans regularly set slaves free. But there are two common misconceptions regarding this practice: (1) that most slaves were eventually freed; and (2) that slaves were set free at no cost to themselves. Only those slaves in close proximity to their masters could hope to achieve manumission.

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61.   Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, pp. 163-64.

62.   Keith R. Bradley states it this way: 'the contrast between free and slave was thus a contrast between person and non-person' ('The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves: Roman History and Contemporary History', *CJ* 87 [1991], pp. 125-38 [137]).

63.   Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p. 25.

64.   W.W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian* (repr., New York: AMS, 1969), p. 187.

65.   Buckland, *Roman Law of Slavery*, p. 187.

Scholars have noted that manumission among rural slaves, who had far less interaction with their owners, probably rarely occurred.[66] The slaves who acquired manumission were a decided minority of slaves; as Hopkins concludes, 'most Roman slaves were freed only by death'.[67] Freedom was rarely given at no cost to the slave—it usually came at a price.[68] Under Greek manumission, the average release price would buy enough wheat to feed a poor family for three years.[69] Under Roman manumission, one of the lowest release prices found in sources was equal to a Roman soldier's earnings for over three years.[70] To save up such a large amount would likely have taken a slave years of service to their master. While some see manumission as evidence that first-century slavery was more humanitarian, the reality is that manumission served rather to perpetuate the institution of slavery: the owners used the slaves' desire for freedom to incentivize them to work hard and to be faithful.[71]

66. Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 204; Susan Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 106-7.

67. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 118.

68. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, pp. 118, 131; Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free: The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 208 n. 32 (she notes that 'most scholars believe that [payment of money for release] was the rule').

69. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 146.

70. The release price that Hermeros says he paid (Petron, *Sat*. 57) was comparable to what a Roman soldier earned in one year; Richard Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1982), p. 12; Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, p. 107.

71. Hopkins explains, 'it was sensible for masters to opt for the carrot rather than or in addition to the stick. The prospect of buying freedom encouraged a slave to show both initiative and parsimony … If the slave died before achieving liberty, the master pocketed his savings … If the slave later bought full freedom, the master had recapitalized the slave's value and with the purchase money he could buy a younger slave to replace him' (*Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 147).

Paul's Collection and a Slave's Dilemma

Now that we have explored what the New Testament teaches about Paul's collection and what history reveals about slavery in the first century, we can turn our attention to the question of how a slave who was a Christ-follower in Corinth might have responded to Paul's appeal. While we cannot definitively answer this question, it is important to consider how these texts might have been understood by this particular group of people who were part of the Corinthian church.

We must begin by first acknowledging that there were undoubtedly slaves in the Christian assembly in Corinth and exploring briefly what their experience within that assembly might have been.[72] Paul indicates their presence in the Corinthian community in 1 Cor. 7.21-22 and 12.13. While being a member of the Christian community provided spiritual equality among members (1 Cor. 12.13), we do not have much evidence of how that spiritual reality impacted a slave's social reality. Wayne Meeks comments that 'in any household of any size there was an informal pecking order that was taken seriously, and the threshold between slave and free remained fundamental in a perception of one's place in society.'[73] It is possible that being a part of the church provided these slaves a sense of honor and human dignity that they lacked outside of the church. However, Barclay notes that 'it is hard to imagine any slaves being given leadership roles, given their inability to predict their attendance from one meeting to the next and the difficulty of admonishing (1 Thess. 5.12) their social superiors.'[74] And given the sexual availability of slaves, Jennifer Glancy challenges the idea that all slaves would have been allowed 'full involvement in the Christian body'.[75] Thus, slaves were a part

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72.   Dale B. Martin comments that 'though no one any longer accepts the older notion that Christianity was a "slave religion" or a movement comprising a huge number of slaves, it is universally recognized among scholars that Christian groups included slaves and freedpersons' ('Slave Families and Slaves in Families', in David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek [eds.], *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 207-30 [207]).

73.   Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2nd edn, 2003), p. 21.

74.   J.M.G. Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership', *NTS* 37 (1991), pp. 161-86 (179).

75.   Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Body Work: Slavery and the Pauline Churches', in Pargas Damian Alan and Roşu Felicia (eds.), *Critical Readings on Global Slavery*

of the Corinthian assembly, but they may have had a liminal existence in that body of believers. Nonetheless, slaves would have been present when the letter we call First Corinthians was read to the church.

