

1 Corinthians 16 - Final Remarks & Exhortations

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

1 Corinthians chapter 16. Let's open up in prayer.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word. Let Your grace just fill this place. Let it fill our hearts as we go through the Scriptures, chapter by chapter, verse by verse.

We pray for understanding. We pray for direction. We pray that You'd speak to every heart. We give it to You, Lord God, that you might fill our hearts. In Jesus name, amen.

It was rather typical, if you are accustomed to reading the apostle Paul's letters, when he gets to the end of what I assume was probably the scroll, and probably realized that he was coming to the end of his ability to write to them, he would begin to pass along at the very end, some rather short, quick, exhortations and reminders, and that sort of thing. Whereas in the previous chapters, he obviously took a lot of time to allow these things to evolve.

But anyway, since chapter 16 is set up this way, with just little short snippets of information, we're going to take it that way. Let's begin by reading the first 4 verses where Paul says:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² 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. ³ And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.” (ESV)

What's going on here? Well, this was a practice that went on in the early church, and it had to do with helping out the believers, the saints in Jerusalem. And one of the reasons for that was because of a famine that had gone on. There could have been very much other reasons, such as the Christians in Jerusalem might have had a hard time carrying on business since coming to Christ. Living in a thoroughly Jewish city and then coming to know Jesus as their Savior, I'm

willing to bet many of them dealt with some business persecution. You know what that's all about. Where nobody will do business with you anymore.

So for whatever reason, they began to put together, or Paul, when he would plant a church in a particular area, he would begin to speak to them about coming up with a gift for the saints back in Jerusalem.

And again, the famine was probably a big part of that. You remember when that was actually prophesied? I'll show you this on the screen. It's from Acts chapter 11, beginning in verse 27. It says,

Acts 11:27-30 (ESV)

Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (and then we're told parenthetically that) (this took place in the days of Claudius) (Caesar). So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Originally, and then remember, Barnabas and Saul at the time were north in Antioch which became the center of Christianity in the first century. And then they would take that money that the believers put together and they would go down to Jerusalem, and bless the brothers with it. But this became a practice for the apostle Paul in all of the Gentile churches that he planted after that time.

And Paul made a very smart decision at some point along the lines, to actually tell those churches to come up with their own delivery section, or group, or whatever. He would have them come up with a contingent from that fellowship to actually take the money to Jerusalem on their own. Sometimes Paul would escort them there with it, but other times, if he wasn't going that direction, they would just do it themselves. So it's interesting.

We see giving going on in the early church doesn't really surprise us or anything, but we understand what the purpose of this giving was. It was really

centered around helping to alleviate the needs that were going on there in the early church among the believers.

We also find in these first 4 verses, some really interesting things as it relates to giving and just the meetings that they held. And you'll notice in verse 2, the first thing, if you look with me again, in your Bible, it says, *“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, ...”*

Now this is just one of many passages in the Bible that speaks of the church coming together on the first day of the week. There are other passages which speak of the same thing. This was called the Lord's day and they called it the Lord's day because of course, Sunday is the day Jesus rose from the grave.

And we see here that the Gentile church began to meet very early on, on Sunday rather than the Jewish Sabbath, which of course is Saturday. And the reason I bring this up to you is because, I don't know, maybe you've received a mailer at one time or another, or even somebody knocking on your door, wanting to talk to you about this conspiracy going on of changing the Sabbath day from Saturday to Sunday, and how it was a political conspiracy. And it really has pagan roots and we really should be worshiping God on the biblical day of the Sabbath rather than Sunday, which is... You get tired just dealing with it sometimes.

Again, you see right here that the early church was already beginning to meet on Sunday, very early on. But people will ask from time to time, so just exactly when did the Sabbath change from Saturday to Sunday? And the answer is, never. The Sabbath has always been Saturday. It always will be Saturday. The Sabbath has never changed. And so people will say, well then why don't we keep the Sabbath? Because we're not under the law.

Sabbath keeping was part of the Mosaic law, which was doled out to the Jews under Judaism, and they were to keep the Sabbath and make it holy. It was to be a day of rest for them.

