

Discovering Ministry

What Active Christianity Looks Like

Discovering the Supernatural Series - Part 9

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

12/17/22-12/18/22

Introduction

- **Short Intro** - We have a lot to cover in our final part of this series, so the introduction is going to be short and to the point (a miracle in and of itself).
- **The Heart of Discovery This Year: Christianity is ACTIVE, not PASSIVE** - We have to do something, not just think things.
 - **What's your calling? What's your role?** What's your ministry? How can you use your gifts? Paul did his, we have to do ours.
- **Recap & Context**
 - **From the Supernatural to the Practical and Logistical** – In this series we jumped into a book in chapter 12. We had already dealt with the first 11 chapters earlier in the year and then in the Fall we grabbed the last 5. This book is really a letter, a conversation, between the Apostle Paul and a rebellious young church he had planted about 4-5 years earlier and since he had been gone went way off the rails. Most of the first portion of the book was correcting bad leadership and the divisiveness that it had caused. In these latter chapters, Paul had been clearing up some of their doctrinal and theological mess (gospel, resurrection, etc.) and it dealt with a lot of supernatural concepts (spiritual gifts, tongues, prophesy). Now that he's touched on those, it's time to close the letter.
 - **Paul's Bottom Line** – In one sense the end of the letter is wrapping up the final random pieces but on the other hand these are the things that have been on Paul's mind the whole time and what he wanted to drive home. And if we know Paul, it's going to be practical ministry and a charge to get out there and love on someone practically. Paul is NEVER okay with the Christian concept of 'it's all about me, I'm up in my head and not actively doing anything.' Unfortunately, that's a bit close to home for many of us.

Lesson

- **Blessed to be a Blessing**
 - **The Importance of Generosity**
 - **1st Corinthians 16:1-4** – *“Now concerning the collection for the saints¹: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do². ² On the first day of every week³, each*

¹ “The same holds true for the fact that Paul here offers so little information about the collection itself—its purpose, for whom, and its theological significance. Finally, this is probably the best explanation for the use of the word “collection” here and in v. 2, which is the technical term for the actual activity of “taking up” the contributions. Since this word is not used again by Paul in any of the discussions of this “collection,” its use here is most likely a reflection of the Corinthian letter, and of their concern for how to go about the actual “collecting” of the money. Elsewhere Paul speaks of this collection in terms that are full of theological content: “fellowship,” “service,”¹³ “grace,” “blessing,”¹⁵ and “divine service.” All of this together suggests that the “collection” was not some mere matter of money, but was for Paul an active response to the grace of God that not only ministered to the needs of God’s people but also became a kind of ministry to God himself, which resulted in thanksgiving toward God and in a bond of fellowship between “God’s people” across the Empire.” NICNT, Gordon Fee

² “Since Paul had just recently come through Galatia on his way to Ephesus (Acts 18:23), most likely at that time he also informed them of the collection and how they could best go about laying it aside. And since he did not plan to return to Jerusalem by way of these churches, the contribution was probably to be brought to him by one of their own.” NICNT

³ “If so, why then does Paul mention “on the first day of every week”? Traditionally this has been one of three NT texts that have been used to support Christians’ use of Sunday, rather than the Jewish Sabbath, as their day of worship. Although one should not assert more than such a passing reference allows, some observations need to be made: (1) The

of you is to put something aside and store it up⁴, as he may prosper⁵, 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.⁶ ⁴ If it seems advisable⁷ that I should go also⁸, they will accompany me.”

- **The Collection for the Saints** – There’s quite a bit of information about how Paul dealt with this situation, how he suggested it be done by the Corinthians and the drama that ensued afterward. This gift is mentioned in both 2 Corinthians and Romans. Here’s what we know. Paul wanted to gather a gift for the struggling church in Jerusalem, primarily a Jewish congregation. Practically speaking they would need to start saving now and gather it together, so that when he or a delegate arrived, it would be all gathered together already so he didn’t have to gather it from all the people. This is a bit of a risky ask considering that Paul and the church in Corinth were at odds.
- **How did it Turn Out?** - Paul did indeed go along with the group to pick up the gift from the Corinthians. But if you put all the pieces together with 2 Corinthians, Paul was in so much tension with the church of Corinth (Paul’s ‘painful visit’ was indicative of the depth of the problems⁹) that it got delayed a couple times (Titus had to be sent 2x’s) and it looked like it wasn’t going to

fact that Paul makes such a reference at all implies that there is some significance to their setting money aside on this day rather than, for example, “once a week.” (2) Although that significance may have been only a matter of when people were paid, it seems far more likely that it is a weekly reckoning with religious significance, especially since it reflects the Jewish tradition of counting days with reference to the Sabbath. (3) This language is well remembered in the Gospel traditions in relationship to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The fixed place of this terminology in those narratives implies that it had more than simply historical interest for the early church. This is verified further by the note in Acts 20:7, which implies most strongly that Paul and the others waited in Troas until the “first day of the week” precisely because that is when the Christians gathered for the breaking of bread, that is, their meal in honor of the Lord. All of this together, therefore, implies that this is the day when believers from a very early time gathered for their specifically Christian celebration of worship, which included the Lord’s Table. Thus, even though they were not necessarily to bring their gift to the assembly on this day, it was the fact that this day marked for them the specifically Christian day in their week that probably made it convenient for Paul to note it as the time for them to remember the poor among the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem.” NICNT

⁴ “For them it is all very matter-of-fact; for us there are some intriguing items for which there is a degree of uncertainty. This is particularly true of the first two phrases, “on the first day of every week” and (literally) “let each one by himself.”²¹ Some have argued that “by himself” means “let him take to himself what he means to give”; in other words, each is to bring to the assembly what he or she has determined “privately” to give. But there is very little linguistic warrant for such a suggestion, not to mention that the participle translated “saving it up”²³ implies that “each person” is to store up what is set aside until the designated time. The phrase “by himself” almost certainly means “at home.” NICNT

⁵ “What is less clear is the clause that apparently is intended to refer to the amount set aside each week. The NIV translates, “in keeping with his income.”²⁷ But that is probably a bit too modern, especially for a culture where a number of the community were slaves and had no “income.” More likely it is intentionally ambiguous and does not mean that each should lay aside all his or her “profits,” which a literal rendering of the Greek text would allow, but that in accordance with “whatever success or prosperity may have come their way that week,” each should set aside something for this collection. There is no hint of a tithe or proportionate giving; the gift is simply to be related to their ability from week to week as they have been prospered by God.” NICNT

