

1 Corinthians 16

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Date: 18 May 2016

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- [0 : 0 0] This final section is the last chapter of 1 Corinthians 16. You may remember that last Wednesday evening we looked at the opening verses, focusing particularly on the collection for the saints, and also for the fact that this was to be gathered and stored up week by week upon the first day of the week, this being the day on which the New Testament church met for worship, the Christian Sabbath as it became.
- Now, the reason for this collection, we speculated a wee bit about it last Wednesday, firstly may be out of gratitude for the fact that the gospel had gone out initially from Judea.
- Secondly, a very practical reason, because the Judean church had adopted the sell everything policy and share it all out, which is great if the Lord is about to come back within the next calendar year, but is not really sustainable long term.
- As an economic means. And so the Jerusalem church would effectively have spent most of their money. They'd be in very hard times if there was any famines or anything like that.
- So this was partly to support and to sustain them. Also, however, it should be borne in mind that in the original context, both the pagan Greek world and also in the Jewish synagogue, it was not uncommon for people to gather money to help brethren who had fallen on hard times.
- [1 : 2 9] If a Jewish man went out into the empire, as it were, and made good, then quite often he would delegate a servant or something to take, you know, a large extra, a donation or a gift back to the temple as a sort of thank offering to the Lord for blessing his business.
- And the Greeks themselves, of course, if one of the members of their trade guild or whatever would fall on hard times or get into financial difficulty, they would club together and support him. And so Paul perhaps also, as well as the other reasons that we mentioned, wouldn't want the Christian church to be seen to be falling behind unbelievers when it came to the care of the needy and the care of the poor.
- So he says, those, whoever you consider to be suitable, whoever you consider to be trustworthy, whoever you approve by your letters, I'll send to bring your gift, your liberality to Jerusalem.
- If it's appropriate, if it's meek that I do also, then they can go with me. Now, it's not quite clear whether this means, you know, if it's a big enough gift, then I'll go as an apostle as well.
- But that seems unlikely. It's more likely to be, if my travel plans coincide with theirs, then I'll go with them. Fine.
- [2 : 4 2] But the letters of commendation coming from the Corinthian church would be to establish the integrity of the bearers. You know, if it says that, you know, these three, four named individuals, they set off with this amount of money from Corinth, then if when they count it out when they get to Jerusalem, some of it's missing, then obviously that would cast aspersions on their faithfulness, on their integrity.
- So it's partly to say, yes, these are our named bearers, but it's also to say, this is what they set off with, this is what they arrive with, and they count it out at the end, and yes, they have faithfully delivered the sum that was given into their hand.

So this is partly the purpose of the letters. Now, I will come unto you, verse 5, when I shall pass through Macedonia. For I do pass through Macedonia, it may be that I will abide, yea, in winter with you, that he may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

But I won't see you now by the way, but I trust to tie a while with you, if the Lord permit. Now, there's these key four words, if the Lord permit. We know from subsequent writing, the next letter to the Corinthians, that this actually didn't happen, or not right away, anyway.

Because if we go on to 2 Corinthians chapter 1, if we look then from verses 15 to 17, here it says, In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit, and to pass by you into Macedonia, exactly as he says there in 1 Corinthians 16, and of you to be brought in my way toward Judea.

[4 : 16] When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? In other words, did I just talk off the top of my head? Was it just sort of making a joke? Which is clearly what some people have said. When he didn't come, then some people said, Well, he obviously didn't mean it.

You know, he wasn't serious about it. He was obviously just speaking lightly. Did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose? Do I purpose according to the flesh? And there with me should be yea, yea, and yea.

They say one thing and doing another. But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and yea. By the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who's preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus.

It was not yes and no, but it was always yes. Now, what does he say then, verse 23? I call God for a record upon my soul that to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth.

