

*<sup>12</sup> Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.* 1 Corinthians 16:12 In the beginning of this letter to the Corinthians we saw that some people in the church were favoring one leader over another. Paul summed up the differences in styles by saying that one plants and another waters, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6,7<sup>i</sup>). The different leaders were all working toward the same goal. There is no competition among them. Competition only existed in the minds of some of the Corinthians. Paul uses the warm reference “our brother” when referring to Apollos which is evidence of their unity and also their individuality. Paul wanted Apollos to go to Corinth, but he was not willing to go at that time.

Our will and that of others in Christ can clash. There is nothing wrong with that as long as there is peace and respect. They disagreed about the timing. Perhaps Apollos did not want to go at that time because what he had heard of how some in the church said they were followers of him. **Biblical leaders do not want followers. They want to make followers of Jesus.**

*<sup>13</sup> Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.* 1 Corinthians 16:13 Because Apollos was not going to Corinth and Timothy was still on the way, Paul closes his letter with five imperative commands to keep the church on track. **Watch or stay awake, which means to be on guard** (Matthew 26:41). Like soldiers on night watch, keep alert to any attacks of the enemy (1 Peter 5:8). Corinth was a strategic location for the church. There were debates in the city forum about religion which may have been where some of the false ideas slipped into the church (1 Thessalonians 5:5,6). Today we have the same problem. It is troubling to see how the news media and academia have united to push ungodly, anti-Christian ideas into our society and the church. A pastor in the Verde Valley was asked to resign because he was quoting some of the leaders of this philosophical shift. It has found its way into most denominations.

**They were to stand firm against any invasion of ideas that are contrary to Scripture.** Paul had set the record straight about some issues that had already invaded the church. They were to stand firm in his teaching, and we are to do the same (Revelation 3:11<sup>ii</sup>). We will review Paul’s key lessons at the end of this message. The enemy is always trying to bring doubt, division, and ingratitude (Philippians 1:27<sup>iii</sup>). So, stand firm in the faith (2 Thessalonians 2:15<sup>iv</sup>). This was Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians, "and after you have done everything, stand!"

**Act like men, be strong.** Don't be caught up in emotion. Stop acting like the immature. Take it on the chin and keep on pressing forward (1 Kings 2:2<sup>v</sup>). As Arnold would say before political correctness took over, "Don't be a girly man." This is a war (Ephesians 6:10<sup>vi</sup>). There will be casualties. But we must fight to the last man to hold the ground of truth we have gained. If soldiers would die to hold some hill in a foreign land, how determined should we who are spiritually fighting for eternal souls be to not lose ground to our adversary the devil (Ezekiel 22:30<sup>vii</sup>)? Don't slack off. Press on!

*<sup>14</sup> Let all that you do be done in love.* 1 Corinthians 16:14 Following the command to act like men, this verse defines what that action looks like. It takes great strength to always act out of love. If we could just follow this one instruction (1 Corinthians 14:1<sup>viii</sup>; John 13:34,35<sup>ix</sup>; Romans 13:8<sup>x</sup>)! It is a one sentence recap of the whole letter. If our

words and actions would always be motivated by love, then we would be complete, like Jesus. God help us. Let us always ask ourselves before we act, "Am I saying this out of love? Am I doing this from a heart of love" (1 Peter 4:8<sup>xi</sup>)?

But we must understand that love is not some sappy emotion that embraces everything. God always acts in love; even His wrath is from a heart of love. He loves justice. He loves His children and will not allow heaven to be corrupted. His wrath warns sinners to turn from their ways. Everything Jesus did and said was from a heart of love. His rebukes to the Pharisees were to open their eyes to their self-righteousness. His anger over the merchants in the temple was because He loved the world and wanted the space to be a house of prayer for all nations. The *hesed*/steadfast love of the Lord endures forever (1 Chronicles 16:34<sup>xii</sup>).

Paul told us in the beginning of chapter 13 that no matter what good deeds we do or sacrifices we make, if it is not done in love, it is nothing. Agape love that expects nothing in return, demands no response or reaction, and remains even when it is rejected or abused, is the love that God is ordering us to act in and have for one another. In fact, John tells us that if we do not have this love for our brothers and sisters, we do not really love God (1 John 4:20,21<sup>xiii</sup>). Loving the unlovely brother or sister is not an instruction from God that we can opt out of if we are children of God (Galatians 5:13<sup>xiv</sup>).

Can we adopt this phrase as a guiding principle for our lives? It is an easy verse to memorize. It is a treasure to store in your heart and mind. It is applicable to all we do and say. God is love (1 John 4:8<sup>xv</sup>). Therefore, let all that you do be done in love!

*<sup>15</sup> 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*— 1 Corinthians 16:15 Paul calls attention to the household of Stephanas reminding the Corinthians that they were the firstfruits in Achaia (1:16). (ESV uses “first converts.”) We saw in the previous chapter that Christ is the firstfruits from among the dead meaning that those who are in Christ are sure to be a part of the great harvest of souls into the kingdom of God. Just as the firstfruits in the Old Testament were devoted to God, so the household of Stephanas had devoted itself to Christ’s body by servicing of the saints. While Paul is away from Corinth, he can have some assurance that if the church submits to their example, they will not be off on some the tangents they had followed in the past.