The way Paul introduces his discussion of the collection in First Corinthians indicates that the church in Corinth is already aware of the project, 'now concerning the collection for the saints …' (16.1). In this letter then, Paul is simply instructing them *how* to gather the funds—he does not address *why* they should (16.2): 'on the first day of the week, each of you should set aside and save as he or she may prosper, so that when I come no collections need be made.'[76] Those who gathered to hear this letter read to the church would have heard Paul addressing each one of them without distinction: 'each of you (ἕκαστος ὑμῶν)'. Garland comments that Paul 'fully expects every member to take part in the project'.[77] This would include men and women, free people, freedpersons, and slaves, wealthy and poor.[78] Many of these people would have had limited resources. Since Paul is directing them to set aside something each week, this may indicate that 'the majority were not well off and had to set aside small sums carefully'.[79]

(Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 427-76 (475-76). See also Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in the Corinthian Church', *JBL* 117 (1998), pp. 481-501.

76.   Some Greco-Roman associations required fees and fines that included non-monetary resources (i.e. bread, food, wine) (Harland, 'Associations', pp. 13-15). However, it is apparent that Paul is referring to a monetary collection since it is something that can be set aside and saved until he arrives.

77.   David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 754. Meggitt comments that 'it was not intended to be the work of a few wealthy members or congregations' (*Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 159).

78.   Garland expects these slaves to participate in the collection: 'if free artisans, small traders, and slaves also give, then the gift will represent the entire body, not just a few wealthy donors' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 754). See also Pheme Perkins, *First Corinthians* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 676.

79.   Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (NSBT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 189. See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 409. Longenecker comments that 'this advice makes the most sense if it is directed to those of ES5 [stable near subsistence level], and possibly ES6 [at subsistence level]. Those among ES7 [below subsistence level] would have had nothing to put aside, while those in ES4 [moderate surplus] would probably have had resources that are out of alignment with the kind of advice Paul offers' (*Remember the Poor*, pp. 253-54).

The opportunity for those with limited resources to participate in a project would not have been unique in the first century. Greco-Roman associations also had collections that allowed those in such circumstances to participate. While wealthy benefactors were usually an important source of funds,[80] there were collections that were set up specifically so that those with little surplus could contribute. Some collections 'set a minimum and a maximum contribution' while others 'had contributors all give the same—usually quite small—amounts'.[81] This latter method of collecting funds suggests that 'the act of giving, rather than the amount given, was what mattered.'[82] There were other collections that called on both citizens and non-citizens alike to contribute, thus allowing everyone to 'contribute to a common project and thus to "perform" their membership in the polis'.[83] These collections provide evidence that those outside the elite—those with limited resources—could and did contribute to collections for projects they found worthy of their participation. So, like these collections by Greco-Roman associations, Paul provided for all—regardless of means—to participate.

After directing the Corinthian believers to set aside funds each week, Paul states that each one should 'save as he or she may prosper (εὐοδῶται)'. This Greek term in the middle/passive can mean to have a good journey, have success, prosper.[84] The NRSV rendering of the term in this context as 'whatever extra you earn', perhaps captures the idea best. By using this phrase, Paul is not asking them to give in a sacrificial manner, to give beyond their means or to leave their own needs unmet.[85] Rather, when God prospers these Corinthian believers, Paul is encouraging them to set some of the surplus aside for this collection.[86] This implies then that some members at times would have nothing to set aside; in fact, they may never have anything to set

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80.   Harland, 'Associations', p. 6.

81.   John S. Kloppenborg, 'Fiscal Aspects of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem', *EC* 8 (2017), pp. 153-98 (184) (attested by inscriptions of the third to first BCE centuries at Athens).

82.   Kloppenborg, 'Fiscal Aspects', p. 185 (attested by inscriptions of the third to second BCE centuries on the Island of Kos).

83.   Kloppenborg, 'Fiscal Aspects', p. 187.

84.   BrillDAG, *s.v.* εὐοδόω; LSJ, *s.v.* εὐοδόω; BDAG, *s.v.* εὐοδόω;.

85.   Garland, *1 Corinthians*, p. 754.

86.   It is worth noting that this giving is likely above and beyond whatever funds each believer in Corinth gave to the local assembly.

aside as they regularly lived at or below subsistence level.[87] So then, we must come back around to the command that 'each of you should set aside and save' is qualified by the next clause, 'as he or she may prosper'. Not everyone listening to this letter would have the means to follow Paul's directive.

Someone might raise the question as to whether a slave would have the means to follow Paul's directive. As discussed earlier, slaves could have a *peculium*. Hopkins notes that 'many [privileged slaves] worked in positions in which they were able to make a profit for themselves.'[88] Thus, some slaves could prosper financially. This, of course, benefitted the master, for the slave was incentivized to work in a such a way that a profit was realized. However, it is important to realize that most of these slaves would have had a very specific purpose for this surplus: to purchase their freedom.