In other words, things that were a problem in 1 Corinthians are clearly still a problem. Some of them are still a problem in 2 Corinthians. And because he wouldn't come to them in a spirit of, perhaps, you know, wrath or a spirit of kind of discipline, he stays away until they're able to sort these things themselves.

[5 : 28] He says, it's not because I didn't mean it. It's not because I was using likeness that I didn't come. But it's to spare you that I didn't come. But clearly the accusation was coming from some people.

Chapter 2, verse 1. But I determined this with myself, in 2 Corinthians now, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. Clearly he has been to them once in a spirit of heaviness.

But he's determined he's not going to come again in that spirit. Otherwise they'll think he only ever comes when there's trouble. He only ever comes when he wants to mete out discipline, when he wants to give them a rouse.

So he stays away that he might spare them. But obviously the fact that he has written here that he meant to come, he was intending to come, and then for whatever reason he didn't come, was used against him by some who weren't exactly fans of Paul and his teaching in Corinth.

Now this is another of the things that it points out to us. Now this chapter indicates a number of things to us. First of all, it indicates the fragility of the early church.

[6 : 37] Not just the early church, but the church in every generation. We have a tendency to look back almost to former times and think, Ah, yes, things were great then.

They were so spiritual, and they were so godly, and they were so much better than we are. And many people were. But the fact of the matter is that when we look back, we tend to focus on those who were good.

And we say, oh, what a giant in the faith he was or she was. And they were so godly. But for everyone that was godly, there would have been ten that were rascals. And there would have been another ten who professed faith and sounded good, but actually their profession was quite shallow.

And they were quite empty. And we might look back and think, Ah, well, think of the days of the Reformation or the Covenanters, meeting out on the moors and the hillsides. They were so faithful.

Do you want to go back to those days? Do you want to go back to where you have to meet out in the moor? You're always watching for soldiers who might seek to arrest you or kill you or whatever. Not foreign soldiers.

[7 : 38] Your own country's soldiers. Where if anybody shelters people who go to these meetings, they can have their homes burned down. And they can be arrested or they can be just shot out of hand.

You know, the covenanting times, you think, oh, how godly they were. Some people were. But the very fact that we had a government in those days that wanted to literally hunt down to death and execute people who met in these times and these meetings out on the moors and these covenanting calls shows just how dire things were at the time.

The reason for the Reformation at the time and earlier on than that is because things were so bad in the church. And we see the fragility of the true gospel at every stage throughout the church's life, throughout its history.

And the apostolic church is no exception. The fragility, but also the durability. The fact that it endures despite its weakness, despite its frailty.

You may look, for example, see a beautiful butterfly fluffing away. Look at the colours. Look at the beauty of its wings and the way that if it rests on a leaf, you see its wings gently opening and closing.

[8 : 54] And yet, what is it? If you were to grasp it and crush it in your hand, what would you have in your hand if you kill a mortal? It's dust in your hand. That's what it amounts to.

It's so, so desperately fragile. A thing of such beauty could potentially be killed just like that. Just by crushing your fingers together. And the faith of Jesus Christ is such that it is placed in the receptacle of which it is put is a human heart, a human soul, which is shot through with so much sin, so much weakness, so much of the flesh, so much worthiness.

It is a wonder that the grace of Christ ever prospers in such soil. But it does. It does despite our weakness. Despite their weakness in first century Corinth, despite their divisiveness, despite the fact that many of them are antagonistic to the Apostle Paul, still the church grows.

The gospel grows. The fragility and the durability of the Church of Jesus Christ. They weren't all super saints in those days.

They weren't all holy, holy people. Yes, they were saints in the sense that they were redeemed by Christ. But there was plenty of sin and plenty of divisiveness and plenty of worldly spirit in them as well.

[10 : 19] It is a miracle. And I say that choosing words carefully. It is a miracle of God's grace that the Church of Jesus Christ survives at all.

And that is true in every generation. And every generation since, for example, the Second World War. And people are always saying, well, at the present rate of decline, the Christian Church will be extinct in 30 years.