⁶ “That Paul is anticipating a sizable gift is to be seen in this further explanation as to how the gift will get to Jerusalem. When Paul himself comes, he will write “letters of introduction” for those whom the Corinthians themselves approve³⁰ to “bear their gift (charis) to Jerusalem.”... Such letters of introduction, or commendation, were a regular part of business dealings in antiquity. Helpful examples may be found in the NT in Acts 15:23–29, Rom. 16:1–2, and especially 2 Cor. 8:16–24, where the final paragraphs function as such a letter.” NICNT

⁷ “At this stage of the planning, Paul is uncertain as to whether he will also go to Jerusalem with the gift. His own present hesitation is found in the words “if it seems advisable for me to go also.” The word translated “advisable” also bears the meaning “worthy.” Some, therefore, have felt inclined to see the gift as the subject of the clause, implying that if the gift is worthy of it, that is, an amount substantial enough,³⁶ then Paul might himself accompany it. But the grammar does not seem to allow such a view; rather, the question is one of appropriateness. What is not clear is, “Appropriate” or “advisable” from what perspective? Some think, From the Corinthians’s; hence, “if it is your mind that I should go.”³⁸ More likely the clause is much more ambiguous and reflects Paul’s own concerns about his ministry in the West and perhaps his reception in Jerusalem (cf. Rom. 15:23 and 31). In any case, by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians he had decided to accompany the gift (2 Cor. 1:16; cf. Rom. 15:25 and have the brothers accompany him. What happens next with regard to this collection lies properly beyond the bounds of this commentary since it is a matter for 2 Corinthians and Romans. But two points may be noted. First, the evidence of Rom. 15:26–27 makes it clear that the collection from this church was finally received, and “they were pleased” to do it, according to Paul. Second, according to 2 Cor. 8:10–11 they had made a good beginning, but had failed to follow through with it. Hence Titus was dispatched—twice—to help them bring it to completion. Their reluctance in the meantime is almost certainly the result of the crisis brought about by Paul’s sudden, “painful” visit noted in 2 Cor. 2:1, which also caused the (second) change of travel plans explained in 1:15–2:13 and 7:2–16. Most likely the proposed return portion of that visit is when he intended to pick up the collection; but the visit had been so painful that he went on to Ephesus from Macedonia instead, and in his place dispatched Titus with a letter. On their meeting again in Macedonia, Titus reported to him that things were basically better between him and the church in general, but the matter of the collection was strictly on hold. Hence in our 2 Corinthians he sends Titus and three others, part of whose purpose is to get the collection ready for Paul’s arrival. The evidence of Rom. 15 is that, despite these momentary setbacks, the Corinthian contribution was finally collected.” NICNT

⁸ What is significant is that Paul had determined to send along representatives of the congregations, probably from key churches in larger geographical areas, to accompany the gifts. A number of reasons, partly practical and partly theological, probably lie behind this decision. On the one hand, they would probably be carrying a considerable sum—all in coin!—and there is some safety in numbers. At the same time it would be a practical way of assuring the various churches of the basic integrity of the entire enterprise... On the other hand, surely for Paul the personal representation would be as important as the gifts themselves in his greater concern for the unity of the church. Much more than in modern Western cultures real life in ancient cultures often happened at the anecdotal level; and living persons accompanying such gifts carry the stories of “giver” and “recipient” alike, thus giving a sense of genuine tangibility to such gifts.” NICNT

⁹ “according to 2 Cor. 1:15–2:4 Paul did exactly the opposite of this. Apparently he paid them a quick visit by sea, hoping that they would send him on his way to Macedonia; from Macedonia he would return to Corinth so that they would also send him on his way to Jerusalem (1 Cor 1:15–16). But this brief visit developed into a major crisis in Paul’s relationship with this church, which took at least two more letters and two visits from Titus to straighten out.” NICNT

happen for a while, but then finally, Paul showed up and got it and took it on his way to Jerusalem.

- **Giving and Tithing** – In this particular situation we see Paul asking for a gathering of a very specific gift to the Jerusalem church. So, what about the finances of the Corinthian church in general? There are a couple differences in the earliest church than today when it comes to local church finances. Usually, the churches were home churches and very small (although the church in Corinth may have been larger due to the amount of chaos and leadership mentioned). Sometimes it was just people coming over to someone wealthy's house and doing church. Everyone would bring their own food for potluck and there were no bills. They would just gather on their day off. So finances needed were minimal. It was not until later with the growth of the church and the logistical demands that local church giving became so incredibly important. Normally they could give away most of what they brought in, instead of having to support themselves. But then quickly the church spread into the poor and slaves and suddenly we had people with less, who needed help. That began more of a benevolence concept (helping each other out financially with basic needs financially).
- **The Principles of New Testament Giving** – The idea of giving money to others to bless them and to invest in kingdom ministry, goes all the way back to Abraham, thousands of years ago. When God called him and told him about His plan to make his lineage into a great nation and a precious people, He told him, 'I'm going to bless you to be a blessing.' That meant that God was going to start filling his life with all sort of good things and resources for the very purpose that he and his lineage would distribute to the needy around them (consider the story of Joseph who was placed in a prominent place in Egypt with power only to support the nation and his people group when they were in need). When God formed the Jews into a people group and nation at the foot of Mt. Sinai, under the care of Moses, after coming out of Egyptian slavery for hundreds of years, it didn't seem like they would ever have enough to bless anyone. But then they got into the Promised Land and began to flourish (they were expected to tithe in multiple ways – give 10% of their resources and money – to support the poor and the needy among them). But truly the biggest blessing of the people of God was to share God with the world. It was through the Jewish people first and foremost that the world was to learn about Yahweh, who He was and what He was like. The Jews were the connection to mankind's Creator. They were blessed to have a God so near and personal. They were to share that with the world. And they were promised a Messiah to come that they were supposed to raise up and share with the world. We believe that to be Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It was then, in this new Messianic reality, in this New Era of a New Covenant, that God kicked it up a notch. God began to pour abundant amounts of love and grace, and mercy and kindness, and resource and financial blessing upon the Christian believers. In turn, God expected them to share what was given to them with those around them in need. The "blessed to be a blessing"

became a norm for the Christian church. We give a portion of ALL that we get from God. We need to support one another personally and through the local church. We need to give charitably to needs around us in society so that the love of Christ can combine with the gospel message.