It is nowhere said that that has been passed along to the New Testament church. In fact, at some points along the way, some of the early Gentile churches actually began to take on certain aspects of Judaism to the point where Paul would write to them and he would say, I'm worried about you guys because you're starting to keep special days, and months, and seasons, and that sort of thing. (Galatians 4:10) But he went on to say, don't let anyone judge you, in Colossians, by what you eat, or drink, or a new moon celebration, or a Sabbath.

He said, these are a shadow of the things which are to come. The reality is found in Jesus Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)

Guys, Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial aspects of the law. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. Why don't we keep the Sabbath? Actually the fact is, we do keep the Sabbath. We keep it by faith. It's not one day a week. It's 7 days a week. It's 365 days a year.

If you are resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, which is what the fulfillment of the Sabbath is all about, then you're keeping the Sabbath. If a Sabbatarian ever asks you, do you keep the Sabbath? You say, you darn tootin I do. Every single day, every day by resting in what Jesus did on the cross.

That's what the Sabbath is all about. Do no work, but rest. That was a picture of not working for our salvation, but resting in what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross at Calvary.

It's a beautiful fulfillment. And so does it matter which day of the week we meet? Absolutely not! The early church started meeting on the Lord's Day, because it was Resurrection Sunday. But that, honestly, doesn't even make Sundays holier or better than any other day of the week.

Although, if you happen to believe one day is special, God bless you. Because Paul says, one man considers one day special, another man considers all days alike. Let every man be convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5) If you're convinced that one day's better than another, fine, but do not foist that upon other people and say, if you don't worship this way, you're not worshiping God truly, because that's just not biblical. At least not for a New Testament Christian. Anyway.

You'll notice that he goes on to speak here in verse 2 of giving, how they were to give. He says, they're "*to put something aside and store it up, (look at this) as he may prosper,...*" That basically means, in keeping or in accordance with his income. You're to give in accordance with your income. You're not expected to do what you can't do, and you're only expected to do what you can do. All right.

Giving should be in proportion to how the Lord has blessed a person financially. And that basically means that the more you make, frankly, the more you should be giving. And you guys know, the only time we ever talk about this is when it comes up in the Word. You know that we don't, we don't even take an offering

here at Calvary Chapel. We don't talk about it. We don't tell you what you should give, or when you should give, or how you should give. Only when we're instructing through the scriptures do we cover this stuff? And so we're going to cover it since it came up here in the early church as Paul is encouraging them to give.

But giving is always to be proportionate to what you're making, regardless of what those Southern speaking televangelists tell you on television when they say things like, even if you don't have the money in your account, just write out a check by faith, or something dumb like that. That's just not biblical. It's just flat out. Let me show you 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 12. Paul says,

2 Corinthians 8:12 (NIV1984)

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what he has, not according to what one does not have.

For if the willingness is there, (fine) the gift is acceptable according to (what you have) what one has, not according to what he does not have.

God doesn't want you to give beyond your means. You're to give in proportion to it, right? Not beyond it, so those guys with the slicked back hair, and the fancy clothes, and diamond rings, they're not telling you what's in the Word of God. Okay.

But I want to talk a little bit about giving because if we limit the subject of giving just to money, we've done a great disservice. Because giving is so much bigger than just... Even giving of money that can become almost a perfunctory sort of a, you don't even think about it. Those of you who are disciplined in the area of giving, you might have something set up even automatically from your account and you don't even, you see it come out at the month. You say, okay, I debited my account for this or that, I've been giving to the...

But pretty soon you just, you're giving and you don't even know you're giving, it just becomes, yeah, give a thing and whatever. And don't even think about it much anymore. But giving is so much more when we give of our lives, when we give of our time.

You don't have to read very far through the gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to find out that Jesus was a giver. I mean, He was constantly expressing the heart of the Father in acts of compassion, feeding the crowds, and healing people, and stuff like that. And acts of compassion are part of what is our birthright as believers in Christ. And even people who consider

themselves in disagreement, shall we say, with our Christian message, will even have to admit that the rise of Christianity brought many sweeping changes into the world that changed society as we know it around the world.

Let me give you some examples. The killing of children, which is called infanticide, was common in the Roman world back in Paul's day. Plato highly recommended infanticide to keep population numbers down, or at least manageable in the Roman kingdom. It was common.