And 30 years later saying, at the present rate of decline, it will be extinct in 30 years. And every few years they keep on predicting the demise and extinction of the Church of Jesus Christ.

And it never happens. It never happens because despite the fragility, there is the durability of that which is divine, that which cannot be killed because the Word of God is not bad.

And it prospers despite its fragility. And here we see this quarrelsomeness, this divisiveness, the fact that there's so much worldly sin and argumentativeness and comparative lack of love amongst the Corinthian believers here.

[11 : 29] But not all. There are those who are pure gold amongst them. But Paul intended to come and see them, but he wasn't able to. I'll tarry up Ephesus until Pentecost.

Why? For a great dawn and effectual has opened unto me and their many adversaries. Now this brings us in, then, to one of the aspects of the Church's fragility.

There is always more needing done than we can possibly do. Here's Paul. He wants to be in Corinth, which is southern Greece.

Achaia is the ancient term for that part of southern Greece. Or in Macedonia, northern Greece. But here he is in Ephesus, in Asia, in the western bit of Turkey.

And he has to labour there because there's an opportunity has opened up and a chance to spread the gospel further there, which there wouldn't always have been.

[12 : 25] There were opportunities there that didn't always exist. And while Paul was in Ephesus there, there was opportunity then to be spreading the word, to be preaching, and to spread it throughout Asia.

And this, you know, this doesn't happen all the time, these opportunities. And here's the chance. The opposition is there. But also the chance to actually root down the gospel in that key city that would then spread it throughout all of that part of Asia.

But there's not enough of him to go around. He can't be in all these different places at once. He can't do all the things that he needs to do. And this is the case with the Church of Jesus Christ at every age.

You know, if we had more missionaries, we could send so many more people to so many different countries. We could strengthen this mission here or that mission there. We can have people doing lots of different jobs and building up the Church of Jesus Christ, but we just haven't got enough people to do the work.

It's not just, here we are, a few sitting here, yes, in Scalpy. That's the case always. If we had more people, more missionaries, more workers, more to do this, more resources, we could always do more.

[13 : 43] And it's back again to the fragility and yet the durability of the Church of Christ. Paul wants to be in two different places at once. But here's a great door and a factory has opened unto me.

And there are many inverstities. There in Acts 19, we read of it, verses 8 to 10. He speaks boldly in the synagogue in Ephesus. For the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

When divers were hardened and believed not and spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one, Tyrannus.

And this continued by the space of two years so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

An opportunity, a great door and effectual has opened unto me. This is what the Lord has opened there. He can't stop and go to Corinth at this point. There isn't enough of him to go around.

[14 : 47] So, what does he do? If he can't go himself, he sends somebody else. This is where Timothy comes in. Now, if Timothy has come, see that he may be with you without fear.

For he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do. Timothy, they didn't obviously have a high opinion of, partly perhaps, because at this stage he's still very young, although he went on to be greatly used of the Lord.

Here he is, chapter 4, verse 17, for this cause have I sent unto you, Timotheus, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church.

Timothy isn't coming in his own authority, in other words, he's coming as my representative. Everything I teach, he's going to teach you. It's the same things I teach in all places. I'm not picking on you, Corinthians.

I'm teaching you the same things as are taught by me through the gospel throughout all the different churches, throughout all the places where I minister. So Timothy's coming. And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear.

[15 : 56] Don't despise him. Let no man despise him, but conduct him forth in peace that he may come unto me. For I look for him with the brethren. Now, that almost implies, not just Timothy might not get a new perception, it almost implies that Timothy might be in danger.

You know, this is how serious things were in Corinth. And Paul physically can't be there, so he sends someone else. Now, we may not always get the people that we would like in the places we would like.

We might want a giant of the faith, an apostle in this place or that place, and the Lord sends somebody that seems so much lesser. But it's the same gospel of the same power and the same God.