- **The Importance of Christian Giving and Generosity** – There are three reasons we must give and have generous giving as a part of our weekly reality: 1.) We desperately need to give away our money, so it doesn't own us. 2.) We must contribute to Kingdom building so that our heart will be connected to what God is doing in our midst. 3.) Practical demands and opportunities of having a local church. Those are in no particular order, but let's talk about each one briefly:
 - **Breaking a Hold and Killing a god** – We have to give money away. Jesus warned us that if we don't, money can insidiously begin to own us and distort our heart. Selfishness and greed cannot be stopped without consistent generosity and sacrifice. It's almost as if the more money we keep the less of our heart Christ seems to own. Money can become a god. Truly it's selfishness that is rotting our spirit, but it takes the form of craving resources and keeping what we have for our own benefit. In other words, we HAVE to give to be HEALTHY.
 - **Investments of Heart in Kingdom Building** – Jesus said, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Wise leaders have said, 'you support what you help build.' Both of those are key reasons why we need to invest in the practical ministry of Kingdom Building. This means that we need to invest in what God's doing. We need more eternal investment, not temporal. We don't need more money as much as we need more true value coming from our money. When we invest in stuff, we invest in ourselves. When we invest in ministry, we invest in what God's doing.
 - **Logistics and Opportunities** – The ability to pool our resources and bless people significantly is incredible in a local church. We can do TOGETHER what we would never be able to do apart. There is so much opportunity to meet needs you will never know about by contributing to Bridgeway. We help people in need that you can't see. We advance ministry both local and globally that you wouldn't know how to run and couldn't run yourself. And on top of it all we have the logistics of a campus to meet on consistently, and a staff of leadership that supports and works for you in the Lord. All of this demands that we act like contributing family members.
- **Personal Touch of Carrying a Gift** – It is sad when a financial gift is separated from the heart of love behind it. Sometimes we give to the Lord out of obligation or out of absent-mindedness. Sometimes we support ministries for the same reason. But the biggest joy and power behind any gift is the intention and love that compelled it in the first place. For Paul the whole point of giving a gift to the poor saints in Jerusalem, was to lift their burdens financially AND emotionally.

Paul wanted them to know that they were loved and supported. Sure, bringing a group contingent would be best for security since it was a lot of money in cash and it was a good distance of a trip, but it was more than that. It was fellowship.

- **The Power of Presence**

- **The Importance of Proximity in Ministry**

- **1st Corinthians 16:5-9** – *“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 journey¹⁰, 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 Visiting Plans to the Corinthians** – Paul knows that in the mess and tension that he’s had with the Corinthians, that he’s going to need to visit them at some point. Some of this is going to need to be hashed out in person and eye to eye. Here he is very non-committal on specifics. Travel in the ancient world wasn’t exact. It was messy. It’s better not to promise and disappoint. But, at the same time, we see that Paul realizes that the Corinthians are not the only move of God or responsibility he has. There is other ministry that he needs to do. We find out later that Paul does visit and it’s brutal (2nd Corinthians talks about his ‘painful visit’ of correction).
- **Why Time and Proximity are so Powerful** – Paul wants to see them and spend time with them. Why? Because there’s something powerful about time and proximity in ministry. We need to be TOGETHER in the same room and have enough TIME to have relational connection. In this busy modern world, where we isolate (especially in wealthy suburban America), ministry is weak. Bonding occurs with time together. Impact occurs with time together. Face to face cannot be replaced. Everything about Christianity is relational and relational has certain criteria.
- **Why Coming to Church Matters** – Coming to church in person is critical. Why? It’s simply the need for us to be together more and to serve one another. Our gifts don’t make sense alone. We aren’t forced into relational growth alone. We don’t get to experience the corporate move of God alone. We need to be in the atmosphere with one another and God. The best we can do, if we had ALL the elements of church available online (small groups, giving, serving opportunities, worship, teaching, fellowship, etc.) we would still only get to 80% effectiveness because time and proximity matter that much.
- **⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,⁹ for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”**

¹⁰ “The verb “help me on my journey” is a technical one for providing a person with food, money, and traveling companions so as to ensure a safe and successful arrival at his or her destination. It seems to be a key means of Christian hospitality in antiquity.¹³ In light of the tensions over his refusal to accept monetary support while among them (see on chap. 9), this has all the earmarks of being a peace offering on this matter. Although he has refused to take money while with them so that his gospel might be offered “free of charge,” he now offers them the opportunity to assist him on his further journeys, so that in this way they, too, can have a share in his ministry.” NICNT

- **Door of Opportunity** – Paul mentions that he was seeing some breakthrough in Ephesus for ministry and he needed to capitalize on it.
 - **A Wide Door Opened Up** – Notice that Paul says a WIDE door was OPENED for him. Those words indicate that despite all of the effort that Paul was doing in spreading the gospel and ministering that a lot of areas were difficult and it was hard to break in. But then something changed. He couldn't force it, it just happened. A door opened up and it wasn't just a little opportunity it was a big opportunity. But again, the way that Paul saw it, was that God opened the door. There was no other explanation. What that means for us is that we need to do a better job at tracking the movement of the Holy Spirit and being watchful for where and how opportunities present themselves. God's doing ministry FIRST, we are joining Him. Where is He moving? Sure, there's benefit to breaking new ground and doing the hard sowing part, but a lot of it is simply being available and faithful and courageous to walk into the open doors God gives us.
 - **Opportunity Doesn't Mean Easy**¹¹ – ministry is difficult. Notice that Paul says, there's good and bad. There's huge opportunity but at the same time, "there are many adversaries". And that's really how ministry feels when you do it full time. It's how I feel. There is so much opportunity and possibility and potential. There are miracles and great things. But at the same time there is constant adversaries and struggles. It's so up and down!
 - **Why people are adversaries of Christianity** – Quick question...why are people hostile to the good news? If it's truly good news why would anyone be upset by it? No one gets mad if you say, 'you won the lottery', right? So, why is Christianity so offensive to people. Literally people hate Christians and the Bible message. Why? Here's the simple reason: Christianity puts demands on people to change and to submit to authority and people don't like that and get hostile when someone forces them to do something they don't like. Christianity confronts selfishness which is our number one god of this world. Christianity says that this reality is not about us. It says that we don't get to do what we want or say what we want. It says that we don't get to live how we want. It says that there is right and wrong, and we are wrong. The good news only comes after the bad news and the bad news is that we are broken and can't fix it ourselves. The bad news is that all of the self-focus is sinful and wrong. The bad news is that we are enemies of God in our selfishness and that we need to change. **Christianity is most offensive in self-worshiped environments. Christianity is least offensive in desperate places.**
 - **The Principle of People of Peace** – When Jesus sent out the 70 disciples to go and minister on His behalf in Israel, he gave them very specific instructions. He told them to go out and spread the good news and do ministry that helps

