

1 Corinthians 16:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

Analysis

I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia)—Parakaleō (παρακαλέω, "beseech, exhort") introduces commendation of Stephanas's household, Paul's first converts in the Corinthian region (Achaia). Aparchē (ἀπαρχή, "firstfruits") recalls Israel's offering of first produce to God (Exodus 23:19), here applied to first converts—a holy offering to God.

And that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints—Etaxan heautous eis diakonian (ἔταξαν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς διακονίαν, "they appointed/devoted themselves to ministry"). This remarkable phrase indicates voluntary, self-initiated service without formal appointment. Diakonia (διακονία) encompasses practical service—hospitality, aid to the poor, support for traveling teachers. Stephanas's household exemplified servant leadership, not seeking status but performing humble ministry.

Historical Context

Stephanas (with Fortunatus and Achaicus, v. 17) apparently delivered the Corinthians' letter to Paul (7:1) and reported on Corinthian conditions. Paul personally baptized Stephanas's household (1:16), one of the few baptisms he performed. As "firstfruits" of Achaia, they held chronological primacy and modeled faithful devotion in a church fractured by status-seeking and division.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean for believers to 'appoint themselves' to ministry without waiting for official authorization?
2. Why does Paul highlight the household of Stephanas rather than individual leaders?
3. How does the 'firstfruits' imagery shape your understanding of first converts' responsibilities in a new church?

Interlinear Text

Παρακαλῶ	δὲ	ὕμᾱς	ἀδελφοί·	οἴδατε	τὴν	οἰκίαν
I beseech	G1161	you	brethren	(ye know	G3588	the house
G3870		G5209	G80	G1492		G3614
Στεφανᾶ	ὅτι	ἐστὶν	ἀπαρχὴ	τῆς	Ἀχαΐας	καὶ εἰς
of Stephanas	that	it is	the firstfruits	G3588	of Achaia	and to
G4734	G3754	G2076	G536		G882	G2532 G1519
διακονίαν	τοῖς	ἁγίοις	ἔταξαν	ἑαυτοῦς·		
the ministry	G3588	of the saints	that they have addicted	themselves		
G1248		G40	G5021	G1438		

Additional Cross-References

Romans 16:5 (Parallel theme): Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:16 (Parallel theme): And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Romans 12:13 (Holy): Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

2 Corinthians 9:1 (Holy): For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

1 Peter 4:10 (Parallel theme): As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Romans 16:2 (Holy): That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

Romans 15:25 (Holy): But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

2 Corinthians 8:4 (Holy): Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.