We know that it was ordered in Egypt when Israel lived there and they began to fear the Israelites becoming too strong for them. They put out an edict, an order to the midwives to begin to kill the baby boys. It was a..., we read that and we're horrified. It was commonplace back in those days.

You know what really is credited with stemming the tide of infanticide historically? The rise of Christianity. You may not know that, historically speaking, but as the Gospel began to spread in the known world, infanticide dropped hugely.

Here's another one. Before the rise of Christianity, male supremacy was unquestioned, and women were rarely even taken seriously, if not despised altogether. But after the rise and spread of Christianity, things began to improve for women, to the point where eventually it was Christians who were behind women being able to vote in democratic countries.

Christianity is also credited with putting an end to the gladiatorial contests in Rome where slaves would be commanded to fight to the death, to the entertainment of the crowds and so forth. It was believers who put an end to that.

Before it was a big business, hospitals were started by Christians as places of extending mercy and healing to people who were hurting and needing help. Today you remember, or you hear about the Red Cross whenever something like a hurricane is going through or some other natural disaster. The Red Cross was started by a devout Christian by the name of Henry Dunant.

The Salvation Army and the YMCA, started by Christians who wanted to touch people's lives. Mission shelters, soup kitchens, which have sprung up in virtually every community across this country, are sponsored for the most part by Christians who have a desire to dispense mercy and compassion to the homeless.

Habitat for Humanity, founded back in 1942 by a farmer and biblical scholar by the name of Clarence Jordan, continues to build houses for people who can't afford them.

And Prison Fellowship, a wonderful ministry that we're a part of here at Calvary Chapel, ministers to imprison outcasts of society and their families. Every Christmas we get to take part in Angel Tree which is part of prison fellowship and we help purchase gifts for children whose parents are incarcerated over the holidays. Hundreds of thousands of children every Christmas receive presents because of Angel Tree.

I don't know if you know much of the history of Prison Fellowship or the Angel Tree ministry that came out of it. It was started by Charles Colson who is one of Nixon's hatchet men during the Nixon administration, and was sent to prison for his role in the Watergate break in. Some of you might, that's just distant history to some of you. Some of us lived through it.

Charles Colson was a pretty crazy guy. But when he went to prison, he started reading some books by C.S. Lewis and he surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. And he was so changed by his time in prison, that when he got out, he started a ministry called Prison Fellowship and Angel Tree from that.

But guys, over, and over, and over, again, you can look at how Christianity has changed the landscape of the world in which we live.

I don't know how many of you are aware of how slavery was abolished in Europe, in England particularly, which was steeped in slavery for so many years in the 1700s. But there was a young Englishman by the name of William Wilberforce who somehow got himself elected to parliament. But basically sat on his hands for the first few years and by his own admission, he says, I did nothing except to advance my own reputation.

But then in the year 1786, during an Easter celebration, he came to know Jesus Christ is his Lord and Savior. And he became passionate about doing something about slavery in his country, and it seemed an insurmountable task. And he was many times threatened with his life for even being involved in this process, and yet he stayed true to it. He is credited as one of the key individuals who helped to abolish slavery in England, and it wasn't his only passion.

Wilberforce being a believer was at one time active in 69 different causes to improve the human condition in England. And we're told that he gave away to

the poor, a quarter of his income. It was just part of who he was as a Christian, as a believer.

You of course know all about, well, some of you do. The orphanages I've mentioned to many times that were started in England by George Mueller. We have his autobiography in our bookstore. It's a wonderful read how this man from Prussia, who lived a total selfish life. I mean, he lived to get drunk and hang out with fast women.

That was his goal in life until he met Jesus Christ as his Savior, moved to England, and saw on the streets of England all of these little children that were being literally left to die on the street, so he started taking them into his home. It eventually became an orphanage, and then it became several orphanages. Why? Because he was a Christian, because he loved God with all of his heart.

A little closer to our own time, you've probably read the book, *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom, who along with her family hid Jews in Nazi occupied Holland so they wouldn't be arrested by the Nazis and taken off to prison camps.