¹¹ "With this verse Paul explains why he intends to stay on for a while longer in Ephesus: On the one hand, "a great door for effective work¹⁹ has opened to me," while on the other hand, "there are many who oppose me." In a sense these two sentences describe Paul's lifelong labors as a Christian missionary." NICNT

people be set free. But, as they were going there were going to be people who were open to the message and the help and those who weren't. In that initial season of the advancement of Christianity, Jesus told them to just spend time with the people who were open to it. If they came into contact with someone opposed or closed off, just let them go and move on.

- **How God changes circumstances and hearts** – The reason we can just move on from people and environments who are hardened to the gospel is that God is still working on them. It's not that God doesn't love them or is ignoring them forever; it means that it's not the right timing. God can change a heart but usually He doesn't so in a very gentle way and at a slow pace so they will own it. God knows what life situations can change a person's mindset and heart.
- **Who are your people of peace?** – who are your people of peace? What if I told you as your pastor to just talk to the people who were open to Christianity, this next year, and not worry about those who you know are adamantly against it? Would that lower your anxiety about sharing? Maybe we can try that. Because God is the one that is prepping people BEFORE you arrive. It's all a matter of God's timing.

- **Culture of Honor**

- **How the Church is Supposed to Honor Their Leaders**

- **1st Corinthians 16:10-18** – *“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. ¹² Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, ¹³ for I am expecting him with the brothers. ¹⁴”*

- **Be Nice to Timothy** – Who's Timothy and why would Paul have to say this? Timothy is one of Paul's key proteges. When there was a situation that demanded that Paul handle it personally, but he couldn't, he would tend to rely on Timothy, due to their closeness and apprenticeship. With things being so tense between Paul and the church in Corinth, with the abuse and rebellion that

¹² “those very tensions fill him with more than just a little anxiety about Timothy and their reception of him (vv. 10–11). Given the nature of the abuse Paul himself apparently has been taking from some quarters in the church, and given Timothy's own apparently less than forceful personal mien, he urges them to take Timothy in as they would the apostle himself. Of this visit we know nothing more, not even whether it materialized... What is of interest, however, is Paul's concern for Timothy's reception. If there have not been many overt hints of the tensions between Paul and this church in vv. 1–9, these sentences about Timothy bring that issue back into focus, especially so in light of the fact that Timothy worked with Paul in the founding of this church for well over a year. Why, then, should Paul fear that an old friend might not be well received? Most likely (1) because he knew that the sentiment against himself in this church was strong indeed and that it would almost certainly overflow toward Timothy, and (2) because Timothy had been specifically dispatched to “remind them of Paul's ways” (4:17). Thus, he urges that they “see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you.” The very fact that such a strong warning is issued is evidence enough of Paul's own concern. The second clause is intended to put the first into perspective: “For he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am.” That is, they are to treat Timothy as one who is there in Paul's place, ministering in Paul's stead. But a word that would ordinarily be one of commendation and security may not be so in this case, so Paul adds a further warning: “No one, then, should treat him with contempt.” Again it is difficult to find a reason for such a word unless Paul was fearful that the contempt some of them have for him will spill over onto his younger colleague.” NICNT

¹³ “One is left to wonder how this visit by Timothy turned out since there is no further mention of it in Paul's letters. In any case, two things are certain. First, shortly after this letter Paul goes absolutely contrary to the plans here laid out and pays a sudden, unexpected visit to Corinth. Why he did so is purely a matter of conjecture, but that he should so radically alter his plans suggests that perhaps the return of Timothy gave him reason for even greater alarm with regard to this church. The fact that the visit turned out to be such a blowup, apparently under the leadership of one person in particular, and that the visit was so painful for Paul that he refused to return for the time being, seems to give this suggestion some merit. Second, what Paul did do was to send Titus back to Corinth instead of either himself or Timothy (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6–7). For the present, neither of them is a persona grata to the community; it also means that Titus must have been a person of extraordinary grace. This, at least, is one viable attempt to make some sense of these very fragmentary pieces of historical data.” NICNT

¹⁴ “Also unclear is what is intended by “along with the brothers.” In the Greek text this could mean “I, along with the brothers, am expecting him.” Those who take this position usually consider it to refer to the same brothers mentioned in v. 12, therefore to the three Corinthians mentioned in v. 15. But that makes very little sense since if they wait for Timothy to return before this letter is sent, why say it at all—unless one also wants to argue that this letter was sent back to Corinth without these three men, which is most highly unlikely. On the other hand, those who take it to refer to brothers who are expected to come with Timothy are equally at a loss. In Acts 19:22 Erastus is said to accompany him. Does this reference include some others as well whom Luke fails to mention, who accompanied Timothy during the entire trip? If so, which seems likely, then the concern for Timothy's own treatment stands out the more. If not, then we have absolutely no way of knowing to whom he is referring.” NICNT

Paul already suffered from them, knowing that it was likely going to get worse (it does get worse, see 2 Corinthians), Paul wants to make it clear that he is sending Timothy and they don't get to mess with him. The Corinthians aren't really nice and Timothy is rather shy and mellow. Paul doesn't want another disaster.

- *¹² Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers¹⁵, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.¹⁶*
 - **Apollos is Busy** – Paul asked him to come, and he said, 'later.' Who's Apollos and why wouldn't he want to come? Apollos is one of the big dog speakers/preachers in Paul's day. He got saved and started doing ministry when he came into contact with Paul's buddies Priscilla and Aquila, who mentored him in his theology. He went on to be a powerful preacher and leader. Unfortunately, the Corinthians really liked this guy for some wrong reasons. They loved the flash and the fancy. We know from the beginning of 1st Corinthians that there were divisions of people who liked Apollos more than Paul. It was a mess. Here we see that they asked Paul to send Apollos to them. Instead of denying them and saying, 'heck no, we don't need any more drama,' or being jealous, Paul asked him. Apollos said, 'nope. Not now' Why would he deny it? It's likely he didn't want to deal with the drama and didn't want to mix up more problems in this confused church. Or it simply could be that he was busy with other ministry. But the point that Paul asked him shows how much Paul was not into his own personal glory.