And as he writes here on 2 Corinthians, my strength is made perfect in weakness. Corinth didn't go down the plughole just because it only had Timothy there instead of Paul.

It continued to be strengthened in the Spirit despite its fragility, despite its sinfulness, despite its weakness. Timothy is used where Paul cannot be.

[17 : 02] Well, he won't send one, he'll send somebody else. just as Jesus said to the disciples, you know, I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you. If you can't get this, I'll provide that.

If you can't have this person, I will provide that person. It may not be your first choice, but it ends up being the right choice. It ends up being the person that I, the Lord, have chosen for you there to strengthen that church or this church or the other one.

If Demolpheus come, see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do. Fragility, weakness, but durability continuing despite its weakness.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. As touching our brother Apollos, oh, there's a giant, there's one that we do want, and he was so gifted, he had such ability and everybody admired his auditory and his strength and so on.

Now this Apollos, we read of him at the end of Acts 18, a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria in Egypt, an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

[18 : 13] This man was instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them and expanded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, Corinth, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him, who when he was come, that is to Corinth, helped them much which had believed through grace.

for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. He made a deep impression. This is one reason why in 1 Corinthians 1, it says, now this I say, every one of you say, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Christ.

Apollos has his own party there. Not that he sought it, not that he wanted to foment division, but some people said, oh, we're loyal to Apollos, he's the guy for us.

And others said, no, no, you've got to stick by the teaching of Paul, he's the one that planted the church here, he's the one that taught us. And others, perhaps the more Jewish party, said, oh, we like Peter better. And others say, oh, well, we don't want anything to do with anything, we just want to follow Christ.

[19 : 29] Now, of course, when people say, oh, I'm not of any of these parties, I'm just of Christ, of course, they usually are of one particular party or other, but these divisions here, Apollos would not help to foment.

This is why Paul is careful to say at verse 12, as touching our brother, notice the term of affection, Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brother.

I wanted him to go. So far am I from saying, I don't want Apollos going there, he's got a fan club there, I don't want him going there, I want him to like me. No, I want Apollos to go.

I want him to strengthen the church, I want him to build it up. But his will was not at all to come at this time, but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

I wanted him to go, Apollos wouldn't come. Just in case some of you are thinking, oh, Apollos is brilliant, Apollos would never let us down. Apollos doesn't want to come. Apollos does not want to foment party spirit there.

[20 : 29] And if one way to strengthen unity is just to stay out of it for a while, this is probably the reason why he doesn't want to go up this stage. He doesn't want to make things worse.

And there is this danger. Verse 13 and verse 14. We see these things gathered up, these exhortations. Four out of these five exhortations are like military terms.

Watch ye, first of all. That means don't be falling asleep. If to watch with somebody, you know, when Jesus comes to get 70, the disciples are asleep, he says, couldn't you watch one hour?

That's, stand on your guard like a sentry, a sentry, not, it's a military term. You're going to be vigilant against the devil because it's when you're sleepy and dozy, when your guard is down, that's when he gets in.

You know, if you're vigilant and prayerful and watchful, well, he'll just wait, he'll stay away, he'll bide his time. But when you begin to lose concentration, when you begin to spiritually fall asleep, that's when he gets in.

[21 : 31] So watch ye, that's the first thing. Stand fast in the faith and again, the imagery is of a line of soldiers holding alive in the midst of attack, not breaking, not giving way, standing fast in the faith because the attacks will come.

Just as the Corinthians have been under spiritual attack and busy being puffed up with one gift in another. We can speak in tongues and we can prophesy and we can do this and we can do that.

You know, that's great, but what's the strength of your actual faith in Christ? Stand fast in the faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Quit you like men. Don't be little children. Don't stay forever as babes in the faith. Don't be content with just always being in the infancy and saying, oh yes, it was great.

I remember when I was converted and I remember how it was then. Okay, that's how it was then. What is it now? How are you growing in the faith? How are you going on with the Lord?