You probably also know that Corrie Ten Boom and her family were eventually arrested and they were taken off to prison camps where many of them died, except for Corrie herself, who was released through a clerical error, and went around the world, as she called it, tramping for the Lord. But why did they hide the Jews? Why did they risk their lives? Because they were Christians. They loved the Lord with all of their heart.

I could go on and on. I could cite thing, after thing, after thing, after thing, where born again believers changed this world because they were living that life of compassion and giving.

You see, this thing that Paul is writing to the Corinthians about, and just saying, hey, guys, just do this. Just take some money and put it aside the beginning of the week so that when I come back, we can just put it together and you can take it to Jerusalem to help. This is this is life you guys, this is what we do. This is who we are.

We are the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, heart of God on the earth, and we're giving and loving and taking what God has given us and blessing others with it. This is who we are. And there's no denying it, so let's keep going.

Verse 5. He says, *“I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, ⁶ and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.”*

Paul's telling them, I'm probably going to pass through your area but I'm not going to stop by on the way first. I'm just going to go and do what I need to do, and then I'll stop by on my way back so that I can spend some time with you.

And then he says in verse 8, *“But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ...”* That's where he was writing this letter from. And look what he says, here's why he's going to stay in Ephesus. Check this out in verse 9, *“for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”*

Isn't that weird? I mean, I remember reading those couple of verses and thinking, is that a misprint? It just seems so odd for somebody to cite a reason for staying somewhere and have that reason be negative. I'm going to stay on in Ephesus because a great door for effective work is open to me, that's cool. I understand that.

Then he goes on to say, oh, and there, I have a lot of enemies there, so I'm going to stick around. I would expect it to be the opposite. I would expect him to say, yeah, I'm going to stay on in Ephesus because a great door has opened up for some really effective work, and I got a lot of friends here so it's cool. We're going to stick around and just do the work here in Ephesus and so forth. But it's not what he says.

He said, I'm going to stay here because God's opened the door, and I got a lot of enemies here. Which is somehow in Paul's heart and mind a proof that he's right where he's supposed to be. Which so contradicts our Americanized Christian understanding of the will of God, or discerning the will of God.

How do you discern the will of God? Well, I know if everything's going good, right? But if things are going bad, everybody's going, well, I don't think God wants me here now because I'm having all kinds of trouble. I even got some..., I got people even persecuting me so I don't think God wants me here anymore. That wasn't Paul's way of thinking. In fact, just the opposite.

He considered it a proof that he was right where he needed to be because there were lots of enemies. Isn't that interesting? That hits us right where we live sometimes. Sometimes people will say to me, I really prayed about this and I

felt like this is what God wanted me to do. Then I went into it and I just had nothing but trouble. Pastor Paul, I don't think I should be doing this because I've just had one challenge after the next. And we're like, huh? If you read your Bible, you'd realize that trouble is part of the calling.

We're called to suffer for Jesus Christ and the difficulties that we deal with, walking out our faith in Jesus Christ is part and parcel of what it means to live for Him. To be a child of God and to be running contrary to the flow of this world.

We're always going to get in trouble, right, for going against the ways of the world. And we're always going to crumple their feathers, rain on their parade, or whatever metaphor you want to try to think of. We're always going to have trouble, right? Yeah, boy, I got a lot of enemies here in Ephesus, so I'm sticking around.

Verse 10, he says, *“When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹ 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.”*

Paul gives some quick instructions about his son, Timothy, ah!, spiritual son. Paul didn't, I don't know if he had any biological children. There's reason to believe he may have been married at one time, but we don't know of any actual children that way, but Paul considered Timothy his son in the Lord. And Paul looked out for Timothy. He's always thinking about him. Thinking about how he could, just encourage him along. He wrote two letters to him that we have in our Bible.

And we know that Timothy was probably a man who dealt with a little bit of worrying because Paul exhorted him in one of the letters and said, God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and a sound mind. And so it's very possible that Timothy was a worrier. And so Paul tells the people in Corinth that when Timothy comes to them, put him at ease. Make sure he knows he's got a friend in you, the church at Corinth.

