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Understanding the Phrase

1 Corinthians 16:15 (NKJV):

*“I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”*

In this verse, Paul describes Stephan’s and his household as the *“first fruits of Achaia.”* The term *“first fruits”* is drawn from Old Testament imagery, where the first portion of a harvest was dedicated to God as a holy offering (Exodus 22:29, Leviticus 23:10). Spiritually, it signifies those who were the *first to believe* the gospel in a particular region.

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Theological Significance

## 1. Achaia as a Mission Field

*Achaia* refers to a Roman province in southern Greece that included cities like Corinth and Athens. It was a significant area for Paul’s missionary work:

- Acts 18:12 – Paul faced opposition in Achaia.
- Acts 19:21 – Paul planned to return through Macedonia and Achaia.
- 2 Corinthians 1:1 – Paul addressed churches in Achaia.

Thus, calling Stephanas the “firstfruits” means he and his family were the earliest converts in this important mission field. Their conversion marked the beginning of the church in that region.

## 2. Spiritual Birth and New Creation

The term *firstfruits* also connects to the theological idea of regeneration—the new birth. Just as Jesus is called the “firstfruits” of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20), Stephanas’ household represents the beginning of a new spiritual harvest in Achaia. Their faith was the seed from which a community of believers would grow.

### 3. Active Ministry and Service

Paul doesn’t only highlight their early conversion—he praises their *devotion to serving the saints*. This implies ongoing commitment, not just a one-time decision:

- Hebrews 6:10 (NKJV): *“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”*

Stephanas’ household set an example of active faith—combining belief with sacrificial service.

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A Model for the Church

Paul urges the Corinthian believers (and us) to follow their example:

1 Corinthians 16:16–17 (NKJV):

*“...that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and*

*labors with us. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.”*

This teaches:

- Honor and submission to those who lead with humility and faithfulness.
- Partnership in ministry is a collective responsibility.
- Generosity and support for gospel workers is a New Testament value (Philippians 4:15–18).

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#### Conclusion

Stephanas and his household were the *first spiritual fruits* of Paul’s ministry in Achaia—early believers who didn’t just receive the gospel but lived it out by serving others. Their story calls

every believer to:

- Be *open and obedient* to the gospel.
- *Grow* in spiritual maturity and service.
- *Honor and support* faithful leaders and co-laborers in the ministry.

May we, too, be “firstfruits” in our communities—living examples of transformed lives that bear witness to the gospel.

May the Lord bless us as we follow such godly examples.

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