Someone might argue that such slaves were in a good situation and would not necessarily want freedom. What would these slaves gain by purchasing their freedom? Manumission provided release from being owned by another person, freedom from sexual exploitation and bodily punishment, the opportunity to establish and maintain a family that could not be forcibly separated or individually exploited, the ability to own property and benefit from it personally, and sometimes Roman citizenship. But even more significantly, freedom provided the return of human dignity.[89] There is much evidence that slaves longed and worked and sacrificed to achieve freedom.

In all likelihood, if they were able, slaves in the Corinthian assembly were longing and saving for their manumission. In fact, they may have found some hope when they heard Paul earlier in his letter encourage them to become free if they could (1 Cor. 7.21). So, when they were encouraged by Paul to set aside something when they prospered, how might they have responded? Did they take some of their freedom money and set it aside to give away?

About a year goes by and Paul sends another letter, and he addresses the topic of the collection again. This time he has much more to say about it. Many scholars conclude that the Corinthian church has been resistant or reluctant to participate in the collection, and Paul is writing to encourage them

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87. Longenecker comments that 'if the destitute were excluded from contributing by default, it was not to their shame or detriment' (*Remember the Poor*, p. 285).

88. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 126.

89. For support of these arguments, especially the final one, see Robin G. Thompson, *Paul's Declaration of Freedom from a Freed Slave's Perspective* (BibInt, 210; Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp 45-47, 76-78.

and ensure that their promised gifts are ready when he arrives.[90] When listening to this letter, the slaves hear of the example of the Macedonians: how God's grace has enabled them to give out of their deep poverty—even beyond their ability (8.1-3). They then hear of Christ's example of becoming poor for their sake (8.9). However, Paul does qualify these statements by telling them their gift is 'acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have' (8.12). He goes on to say that the Corinthians' 'abundance will meet [the saints'] need, so that one day their abundance may also meet [the Corinthians'] need, and thus there may be equality' (8.14 NET).

Some slaves listening to this letter would have little to no resources to give to anyone else. But being Christ-followers, would they nonetheless long to have the grace of God work in them and enable them to participate in the collection, just as their brothers and sisters in Macedonia? Perhaps they—like the Macedonians who gave out of their 'deep poverty'—would desire to give because they knew first-hand the hardship of privation.[91] Other slaves listening to this letter would have surplus in their *peculia*. This surplus would likely have been set aside to pay for their freedom. How would they hear that their surplus is to meet the needs of the saints in Jerusalem so that later those saints could meet their needs? Would those needs include help on the path to freedom?[92]

While we cannot definitely answer these questions, it is important that we consider their full implications. We should not be quick to offer easy—and perhaps comfortable—answers to these questions. We should not dismiss out-of-hand that the slaves in the community of the Corinthian church could

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90.   For example, Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, pp. 208-9; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, p. 371; Horrell, 'Paul's Collection', pp. 74-75; Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 204; Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), p. 102.

91.   As Parkin suggests, 'Those for whom the spectre of destitution held the most power were perhaps the most generous' ('You Do Him No Service', p. 72).

92.   There is evidence that both Christian and Jewish assemblies paid for the manumission of slaves, but the extant sources are later than the first century. See J.A. Harrill, 'Ignatius, Ad Polycarp. 4.3 and the Corporate Manumission of Christian Slaves', *JECS* 1 (1993), pp. 107-42; Last and Harland, *Group Survival*, pp. 176-77, 183.

have contributed to Paul's collection. And we must reflect on the deep sacrifice they would have made if they did so.

However, we cannot stop there in our consideration of these slaves who were members of the Corinthian assembly. We must also consider the other Christ-followers in the community—those who were freeborn or freedpersons. As they were setting aside funds from their surplus to meet the needs of unknown fellow believers in a faraway land, did they stop to consider the needs of the slaves among them? Did they see how desperately these slaves worked to save for their freedom, or was this so common they could easily look past the desperation? Was the surplus of these freeborn and freedpersons due, at least in part, to the exploitation of these very slaves? Was it easier to give this excess to a stranger far away who needed food than to sacrifice their lifestyle in some manner and give a slave (or help a slave buy) their freedom?

In conclusion, I suggest we not leave our questions for the Corinthian community in the first century; perhaps we ought to ask ourselves similar questions. What is the source of *our* surplus? Do we know if people are exploited so that we might maintain our current lifestyle? Is it easier for us to send money to organizations who serve the poor, the hurting, the displaced around the globe, than to change the way we live in order to truly help those who are exploited in our own midst? What does it say about us today, who give to those we do not know while we look past the needs of those we do?