Verse 12, he says, *“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.”*

I like some of these little inside tidbits that help us to get this visual picture of how the apostles operated. They weren't always in agreement. We know that

Paul and Barnabas were in such disagreement, the Book of Acts tells us, that they actually separated. I mean, it actually became hot between the two of them, and it had to do with whether or not to bring John Mark along on a second missionary trip.

In this case, we see Paul and Apollos, coming to a place of disagreement concerning when Apollos would go to Corinth. He says, I really strongly encouraged him to go, and I'm assuming along with Timothy and the other brothers to come to Corinth. And he said, but he wasn't willing, but that's okay. He'll come when he can.

And it's really cool to me that you don't see these guys fighting. You don't see, Paul saying things to the Corinthians, like, the guy is just a drag on my ministry. I tried to encourage him to come, but, I don't know what his issue is, but he's just not, he wasn't willing, so we'll see. We'll see if he ever shows up. Send me a note if he does, okay.

There's none of that going on. He's not trying to be divisive or put any kind of a wedge. He just says it like it is, hey, I tried to encourage him to come. He wasn't willing at this time, but he'll come when he can. Okay. That's all that needs to be said.

We need to be careful how we convey our heart toward other brothers and sisters in Christ when we're talking about them, even when there's disagreement. And that's a good thing to remember in marriage as well. Married couples don't always agree. You guys knew that, right? You guys have been married. I love to say these really profound things sometimes, they just, the earth just shakes. But what happens when people don't agree? Well, sometimes they say things they shouldn't about the other person.

I really like the fact that we see this example here saying, hey, there's an area here of disagreement, but there's also respect and honor.

He goes on, verse 13, quick exhortations. *“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men,* (and by the way, that's a way of saying, be brave. Your Bible may say something to that effect, be brave. And then,) *be strong.”*

Paul is telling the church in Corinth, to *“Be watchful,”* in other words, be alert for attacks. To *“stand firm in ... (their) faith,”* when those attacks come. To be brave about the battle that goes on and to *“be strong.”* And we'll talk about what he means right there in just a moment.

But the way we get attacked in our faith, it might be a little bit different than the way the Corinthians faith was being attacked. Maybe there's a lot of similarities. We're attacked in different sorts of ways living here in America. I think we might be moving toward something more similar to what they dealt with.

But our attacks come in pseudo intellectual arguments against Christianity, creationism, things like that. Pseudo-science. We're attacked on a regular basis and you're being attacked because you begin to doubt some of the reality of what God's Word has to say. That's what happens when you get attacked.

And so Paul says, hey, you ought to be watchful for those things. In other words, you have to have an expectation that you're going to be attacked. The Word of God, the veracity, the historicity, the authenticity of God's Word is going to be attacked, okay. Expect it, but also do this.

Stand firm in your faith. Stand firm in what you know regarding the Word of God. What the Word of God says to you, stand firm. Don't waffle on it. Stand on what the Word of God has to say. Be brave when the attack comes your way. And then he says, "*be strong*," but he's not telling you to be strong in yourself.

I think the Corinthians knew what he meant, but he actually explained it a little bit better when he said the same thing to the church in Ephesus. Let me show you that passage on the screen from Ephesians 6:10. He says,

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Finally, be strong (look at this) *in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*

You see, this isn't the apostle Paul telling the Corinthians, hey, you guys, attacks are going to come, so buck up. He's not saying that at all. He's not telling you to be strong in and of yourself. He's saying, being strong in the Lord. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Listen, the apostle Paul learned well the lessons about strength and weakness. You'll remember, in 2 Corinthians, he actually wrote about it and he said, I've come to the point. God has brought me to the point where I actually boast about my weaknesses, which is a real strange thing to boast about. People don't normally boast in the things in which they are weak, but Paul did.

He says, you know what? In fact, I'll boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses because when I'm weak, I find God's strength really rests upon me. And that's in fact, remember what Jesus told Him? He said, My grace is sufficient for you because My power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9) When you become weak, Paul, then you're going to become strong because it's going to be My strength operating through you.

And that's what Paul is saying to the Corinthians here as well when he says, be on your guard, make sure that you guys are standing in the faith, that you're walking in bravery, and you are living in the strength of God. Do you remember how that passage goes on to talk about strength and the full armor of God's protective covering that we're supposed to don when we are dealing with spiritual attacks?

