

Final Thoughts – 1 Cor 16:15-24

Well, after 2 ½ years and 73 messages in 1 Corinthians – it's with mixed feelings that I say, this is it; The last one
Looking at the issues of *their* day, in *their* church, so as to avoid them in ours; And thereby live as the church in the world without the world in the church
That's been the intent of this entire study; And this message is no different

So, for the last time – why don't you turn with me to 1 Cor 16:15-24 (p.963; **Intro**)
These are Paul's final thoughts, that I want to look at in 2 parts; Starting with v15-18
[15] *Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, 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.*
Let's stop there

➤ I don't know about you, but often times when our girls are headed out the door, I will holler one or two final thoughts
Like, "Drive safe!" Or, "Let us know if your plans change! Be a blessing!"
And always, always – "I love you"

Final thoughts that I want in the forefront of their mind, as they leave our home
Not unlike those of Paul here, as he leaves his letter
Last minute reminders, and admonitions even, as he signs off

The first of which, is . . .

Follow well (v15-18)

As in *be subject* to your spiritual leaders; That's the crux of v15-18, and one of the two main thoughts that Paul wanted to leave with them
Be subject [v16] *to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.*
As in, follow them; Follow your leaders

The question is, how do you do that? And how do you do it *well*?
And the first part of the answer comes from the actual *word* Paul uses here – the word *for be subject to*; It's *hypotasso* in Greek . . .
And it means to place yourself under, or submit to the authority of

IOW Paul is saying, follow well . . .

• By placing yourself under the authority of your leaders (v16)

Your *spiritual* leaders in this case; The leaders of your church
Submit to *them*, just like you to submit to and place yourself under the authority of God the Father – Heb 12:9; Same word – *hypotasso*
And just like citizens are to place themselves under their *governing* authorities – Rom 13:1; And those who are younger are to submit to their *elders* – 1 Pet 5:5
And wives are to submit to their husbands – Eph 5:24
Same word and same meaning – submit to or be subject to, by placing yourself under the authority of another

In this case, those who are your spiritual leaders

Those who *have devoted themselves* [as Paul says in v15] *to the service of the saints*
Who have given their lives to the work of ministry, like pastors and elders
And those who *represent* the church, like *Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus*, v17
And those who refresh your *spirit*, v18, like they did Paul's

If you're going to follow *well* in the church, as Paul exhorts us – you need to place yourself under the authority of those who *lead* the church

Second, follow well . . .

• By honoring your leaders (v18)

That's the idea of Paul's last statement in v18 – *Give recognition to such people.*
Referring to the leaders he just cited

Recognize the role they play, and the position they hold, and the responsibility they carry – and *honor* them for it; Show them deference
Not necessarily in a big ceremony or *formal* way, but in your heart, and your conversations, and decisions

Honor them, and obey them; Follow well . . .

• By obeying your leaders (Heb 13:17)

That's what **Heb 13:17** says explicitly – *Obey your leaders and submit to them* [which is a different word by the way, with the connotation of yielding to or going along with], *for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this* [i.e. lead and watch over you] *with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

The bottom line being – if you're going to follow well, you need to obey well; *Obey your leaders and submit to them* it says
Which, if you're anything like me – you chafe against the very thought of
You don't even like to hear the *words* – obey your leaders; I don't
Let alone actually yield to them

In fact, you might be thinking – "No way; It's one thing to obey the government, and do what *they* say; But my church? My pastor? Not happening"
In which case, you sin; Even if you grudgingly obey; Grudgingly follow
B/c grudging obedience is not godly obedience; The OT makes that very clear

Nor would it be of any *advantage* to you Paul says, b/c it would cause your leaders to groan; And if *they* groan, it's only a matter of time before *you* groan

So if you're going to follow well, you need to obey well
Honoring their position, and joyfully placing yourself under their authority*****

➤ Now, does that mean you do so blindly? Ignoring their sin or recklessness? No
Does that mean you follow silently? Keeping to yourself, and offering no thought or insight or opinion? No
Does that mean you go along naively? Not bothering to weigh what they say, and listen to the Spirit? No; No, no, and no (**Summary**)

Following well and obeying your leaders, simply means making yourself easy to lead

And being a part of solutions, instead of adding to the problems

That's the *first* of Paul's last two reminders – follow well; Second, is to . . .

Love always (v19-24)

Look at v19-24

[19] *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, 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.*

[21] *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.* [22] *If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!* [23] *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.* [24] *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

When you get right down to it, this is one big expression of love; A great big love-fest

And an example that we'd do well to imitate and cultivate, in our own church

And I think we do

So let me just add fuel to the fire, and encourage you to love always . . .

• Like the churches did with hearty greetings (v19)

Paul says in v19 – *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.* (**Map**)

Asia is the Roman province located in what is now western Turkey

Including churches like Laodicea and Philadelphia and Smyrna

Prisca meanwhile, is simply the Greek form of Priscilla as you sometimes see it

And together with Aquila, they had not only helped Paul to establish the church in

Corinth (Acts 18:2) . . .

But had evidently traveled to Ephesus, to host a church in their *home*

Just like they would later do in *Rome* (Rom 16:3-5); Amazing people

Similar to those from *our* church, who moved to Washington DC and Chattanooga, to

help establish churches there*****

- In any case, these churches to whom Paul referred – expressed their love with *hearty* greetings; A word in Greek that carries an *unusual* intensity by the way Showing that their love for one another was deep, and heartfelt Especially so, b/c of their common connection with the Lord They sent hearty greetings *in the Lord*

And that's exactly what should characterize *our* love for one another

Not just a casual, take-it-or-leave-it “hi” here and there, but hearty and heartfelt

greetings, that express a genuine love for one another . . .