[22 : 33] You've got to be grown-ups. It's not an exclusive term, men as opposed to not like women, but it's rather to be grown-ups. And yes, there is a sense in which you've got to be masculine about it.

You've got to be like leaders there too, but the sense is of not being immature. Be grown-up, be man, and be strong because it is so possible always to be weak.

Now, I know it's a bit of a caricature how always, you know, Christians are portrayed in the media or in television programs or films. They're always one of two things. They're either bigoted fundamentalists and they portray the characters as a caricature so hateful, so narrow-minded, so nasty as the atheists like to portray Christians.

Or on the other hand, they're so mealy-mouthed and wimpy and soft and don't actually stand for anything and nobody could respect anything that they say because they're just so weak.

And that's how the caricature of believers are either as fundamentalist bigots, narrow-minded, nasty, or on the other hand, weak and limp and effeminate and, you know, not standing for anything.

[23 : 45] And what the true Christian is meant to be is to be strong. Yes, gracious. Yes, true. Yes, patient and kind but strong in the faith. You can be as kind as you like to somebody else but don't compromise on the faith.

Let them ask all that they want but don't climb down from your position in relation to Christ just so you think you're being nicer to them. You're not. If they're truly interested in the truth, then it is the truth that they want to know about, not some watered-down, diluted, ecumenical, multi-faith version of it.

They want the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. So you have to watch you. Stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Be strong. Military terms pretty much.

But through it all, like all your things, be done with charity, with love. Charity suffereth long and is kind. Charity envieth not.

Charity wanteth not itself. It's not talked off. It's not proud. Love is not the weak, soft option. Anybody who thinks it is has never tried it.

[24 : 54] Loving costs and having all things done with charity means that all things will cost. All things will be difficult to do. It is difficult to keep loving when people are so often so unlovable.

But let all things be done with love, with charity. This is what shows that it is of Christ. It's not just military hardness.

It is military hardness with regard to the self. It is gentleness and love with regard to others. It is a strong faith. A faith that can love because it is strong.

I beseech you, brethren, you know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. submit yourselves unto such.

Now, you are submitting yourselves to what? Why? Because they are being kind to everybody to the ministry of the saints. A suggestion here, as some commentators have said, is that that which begins spontaneously, the putting themselves, the household of Stephanas, putting themselves at the disposal of the church, always open in hospitality, always serving the saints, always giving on themselves, showing spontaneously this kind of initiative, this leads in due course to official position in that sense.

[26 : 21] Because why are you making them, why would you submit to them? Well, you only submit to them because they're leaders. But in what sense are they leaders? They're leaders because they have shown themselves to be servants.

You see the point here? They spontaneously began to put themselves at the disposal of the church, addicted themselves to the ministry, the service of the saints.

If they're going to lead, they must lead by serving. And because they've shown themselves to be spontaneously servants of the saints with a servant heart, therefore the church rightly is able to say, well, who do we want as our leader?

These are the kind of people who are fit and mature enough to lead because they are so humble. Because they're not going to be puffed up with pride and getting all sort of arrogant and tyrannical and all of this about it.

No, they're going to lead by example. They're going to lead by humility. They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, so submit yourselves unto such.

[27 : 21] Such humility, such service, such self-giving. These are the people you can submit to their word, to their gentle authority because they lead by example to everyone that helpeth with us and laboureth here.

It is the first fruits of Achaia. Now, the house of Stephanas, clearly within the house of Stephanas, there must have been a particular one, Eponatus, who in Romans 16 at verse 5, he is described personally as being the first fruits of Achaia.

That is of that part of Greece. Now, if the household of Stephanas is the first fruits of Achaia, and Eponatus, Romans 16 verse 5, is himself the first fruits of Achaia, then it must mean that within that household, he is the very first one in that place, in that area, who trusted in Christ.

I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and the Fortunatus and the Caiapas, for that which was lacking on your part, they have supplied. Now, that doesn't mean money. We've got to stress that.