¹⁵ To this is added a word about the presence of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (vv. 17–18), who are almost certainly the bearers of the Corinthian letter to Paul, and probably will return to Corinth with this letter. The matters in vv. 15–18 are full of interest, both in terms of how these men relate to Paul, on the one hand, and to the quarrels of 1:10–12, on the other. Both the fact that Paul devotes this amount of space to this matter and that Stephanas at least probably represents someone who is loyal to Paul suggest that this is one more reflection of the tension between him and the church. But on these matters no certain word can be given." NICNT

¹⁶ "Apparently they have requested him to ask Apollos to return and minister among them. The fact that he did so probably says as much about his self-understanding as an apostle as anything in this letter. Although it is a brief sentence, and is easily overlooked in light of some of the thundering moments in this Epistle, here indeed is a chunk of Paul's life that puts a considerable number of things in this letter into their proper perspective. The sixth and final "now about" with which this sentence begins implies that this passage is also in response to their letter. Its content further supports such a view. Given the nature of the problem addressed in 1:10–4:21, it is difficult to imagine any circumstances in which Paul himself would have initiated a request for Apollos to return to Corinth! What this means, therefore, is that in their letter to Paul the Corinthians have requested Apollos's return. What is remarkable is that Paul acceded to it: "I strongly urged⁴ him to go to you with the brothers." The "brothers" in this case are almost certainly the three mentioned in v. 17, who presumably brought the Corinthian letter to Paul and are now returning with his letter to them. Since they are going, and since Apollos is obviously well-loved by many in the congregation, Paul urges him to go along as well, perhaps as a display on his part of the complete harmony between the two of them. But for the present Apollos resists the imploring, both of Paul and of the church. But what is not as clear as the NIV suggests is whose "will" is involved in this rejection, Apollos's or God's. The Greek sentence is quite ambiguous, reading literally, "And not at all was⁵ the will that now he come." Although a good case can be made for this to refer to God's will, the lack of qualifiers suggests that it should be understood within its immediate context. Since Apollos is the subject of the final clause, "when he has the opportunity," one may rightly assume that he is the one who has also determined not to come now. If so, then this refusal probably says as much about Apollos's own character as it does of Paul's in asking him in the first place. Most likely he would have turned it down precisely because with Paul he resisted any implication that either of them was party to the internal strife being carried on in the church in their names. Two things about this request are especially significant for this letter. First, this is sure evidence that Paul did not consider Apollos himself responsible for the trouble that is addressed in chaps. 1–4. Furthermore, both the request itself and the designation "our brother" indicate that Paul's view of their unity in ministry expressed in 3:5–9 paints the picture as Paul really sees it, not as he would say it in some idealistic fashion. They are coworkers under God; from Paul's point of view there is no rivalry between them. Second, this is a particularly important text in our piecing together Paul's view both of his own ministry and his true relationship to the church. There can be little question that for him several of the issues spoken to in this letter in various ways pose threats to his apostolic authority in this community. At times he takes up this challenge in such vigorous ways (e.g., 4:18–21; 9:1–27) that one could get the impression that Paul, as so often happens in the church, had so identified the gospel and the church with his own ministry that a threat to the one (his ministry) is a threat to the other (the gospel). At times this seems to be precisely what he says. But in 3:5–23, and again in 4:1–13, he puts all of this into perspective. The gospel is God's thing, and his alone, and so too, therefore, is the church. The church, he argues strenuously, belongs neither to himself, nor to Apollos, nor to them. The church belongs to God through Christ, and all of its ministers, including the founders (!), are merely servants. This final word about Apollos is living evidence that Paul is as good as his word. If the church in Corinth were Paul's, the last person in the world he would want to return would be Apollos. Indeed, the real pressure would be to keep him away for some time while things cooled off. But not so Paul. Apollos watered what Paul had planted (3:6); and "all things are theirs" in Christ Jesus, including Apollos (3:21–22). So for the sake of the growth of the community he can urge Apollos to return, despite some of the inherent difficulties that would entail. Here is another piece of clear evidence, along with Phil. 1:12–18, of the incredible bigness of the Apostle to the Gentiles—far greater than that of many of his detractors, one is wont to add." NICNT

- ¹³ *Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*^{17 14} *Let all that you do be done in love.*
 - **The Spirit of How Ministry Gets Done** – In the middle of Paul’s comments on leaders and people in the ministry he slides in powerful wisdom on how true ministry gets done.
 - **Be Watchful** – Although it’s most likely that Paul uses this phrase like he normally does in other letters: to be watchful and alert either for the Enemy or for the return of the Lord, in light of the open door concept he just said, I think that we also need to be watchful for the movement of the Spirit. **Sometimes God opens up a WIDE DOOR for us too and we totally miss it because we are too distracted by our own drama.** Part of being a Christian is being alert and tracking on the movement of the Holy Spirit around us.
 - **Stand Firm in the Faith** – This means that we already have our location and blessing given. If we still needed to find it, Paul (and Jesus) would say, go out and fight for it. But over and over Paul says, stand firm. That means you have your spot, don’t let the enemy ruin it or move you from your spot (I talked about this in our closing last weekend). Don’t let people and ideas mess with your head (theologically). Don’t let the enemy sow lies into your mind and heart. Don’t let peer pressure alter your passion for God. Stuff like that.
 - **Act like Men, be Strong** – No offense ladies but when we are talking about strength, it’s stereotypically seen as a man thing. Sure there are ladies here today that can beat me in an arm wrestling match, but I’m not exactly the champion of dudes here. But the physically strongest man versus the strongest woman it’s not close.
 - **Squatting Weight Lifting Records**¹⁸ - The current record for women’s squat is 880lbs by Leah Reichman. For men, Brian Carroll squatted 1306lbs¹⁹.
 - **Bench Press Records** - The current record for women’s equipped bench press is 620lbs by Rae-Ann Coughenour-Miller. Raw bench press is 457lbs by April Mathis. The Current record for equipped men’s bench press is 1320 lbs by Jimmy Kolb. Raw record is Julius Maddox at 782.6lbs.
 - **The Point** – when we talk about strength, it’s okay to talk about being like men who are constantly demanded to physically do the strong thing. If we are talking about spiritual strength of emotional strength (inner strength), it’s going to be a tie with men and women.
 - **Let All (that you do) be Done in Love** – And here’s the key to doing ministry rightly. We are supposed to be strong, immovable and alert but our hearts