And then we go on in verse 14. Paul repeats. He gives them really a synopsis of what he wrote in an entire chapter earlier in this letter. That was chapter 13. Here in verse 14, he simply sums it all up by saying, *“Let all that you do be done in love.”* Very simple. Just what you're going to do, whatever you're doing for Christ, what you're doing in your home, what you're doing, your work, your life, your living, let it all be done in love. Why?

Because Paul made it very clear in chapter 13 of this letter, that if I do all of these things, or if I have all of these incredible blessings and gifts in my life, but I have not love, remember? It's useless. (1 Corinthians 13:3) I'm nothing and everything I've done amounts basically to nothing in the grand scheme of things, because love is what makes it all matter and gives it validity.

Verse 15, *“Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, (or Achai-a is how its pronounced, I always wanted to say Acha-ia though) and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—¹⁶ be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. ¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, ¹⁸ for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people.”*

It seems that the men that Paul is citing right here were those who had come from Corinth and delivered the letter containing various questions to Paul, that he then answered in this letter that we call 1 Corinthians. So these were the men who came and also came just to minister alongside Paul and refresh him in his ministry there. And so he tells the people in the church to honor these sorts of men, giving them recognition, because traveling in those days, and particularly traveling for the Gospel, was a risk of one's life.

Verse 19 says, *“The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, (which is the form of Priscilla) together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.”*²⁰ *All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.*” Yeah, I don't think so.

The holy kiss thing, just so you know, the word, holy put in front of it essentially means without shame or impurity. In the Middle East, to this day, men will still kiss one another for greeting and even saying goodbye. Not on the lips, on the cheek. And it's something that goes on here.

Here in the West, the holy handshake has taken over or even sometimes, the man hug, right? It's one hand with a handshake, the other hand around the back, and a hearty pat. That's the... I'm glad, frankly, we don't do the holy kiss, to be honest with you, not much for kissing guys. And yeah, anyway. Honestly, I don't think the specific aspect of how we greet is the important part. Paul says, let it be done in a holy way. Love one another and so forth.

Paul says in verse 21, *“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.”* Now, this was Paul's stamp of authority. Paul did not write his own letters. He dictated them to someone who wrote them down, and then at the end of his letter, he would write one sentence with his own hand, as to validate the fact that this was in fact from him.

And the reason for that is because there were already circulating among the churches some pseudepigraphal letters. That's a fancy word simply that means, they were claiming to be from the apostle Paul, but they were actually written by someone else. Paul alludes to those letters elsewhere, and he says, don't let anyone upset you by any letter or communication supposed to have come from us saying that..., and they were usually always unbiblical, ungodly sorts of things, being perpetrated among the believers. So Paul needed a means of being able to communicate to the people to say, this is me, this is really me.

Now, the reason his handwriting became so distinctive, you'll remember, is because he had a disease of the eyes, and he even wrote to the Galatians telling them, you guys know that the reason I came to you initially was because of an illness. And he says, I can confess that if you would have been able, you would have gouged out your own eyes and given them to me if you'd have been able. (Galatians 4:15)

Paul gives us very strong clues to help us understand that there was an issue with his eyesight. And then later on in that letter, he writes and says, see what large letters I use, as I write with my own hand. (Galatians 6:11) And that was

Paul's distinguishing mark. They would look at that letter and say, that is written with the hand of the apostle Paul. This was something he had to do, unfortunately because of people trying to write in his name.

Verse 22 says, *“If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!”* Now I want to handle, very quickly these statements. First the latter one. *“Our Lord, come!”* is one single Aramaic word. It's Maranatha, and it's the heart cry of believers everywhere. Come Lord Jesus. The Spirit and the bride, who is us, says, come, come Lord Jesus. Maranatha.

But this other statement that he says here that he makes here, where he says, *“If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.”* That's a pretty strong statement. So what exactly does he mean here?

Well, let me just tell you, for starters, Paul is not laying down a requirement for salvation. In other words, he's not basically saying, you must love the Lord in order to be saved. Nor is he saying, unless your love for God is perfect all the time you're probably not born again and so you're likely going to hell. That's not what Paul's saying here. But those are a couple of ways that people might interpret that sort of a statement.