It's not, you, Corinthians, didn't give me a thing, but they have brought all this largesse and all this money. It doesn't mean money, and the reason we know it can't mean money is if you double back to chapter 9 at verse 15, it says, you know, I have used none of these things, neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me, for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void.

[28 : 50] He doesn't want anything from them. He says, yes, it's right that those who preach the gospel, should live off the gospel, just as those who serve at the altar live off the altar, but I haven't done any of these things.

I do these things willingly, and he says elsewhere, you know, whatever I needed, the brethren from Macedonia supplied, in other words, the Philippine church supplied.

So it's not money, whatever it is that they brought. It is probably, maybe some gifts, physical gifts, but above all, it's information.

It's the greetings, the update, the knowledge of how things were going in Corinth, and then he then transmits information and instruction back to them.

So that which was lacking on your part means, I didn't know how you were getting on. I didn't know what the situation was with you, but they have supplied it now. They have refreshed my spirit and yours, because now that they've come to me with these updates, this information, this knowledge of how you're getting on, they can take likewise my words back to you and refresh your spirit as well as mine.

[30 : 01] The churches of Asia, that is based in Ephesus, salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord with the church that is in their house. Now, brief word on Aquila and Priscilla there.

In Acts 18, we first encounter them at the beginning. And Aquila was a certain Jew, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome.

And this is in Corinth. Because they were originally in Corinth, they know the Corinthian Christians and therefore they are sending greetings. But we read in Acts 18 that when Paul then left Corinth, verse 18 of Acts 18, and sailed then into Syria with him, Priscilla and Aquila, having shone his head in Cancra for he had a vow.

So they go with him to Ephesus. And now from Ephesus, they are sending greetings back to the Corinthian church and the church that is in their house. Now, when Paul writes to the Romans, he writes to them, Priscilla and Aquila, greet them, my helpers in Christ Jesus, Romans 16, at verse 3, who have for my life laid down their own necks unto whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Greet the church that is in their house in Rome. So they've gone back to Rome and wherever they go, whether it's in Corinth, whether it's in Ephesus, whether it's in Rome, their home immediately becomes a meeting, or gradually perhaps, but it does become a meeting place for the Christians.

[31 : 35] There were no church buildings for the first 300 years or so of the Christian gospel. The church met in people's houses. They met wherever they could gather.

Whenever there was a house big enough and people were welcoming it, then the church would gather there. And the church always seemed to be ready to gather where Aquila and Priscilla were.

In Corinth, in Ephesus, in Rome. And so, the church that is in their house likewise greets them. All the brethren greet you. Greet you, one another with a holy kiss. The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand.

Now this tells you that most of this letter was transcribed by a secretary, or the old-fashioned word, Emanuensis, somebody who scribed out the letter.

But this last bit, like at the end of Colossians, like at the end of Ephesians, Paul writes a wee bit with his own hand just to show that it's actually coming from him.

[32 : 30] Just as you or I, you know, if you had a legal document or a typewritten letter, yeah, you could put your name at the end, but you sign your name at the end. And you don't do that with a typewriter, with a computer printout.

You do it with a pen and you write your own name physically with your hand. That's your signature. That's what shows definitely the letter came from you. Or the check or the document or whatever it is, it's got your signature on it.

That shows that whatever is printed above it, you are putting your name to it. And likewise, Paul is signing off this letter just as he signs off Colossians, just as he signs off Ephesians with his own hand.

But the salutation is more than just, this is from Paul. He's also saying, verse 22, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.

Here's two strange words here. The one means accursed. Anathema is accursed. Now, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.

[33 : 33] Now this takes us back to chapter 12, where if you remember verse 3, it says, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.

And no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. So in other words, if you're calling, if you're loving the Lord Jesus Christ, you can't say that he's accursed.