B/c of a common, genuine love for Christ

Love always – like the churches did with hearty *greetings*; And . . .

• Like the believers did with warm fondness (v20)

All the brothers [Paul says in v20; the brothers and sisters in Christ] *send you greetings.*

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

A holy kiss in those times was an expression of unity and affection among the believers – men to men and women to women

Most likely a peck on the cheek/forehead; Like a handshake or hug in our culture

The point being, that if we love one another, we should show it with expressions of warm fondness; If that includes a kiss, so be it

There's nothing wrong with that in and of itself; But it doesn't *have* to be a kiss

Similar to the issue of head coverings in chapter 11, a kiss for a greeting not only doesn't *mean* the same thing as it did then, but it implies something vastly different

And, the principle can be separated from the practice

IOW we can honor the principle to love one another with warm fondness, without kissing one another

Third, love always . . .

• Like Paul did with simple reassurance (v21)

V21 says – *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.*

It was a simple reassurance that the letter is his; And a subtle expression of love I think

So they weren't left guessing, or wondering – especially after all the hard things he had said; And the issues he'd addressed; And the force with which he had done so

He wanted them to know they could trust what they heard; He reassured them

Which goes a long way, doesn't it?

Whether it's in your marriage after a heated exchange . . .

Or the workplace after a disagreement; Or with your kids after a punishment . . .

Or in church after a hard message; Simple reassurance goes a long way

That's one of the reasons I end our services with – **You Are Loved**; And mean it

I want to *reassure* you – after challenging, or correcting, or teaching you*****

And you should do the same, with those around you

Love always like Paul did with simple reassurance

And sometimes . . .

• And warning (v22a)

He says in v22a – *If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.*

Which at first glance, seems a bit out of place

But remember, these are final thoughts; Strung together in a stream of thought manner, much like Becky and I do when we're getting away for a weekend . . .

And saying goodbye to the girls

“Don't forget the trash; And be sure to feed the dog; I love you; *And if you give grandma any trouble, you're gonna get it*; See you soon; Text me”

Feels a bit out of place, doesn't it? But very normal; And that's what Paul does here

In the middle of his *feel-good* expressions of love, he includes a *warning* as an expression of his love; Probably the most important thought of all

Making sure they're under no false pretenses or assumptions, regarding their eternity

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Let him be the recipient of God's wrath

With *love* in this case, being *phileo* love – love that's *shown*; love that's *lived*

Not just heartfelt, or other-directed – like *agape* love; But *demonstrated*

IOW Paul is saying that if anyone fails to show their love for the Lord in the way they *live*, the way they consistently carry themselves and conduct their life . . .

They're not saved; They're facing wrath, *anathema*; That's the word
And that's the warning; He loves them so much, he doesn't want to leave them without
making sure they know where they stand

- And neither do I as we leave this book; So let me just say it this way
If your faith hasn't changed you, it hasn't saved you
If it doesn't *show* in how you interact with others, or in what you say, or think, or do . . .
Or in how you serve, or what you like, or how you live . . .
If your faith doesn't show, if your love for the Lord lacks expression – you're not saved
You're still facing punishment; You're accursed

The solution to which, is not to change your *behavior* – as if you could anyway
The solution is to come to the place in your heart and mind where you genuinely *love*
Jesus; Not for what he can *do* for you; But for who he is and what he's done
For who he is as God in the flesh and Lord of all . . .
And what he's done in dying for your sins, once and for all

That's the solution; And you can start right now
Acknowledge who Jesus is, and what he did by dying for you on the cross – and love
him for it; Not just inwardly, but outwardly; Not just sometimes, but always
With a *phileo* love that shows

5th, love always like Paul did, with . . .

• **And longing (v22b)**

After saying, *if anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed* – let him be
anathema . . .

He then says – *Our Lord, come!* Which in Greek, is *Maranatha*
An obvious play on words, to emphasize the contrast between the heart of those who
love the Lord, and the heart of those who don't
One, an expression of warning on Paul's part, and the other an expression of *longing*
Longing for the one he loves; Lord, come!

Is that you? Do you love the Lord so much that you long for his return? And soon?
Or would you just as soon get some more things done around *here* first?
Would you just as soon enjoy *this* life a bit more?
I hope not; I hope you *live* for his return
I hope you love his appearing so much, that you long for it

Love always – with longing . . .

• **And grace (v23)**

The grace of the Lord Jesus; The favor and blessing of God, embodied in his Son
Paul wants them to know it, and have it, and experience it
As in, *the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you*.

Can you think of a better gift or wish for someone? Better than divine favor?
Better than divine blessing? Better than divine grace?
Grace that's greater than all our sin
Grace upon grace from the one who was full of it – Jesus?

Can you think of a better expression of love?

I can't; And neither could Paul evidently
Make it a point to love always, by extending *that* kind of grace to people – *the grace of
the Lord Jesus*

And then last, love always with . . .

• **And affection (v24)**

Paul says in v24 – *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

In addition to God's grace, may you experience my love
Especially those of you *in Christ Jesus*; Brothers and sisters as we are
Tender words of obvious affection, that we'd do well to cultivate and express in our *own*
lives

- Don't hold back; *Love* those around you, and let them know it
With expressions of words and greetings and reassurance and grace, and even warnings
sometimes (**Summary**)

And while you're at it, follow well

Placing yourself under the authority of your leaders, and making it a joy to be led

Both, final thoughts and great reminders, as we close the *book* on 1 Corinthians – but
continue to live as the church in the world without the world in the church

Pray – Lord, it's been a long journey, but a good one; And I trust you'll remind us often of
these things; Change those who follow poorly, and stir those who love sparingly; And
for those still accursed, will you open their eyes to who you are and what you've done?
I trust you will; Take our tithes and offerings now, and use them for that purpose