¹⁷ “First, the Corinthians are urged to “be watchful” or “alert.” This imperative occurs elsewhere in the NT, including Paul, in eschatological contexts, urging watchfulness in light of the Lord’s return. But it can also be a call to watchfulness with regard to the enemy (1 Pet. 5:8 or to corrosive influences (Acts 20:31). Given the full context of 1 Corinthians, the latter is most likely what is intended, hence “be on your guard.” This seems the more so in light of the second imperative, “stand firm in the faith,” which is a modified version of the concern expressed in 15:1 and 58 (cf. 10:12). In Paul this verb invariably has the sense of “standing” firm in Christ, as opposed to “falling.” The use of “in the faith” in place of “the gospel” is clear evidence that in Paul from the very beginning this noun can refer to the content of what is believed as well as to the activity of trusting itself. The third and fourth imperatives in this list are calls to courage, in which Paul seems to be recalling the language of Ps. 31:24. Ordinarily, one would expect such imperatives in a context of outside opposition; but in the present context Paul is probably urging them to remain steadfast in the gospel he preached, and to do so courageously in the face of the errors and behavioral aberrations that are rife among them.” NICNT

¹⁸ Trying to research this data was a nightmare. Every site had it different. There are a lot of varieties of types of ‘bench press’ and types of ‘squatting’ so the records are all over the place, but the point is still clear...in physical strength men are going to be stronger than women at their best.

¹⁹ Some still say that the record is held by Ray Orlando at 1,080lbs

have to be field with love for it to matter (1 Cor 13). If we do all the other strength pieces without love, we are going to lose.

- *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—²⁰ 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. ²¹ Give recognition to such people.²²*
 - **The Household of Stephanas** – be subject to them and all the leaders. Who are these guys? It's likely, because Paul highlighted him, Stephanas is the main guy, a leader in the Corinthian church that brought the letter from the Corinthians TO Paul and now are bringing Paul's response letter back TO Corinth. Stephanas' household seems to have leaders in it, but we don't know who they are. It could be that he had slaves, perhaps Fortunatus and Achaicus, who led as well, but that is conjecture. The plural of fellow workers, indicates it was an influential and powerful household. But highlighting Stephanas, one of their own, does seem to suggest that he was favorable to Paul and that may have caused some tension with other leaders in Corinth.
 - **The Three Amigos (Stephanas, Fortunatus & Achaicus)²³** – who are these guys. Clearly they are returning from visiting Paul in Ephesus where he's writing from. Paul saw them as a blessing that the Corinthians didn't bother to provide (made up for your absence and brought refreshment).
 - **Give Recognition to Such People – Culture of Honor.** A culture of honor means that we honor authority in our midst. It means that we speak respectfully. It means we have humility with our leaders. It means we submit to their leadership. There is a blessing of honor (submitting and covering) and the curse

²⁰ "The result is a singular emphasis on Stephanas, and the Corinthians' need especially to recognize him, to which then is added that they need to be in submission to all who so labor among them. This strong commendation of Stephanas implies that he had been loyal to Paul in the present tensions within the community. The language of v. 16 further makes certain that he is a leader in the church. Very likely he is also a source of further information about the condition of the church, quite apart from their letter. In calling attention to the "household of Stephanas," Paul reminds them of two things about Stephanas that they already well know.¹⁷ First, his "household" were "the first converts in [the province of] Achaia."¹⁹ It is impossible to determine who would have made up the household, which included at least two or more adult members, since the second verb is plural, "they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints." It is possible, though not provable, that Fortunatus and Achaicus were themselves members of his household, perhaps as slaves or attached freedmen. Second, Stephanas and his household are noted among the Corinthian believers for having "devoted themselves unto service for²² the saints." Here are people who in self-dedication took it upon themselves to minister to others in Corinth. One cannot be certain as to the specifics of this "service" since the word is ambiguous enough to cover a number of "ministries," including that of teaching and preaching. It may be that Stephanas's house also served as one of the places of meeting, in which case he would also be one of the "patrons" of the Lord's Supper. But that, too, cannot be known. The content of v. 16, including both the urging of "submission" to "Stephanas's household" and the addition of "everyone who joins in the work and labors at it," implies that their ministry was probably not limited to good deeds of service among the believers, but also included some responsibility for the ministry of the Word." NICNT

²¹ "The words "to fill up your lack" mean that Paul's absence from Corinth had left a gap in his life; in these three men, therefore, he has in effect welcomed the whole congregation, of whom they are the representatives, even if they do not in themselves truly "represent" the various elements and points of view in the community. That is, as bearers of the Corinthian letter, they are "officially" from the church, even if they do not represent the point of view of the letter itself. If this is the correct view of things, then there is a degree of irony in this accolade." NICNT

²² "It seems unquestionable that Stephanas at least was a leader in the church in Corinth; probably also Fortunatus and Achaicus, even if they were attached to Stephanas's household in some way. That the church should honor and submit itself in love to such is first of all a local concern, probably related to their relationship to Paul and the church's somewhat antagonistic attitude toward the apostle. On the other hand, there is no reason why such should not always be so in the church, provided of course that one is talking of those who lead by serving the saints (v. 16) and refreshing them (v. 18). Such people, whether in leadership or otherwise, are always worthy of proper recognition in the community of believers." NICNT

²³ "Fortunatus, and Achaicus." Of the latter two men nothing more is known. Fortunatus is a common Latin name, meaning "blessed" or "lucky"; it appears to have been common especially among slaves and freedmen. Whoever this Fortunatus was, he was undoubtedly from among the large number of Romans who made up this Roman colony. Achaicus means "one who is from Achaia." This name, too, appears to be the kind that is given to slaves, or taken sometimes by freedmen. Such derivations may mean little or nothing as to their present socioeconomic status. On the other hand, they do add weight to the possibility that these two men are attached to Stephanas in some way.³⁶ In any case, that is as probable as the oft-repeated assumption that the three men were independent of one another as members of the church in Corinth. If they belonged together in some way, as members of Stephanas's household, then they might very well have been traveling together to Ephesus, perhaps on business, in which case the church would have asked them to carry their letter to Paul. In that sense the three together would become a kind of "official delegation" from the church." NICNT

of dishonor (arguing, jumping churches and you are the authority). Too often we have allowed ourselves to be the leaders of our lives and not church leaders and that loses out on the blessings.