The Spirit of God will not allow you to say that. So if anybody does say that, they can't be speaking with the power of Christ. But if anybody doesn't love Christ, then are they under a curse?

Well, yes, technically they are of course, because we're under the curse of the law. And we continue under the curse of the law. Remember what the end of John chapter 3 says, you know, the wrath of God abideth on him.

It stays in us until and unless we're delivered by Christ. Now if we're delivered by Christ, we're going to love Christ. But if we don't love Christ, it's not enough just to believe that he exists because as James tells us, the devil believes, chapter 2, verse 19 of James, the devil believes and he trembles.

[34 : 39] But if we love Christ, then it's because we've been saved by Christ. If any man love not Christ, it's not, I hereby curse him, but rather, let him be cursed.

Let him be anathema. You know, like at the end of Revelation 22, you know, it says, he that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He which is filthy, let him be filthy still.

He that is righteous, let him be righteous still. He that is holy, let him be holy still. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. He is cursed.

He's under the curse of the law. He's under the curse of judgment. If he won't love Christ, let him be there. Let him be anathema. And then this word, mananatha, this is a Syriac word, or Aramaic, some people would say.

And it means quite simply, the Lord cometh. You know, the Lord is coming soon. We've got to be watchful for the Lord. Can we think, well, why would you put a bit of Syriac at the end of a letter written in Greek?

[35 : 41] Well, you might say, well, there's the word Amen at the end of verse 24. Why would you put a word of Hebrew at the end of Greek? The fact is, the word Amen, this Hebrew word, has been used without any alteration in more languages in the world than any other single word.

The fact that it is originally a Hebrew word doesn't mean it doesn't get used in other languages. Likewise, lots of different words in different languages find their way into other languages.

You know, we might say, I live in a bungalow. Bungalow is an Indian word that means a house at a single story level. And like lots of different words, you know, you go and have a cup of coffee in a cafe.

Cafe is a French word, just means coffee. You know, all these other things, they work their way into languages. So likewise, in the Christian church, this term, Maranatha, which must have originated in the Palestinian church in Judea because that was the language, the Aramaic, the Syriac, was the language that the original disciples and Jesus himself would have spoken as their daily language.

And this, the Lord cometh, would have become so common as a proverb, almost as a signature, that you wouldn't need to translate it because it would be so well known across the church.

[36 : 58] Let it be an Arthema, Maranatha, the Lord cometh. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you see how love, which is not the soft option, not an easy option, but a hard thing to do, a hard thing to maintain, and yet it is the glue that holds the church together.

It is the membrane that sustains the fragility of the butterfly wings. It is that which, despite our weakness and the weakness of the Corinthians and the weakness of the Galatians and the Philippians and all the other branches of the church and the weakness of us too in this country and in this century now, that love of the Lord, which likewise produces love for one another, that is what holds together and sustains and pumps the lifeblood through the church of Jesus Christ in each succeeding generation.

And one generation follows another, but they don't come in chopped up seconds. They overlap. We had a hint of that there at verse 10. Timothy's coming. Timothy's not Paul.

He's a young man, but the young have begun to come in before the old have completely gone out. And that's the case in every church. Every congregation. The young begin to come in before the old completely go out.

They overlap, but their generations are different. And so it keeps going. The durability of the church of Christ. The durability with the spirit and the love of the Lord maintaining it.

[38 : 40] Not only in Corinth, not only in Asia and Macedonia and Asia and Italy and thence on into Spain and France and Britain and Scotland and these islands through all the centuries.

The fragility which keeps on going. And the devil thinks he's only got to surely crush his hands and that will destroy the church of Jesus Christ.

And the atheist who confidently predict 20 years time, there'll be no church left. 30 years time, they'll all be gone. They'll be extinct. No, they won't be. Because there is no mere man-made institution.

It is breathed through with the breath of the living God. It's sustained by the life of the Savior. It is upheld by this love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. This is the word to us in our day. This is the word to the Corinthians. This is the word to the