In fact, there are people in the body of Christ who read something in the Scriptures like a warning, or a reference to judgment, or hell, or condemnation, and they are just instantly just sent into a tailspin. And it's usually people who have gone through something in life that has just put them in that sort of a mindset for it to be a trigger. They've received some kind of rejection from someone in their life that they loved, maybe a parent or some other person that they loved, and now they basically project that onto God.

And every time they read in the Bible, some reference to being accursed or going to hell, or judgment, or condemnation, or something of that nature, they are just instantly freaked out. And I want you to know something about that response, even though that's a trigger that is caused usually by an individual going through some a traumatic rejection in their life. You need to know that that is not God, that's not God talk.

Listen, if you ever read the Bible and you read a word of warning that expresses some, I mean, genuine warning about hell or judgment or something like that. And you just have this shaking of fear just wash over you at that moment, and you feel condemned, I want you to know that's not God. That is not God.

When God's Holy Spirit is moving through His Word, He will bring conviction, but that conviction always leaves you with hope. It always leaves you with a sense of, even when I don't measure up, and God convicts me of that a lot, there's always hope.

And it always goes along with my son, I love you. I love you with an everlasting love. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Yeah, there's some things we need to talk about. There's some areas of your life that still need to be surrendered into my hands and so forth, but I am never left with an attitude of condemnation or a feeling of hopelessness. That doesn't come from God. It comes from the enemy of your souls.

Do not listen to him because the m.o. of the enemy of your souls is to get you to close your Bible and say, that's it, I'm done, I can't take this. God doesn't love me. I'm not good enough. I don't measure up. I'm not worthy. Whatever he tries to convey into your heart and mind and basically you're brought to that place of just saying, you know what? I can't do this. Maybe some people can, but I guess I can't.

People just know this beyond a shadow of a doubt, that is satanic. That is not your God. Your God will always speak in such a way as to draw you into His heart. And He will do it with words of grace and mercy. Even if you're being a dope head, even if you need maybe a good wallop, which some of us do from time to time, right?

He's still, even those times of discipline are to direct you back to His heart, never to drive you away. Please know that what Paul is saying here is not to be taken by some to be some kind of a warning to strike fear into your heart to get you to feel condemned and hopeless.

Paul is basically saying, listen, if you have no love for Christ. And what that means is if instead your heart is filled with the love of this world, and the desire for the lusts of this world, then you know what? That only goes to prove that you have no love in your heart for Christ. That you don't know Him and that you are still in a lost condition.

Listen, Paul is not suggesting to you and I, that there aren't times that we go through struggles in our Christian life where we become drawn by the world. Because we all do. That doesn't mean you're not a Christian, that means you're a normal Christian. Those are the kinds of things we're supposed to watch out for. Those are the kinds of things we're supposed to stand in our faith about when

we're being drawn away when our hearts are being drawn toward the things of this world, the pleasures of this world.

Listen, the world is full of pleasures, and delights, and things that will draw your heart away from devotion to Jesus Christ. It happens and it happens to Christians, honest, born again, going to heaven, washed in the blood Christians. We get drawn away. And the enemy's desire is to use those things to cool the passion of our heart so that we would begin to walk away from that devotion to Christ, so be on your guard.

Paul is not saying when you and I struggle with those things in the world, probably means you're accursed. It's not what he's saying at all, so please understand that. Loving, loving Christ is part of what it means to be a Christian. We love Him because He first loved us. And, Peter wrote about this. Let me show you this last verse, we'll take a look at here. He says..., 1 Peter 1, verses 8 and 9,

1 Peter 1:8-9 (ESV)

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. (isn't that interesting) Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy (a joy he says) that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

See, it's part of our birthright to love Him, and how we show that we love Him is when we're drawn away from the things of God to the things of this world, and we start to feel that cooling going on. We do receive the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and when we respond to that, we come back to Him. We're showing our love for Him.

The last 2 verses of the chapter simply say, “²³ *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.*” ²⁴ *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*”

And with that, we finish our study of 1 Corinthians.