- **From the Cast and Crew**

- **Paul's Closing Comments and Greetings²⁴**

- **1st Corinthians 16:19-24** – *“The churches of Asia send you greetings.²⁵ Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.²⁶ All the brothers send you greetings.²⁷ Greet one another with a holy kiss.²⁸”*

- **The Churches of Asia** (they say hi) – who are they? Paul doesn't specify but the Corinthians knew. We do know that later John the Revelator mentions God saying something specific to 7 churches in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia & Laodicea. At the time of writing, as we know, Paul was in a church of Asia: Ephesus.
- **Aquila & Prisca say hi** – they have a church in their house - Who are they? These are the tentmaking friends of Paul. The book of Acts mentions them quite a bit. They were a husband and wife power team in ministry together and likely quite wealthy. They were also the leaders of the church in their home. They also mentored Apollos in the Lord.
- **Ephesus Church says hi** – brothers and sisters send greetings - What do we know about the Ephesus church?²⁹ We know that if Corinth was a nightmare, Ephesus had the second place. They were a mess too. They had other problems but it was precious to Paul. Later it became the head of the 7 churches in Asia Minor. Paul's founding of it is tracked in Acts 18. We know that by the time that John wrote Revelation it was already a mess. It was a port city and very pagan and very secular. There was a lot of occultic practices and it was very passionate. Lots of sexual sins as well. Some of their main problems were false teachers leading them astray (like Corinth, but in other areas).

²⁴ “there is no standard form in his own letters; he uses some of the elements already available, but he also adds some of his own. Generally speaking his conclusions contain (1) hortatory remarks, (2) a wish of peace, (3) greetings, including (4) the exhortation to greet one another with a holy kiss and (5) an autographic greeting, and (6) a grace-benediction. Our letter follows this form with the following exceptions: (a) there is no wish of peace; (b) a brief word of warning is inserted between the autographic greeting (v. 21) and the grace-benediction (v. 23); and (c) the grace-benediction, which is the final item in all his letters, is followed in this instance by the personal wish of Paul's love (v. 24).” NICNT

²⁵ “The greeting from all the churches of a province occurs only here in Paul's extant letters. One cannot tell from such language, of course, how much of the province this entails. We know from Rev. 2–3 that by the end of the first century there were churches in many of its cities. The implication of Acts 19:10 and 26 is that this had already begun with Paul's ministry.” NICNT

²⁶ “The greeting from Aquila and Prisca probably reflects a twofold reality. First, these were former Corinthians (cf. Acts 18:2–3), who now join Paul in “warmly” greeting old friends; second, this is most likely the house church⁹ in Ephesus to which Paul himself is attached. Hence the greeting comes not only from their friends, but from the church as well. Aquila and Prisca are among the companions of Paul about whom there is a bit more information than for some others. Fellow Jews and tentmakers, they first met Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1–3). They then accompanied him to Ephesus, where they led Apollos to Christ (Acts 18:18–26), and where they still are at the time of this writing. A little later they are apparently again in Rome, where they have another house church (Rom. 16:3–5); but in 2 Tim. 4:19 they are back in Ephesus. Both their mobility and their patronage of house churches (in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome) indicate that they were well-to-do.” NICNT

²⁷ “One cannot be sure whether “all the brothers” in v. 20a is a redundant generalizing of those mentioned in v. 19, or whether, more likely, it refers to Paul's various coworkers and traveling companions. If the latter, of course, we cannot name any except Sosthenes (1:1), since Timothy is not with him and one cannot be sure of who else is, although it is possible that Titus would currently be working with him (see 2 Cor. 2:13).” NICNT

²⁸ “From greetings to the Corinthians from Asia, Paul turns to encourage them to “greet one another,” and to do so “with a holy kiss.” This is the second of five such appeals in the NT. There can be little doubt that this form of greeting prevailed in the church from the very beginning.¹⁵ Most likely it was a carryover from Judaism and from the culture in general. Its background in Judaism can be found in the greeting of both family (e.g., Gen. 27:26; cf. Luke 15:20) and friend (1 Sam. 20:41); it was also the evidence of reconciliation (Gen. 33:4). By the time of Justin,¹⁶ the “kiss of peace” had become a part of the liturgy in Rome. Some have suggested, therefore, that it has liturgical significance here as well, where the kiss of peace, indicating an expression of reconciliation or unity, preceded the Lord's Table. More likely, however, it is simply the common form of greeting, reflecting both the culture (thus “the kiss” as such) and the special relationship that believers had to one another as the family of God (thus a “holy” kiss, that is, a kiss that belonged to the saints, God's holy people¹⁸).” NICNT

²⁹ <https://kingsharbor.wordpress.com/2015/09/11/a-brief-biblical-history-of-the-church-in-ephesus/>

- **Holy Kiss Greetings** – It was not just to be loving and welcoming toward one another, it was to act like family. Family greets each other with a kiss. It’s difficult to maintain animosity with someone when you have to continually be in each other’s personal space at each greeting. It forces reconciliation.
- *²¹ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.^{30 22} If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.³¹ Our Lord, come!^{32 23} The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.²⁴ My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.³³ Amen.”*
- **I, Paul, am handwriting this greeting (hi)** – why Paul didn’t write the rest of it and why him writing this part was a big deal – It’s likely that he was audibly telling a secretary or was transcribing what he said (Sosthenes). At the end here, for authentication purposes (that it was really Paul and not a fake letter trying to lead people astray), Paul would sign the end with his large handwriting (likely due to eyesight problems). He also wanted a personal mark on here because it was such a harsh and emotional letter.
- **To Those that Don’t Love the Lord = Let them be accursed** – What this means and why Paul is saying it. Paul is taking one last shot at the bad leaders that had done so much damage to this young church. He was warning them that they aren’t even believers and don’t love the Lord so there is nothing but judgment coming for them.
- **Our Lord, Come!** – This is the word Maranatha - what this means – It means EITHER: 1.) Please come Lord, we eagerly await your return to make things right;

³⁰ “Thus (literally): “This greeting is in my own hand, Paul.” This means that the letter to this point has been inscribed by someone else, probably Sosthenes (see on 1:1), and that the rest, from here through v. 24, would be in Paul’s own “large print” handwriting.²² This means of authentication was a common feature in letters and reports in antiquity. Although it does not occur in all of Paul’s letters, the possibility that someone had forged a letter in his name (2 Thess. 2:1) caused him to adopt such a procedure in 2 Thessalonians, and in other later letters as well. His reason for doing so here can only be surmised, but most likely it is related to the questioning of his authority by some in this church.” NICNT

³¹ “With pen in hand, immediately following his signature, Paul apparently feels impelled to take one last shot at his Corinthian opponents, in the form of a curse: “If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be anathema²⁶.” Because of the un-Pauline character of the language and of the alleged eucharistic setting for the following Maranatha, it has been argued that this is a ban formula, intended to exclude certain people from the Lord’s Table. But to arrive at that conclusion requires several leaps with the evidence. It seems quite probable that Paul has here borrowed something traditional; that its setting is a “fencing of the Table” for the Lord’s Supper seems highly unlikely, especially in light of 11:17–34, where his judgments on their actions require a change, to be sure, but scarcely result in a ban. The clue to its meaning lies in two places: (1) Paul’s own usage of a similar “curse” in Gal. 1:8–9, where it is pronounced on those who deviate from the gospel that Paul preached. There is no good reason to think it means otherwise here, especially in light of the frequent warnings of this letter, some of which take even stronger expression than this. (2) The similar warning that moves toward exclusion in 2 Thess. 3:14–15, where the warning is precisely for those who “do not obey our instruction in this letter.” Thus, using traditional language whose origin is uncertain, Paul offers one last warning to those who persist in deviating from his gospel, and now especially to those who might refuse to obey the injunctions of this letter. He has just authenticated the letter with his signature. That leads him to assert their need to obey; but instead of putting it in terms of their obeying him, he puts it in the ultimate language of Christian obedience: “If anyone does not love the Lord.” That covers the whole letter. To insist on human wisdom over against the gospel of the Crucified One is to “not love the Lord”; so with living in incest, attendance at idol feasts, and so forth. The ultimate issue for Paul, therefore, is not their obedience to his word, but their love, or lack thereof, for the Lord himself. Failure to obey him is lack of love for him; to reject him in this way is to place oneself under the anathema.” NICNT

³² “But what, then, is the meaning of Maranatha? This is a particularly complex issue, both because of the ambiguity as to its meaning in Aramaic and because of its place here in the letter. The Aramaic lying behind this Greek (and English) transliteration can be pointed either Marana tha (= “Our Lord, come!”) or Maran atha (= “Our Lord has come”). In either case its use in a context like this can only be explained on the basis of its prior use in the Aramaic-speaking church, almost certainly in the context of worship. Whether or not it belonged to the “liturgy” of the Lord’s Table in such an early setting is moot. If so, then it probably meant “Come, O Lord” (as the NIV), and is to be understood as an early eschatological prayer, similar to that in Rev. 22:20, “Come, Lord Jesus.” This is precisely its function in the concluding eucharistic prayers in the Didache 10:6. But it is not certain that in this context Paul intended it as a prayer, or if he did, whether he intended it eschatologically. Some have argued that his intent is to reinforce the preceding “ban formula,” as an invocation of the Lord’s presence to hear and bear witness, as it were, to the pronounced anathema. It is also possible that it functions in this same capacity as an indicative. In light of the inherent warning in the words “If anyone love not the Lord, let him be anathema,” he concludes by affirming that the Lord whom they reject has indeed come. At this distance, and especially with a word that would have had special significance for worship, one cannot be certain as to Paul’s own intent. In light of its later use in the Didache, supported by the prayer at the end of the Revelation, it seems most likely that it is in fact an eschatological prayer. If so, in the present context it would seem to function as a response to the anathema on those who do not love the Lord, affirming that the Lord whom they reject is indeed coming, and those who do not love him are under the anathema and in danger of being rejected by him. It needs only to be added that this prayer is clear evidence that in the very earliest days the Aramaic-speaking church referred to Jesus by the title that in the OT belongs to God alone.” NICNT

³³ Given that reality, the concluding expression of Paul’s own love for them is all the more striking. Most likely it is added to soften the blow of what at times, including v. 22, have been very strong words. To write as he has does not mean he loves them less, but more. Thus, along with the benediction of grace from the Lord, he affirms that his love is also “with them.” It is more difficult to determine whether Paul here intends an indicative or an optative, but it matters little. His love is always “with them,” hence he offers it to them as the final matter of this otherwise very strong letter, in which he and they have been at odds on almost all issues. What makes all of this possible are the final words of the letter, “in Christ Jesus.” Just as he began in 1:1–3, so he concludes, by reminding them that their common life together, and thus his love for them, takes place as they are together “in Christ Jesus.” Thus the letter ends on a note similar to its beginning, full of the same tensions between what they are by grace and what they yet need to become in terms of obedience to Christ. They are greeted with warmth, and assured of Christ’s grace and Paul’s love.” NICNT

2.) The Lord is coming so anyone who is not on His side needs to be warned. This would go along with the context. Either is grammatically possible.

- **May the Grace of Christ be with you**³⁴ – Typical closing for Paul is to focus on the grace in Christianity, the truly unique element of this faith.
- **My love to all of you (in Christ)** – Here Paul reminds them that he still loves them even if he's been harsh with them. It's actually why he's so hard on them.

Conclusion

- **We are left with 3 challenges with this passage today:**
 1. **Attendance** – proximity and time with each other and those we are ministering to.
 2. **Alignment** – with each other and with leadership in the church so that we are in the blessing of God and locked and loaded to do great things together.
 3. **Action** – Giving and Doing. We can't be bump on a log. We have been empowered to turn the world upside down. Let's do that.

³⁴ "All of Paul's letters conclude with the grace-benediction. The standard "good-bye" in ancient letters was *errōso* (lit., "be strong"),³⁷ found in the NT in the letter of James (Acts 15:29). As with the salutations, this standard conclusion is also Christianized. It is "grace," the favor of God that is theirs through "the Lord Jesus," that he wishes for them.³⁹ Thus the letter begins with the salutation "Grace to you" and concludes the same way. Grace is the beginning and the end of the Christian gospel; it is the single word that most fully expresses what God has done and will do for his people in Christ Jesus." NICNT