*<sup>16</sup> be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.* 1 Corinthians 16:16 Paul wanted the church to imitate those who were living godly examples by serving others, so he points to these mature believers. Paul uses a submissive clause rather than an imperative command when he tells the church to be subject to them. The expression “I urge you” at the beginning of verse 15 is connected to being subject to these in verse 16. I urge you to be subject to these (the household of Stephanas). He is not setting them up to be bishops over the house churches in Corinth, but he is reminding them that Stephanas’ household is an example to them of how to live the Christian life. They were acting as Jesus did, for He said He came not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28<sup>xvi</sup>). He is urging them to follow their example of service to one another (Hebrews 13:17<sup>xvii</sup>). The Greek means they were addicted to serving the needs of the believers, and the translation “devoted” is an appropriate way for us to understand that word. Devotion implies that you may not always want to do something, but you have determined to see it done.

But Paul does not limit the example to just that family. He extends it to every fellow worker and laborer. Those who dedicated themselves to serving the saints such as the ministry of the Word, prayer, caring for the sick, leading music, hospitality, helping one another, or any gift when used in a generous capacity as most of the person's time should be recognized, respected, and their example followed (4:16<sup>xviii</sup>). They are living out verse 14, *let everything be done in love*. They genuinely care for others in the body. Those who serve demonstrate by their actions that they love their family in Christ.

*<sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people.* 1 Corinthians 16:17,18 Paul points out these three men as examples for they assisted him and refreshed not only him, but the church as well with their service. Some commentators think that they brought news that things were going better since Paul had received the news about problems in the church.

The phrase “making up for your absence” is a way of saying that “they compensate for missing his dear Christian brothers and sisters...” in Corinth.”<sup>xix</sup>

They are worthy of recognition. These laborers who encourage the church are subject to attacks from the enemy, for if Satan can discourage those who set an example, then he can affect a great number of people in the body. Dealing with people can bring a lot of discouragement. These people who are serving and refreshing the spirit of others are compassionate and caring, so when people go the wrong way, it deeply grieves their hearts. When their gift is acknowledged it encourages them to keep on keeping on. Give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7<sup>xx</sup>).

I am so grateful for the encouragement I receive from many of you and others who have passed through Wayside. Even the night before I wrote this, one of you texted me a timely encouraging note. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that they were to encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11<sup>xxi</sup>). Refresh the spirits of your fellow saints by reminding them of the promises of God and telling them of how you see God working in their lives.

*<sup>19</sup> The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.* 1 Corinthians 16:19 The churches of the region then called Asia sent greetings to the church of Corinth. If you were with us in the early part of our study in this letter, you learned that many Corinthians derived their success based on who their patron was. It opened doors for them in business and gave them a sense of security and worth. But this greeting from the churches of Asia would have reminded them that they have a greater patron who is much more influential than the wealthiest patron in Corinth. Our Lord has clients in cities around the world. His wealth is immeasurable, and true security and worth is found in belonging to Him. It reminds us that we are a part of something much larger than what God is doing in our city. If this note reminded them that they were not alone, how much more should it remind us that we are a part of a worldwide body of believers with all its variety and expressions. And yet, we share the same Lord, the same practices of baptism and communion, the same gifts, and the same instructions from the Word of God.

The Ephesus' house church also met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla so they must have been wealthy enough to have several large homes, though they were leather craftsmen like Paul (Acts 18:2,3<sup>xxii</sup>). They had instructed Apollos in the faith and sent him to Corinth (Acts 18:26<sup>xxiii</sup>). We see in Scripture that they traveled between Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome probably in relation to their business. The hearty greeting from

Aquila and Priscilla is because they had a home in Corinth and personally knew members of the church. “In Aquila and Prisca we can see a combination of true Christian devotion and sacrifice, a vision for the spread of the gospel, deep affection for Paul, and affection for communities of Christians in a network of locations that was growing into a worldwide church.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

*<sup>20</sup> All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.* 1 Corinthians 16:20 Paul frequently refers to followers of Christ as brothers and sisters. This greeting was from all those in the church of Ephesus, and because they all serve the same patron, our Master Jesus, they are family. The church today needs to be reminded that this should be our relationship to one another.

A kiss was the typical form of greeting to those who knew one another. Because they are all in Christ, the kiss is holy, for we are sanctified by faith in Christ. After reading this letter, the congregation was to greet one another. It would be a way of sealing what they heard in united agreement. “This is a command to get rid of their unhappy divisions and jealousies. The solemn kiss was a token of the love for one another which all Christians ought to regard as a debt (Romans 8:8<sup>xxv</sup>).”<sup>xxvi</sup> Perhaps the equivalent today is a holy hug, or a hearty handshake, at least in the American church culture. Before or after every gathering of the church, there should be a time of greeting and catching up with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

*<sup>21</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.* 1 Corinthians 16:21 Paul signed with his large letters because of his eye affliction what a scribe had written (Galatians 6:11<sup>xxvii</sup>). It not only authenticated the letter as being from him, but it added a personal touch much like signing a typed letter does in our day.

*<sup>22</sup> If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!* 1 Corinthians 16:22 In this case the Greek for love is *phileo*, meaning to have a tender affection towards.<sup>xxviii</sup> All other instances of love in this passage are *agape*. If people persist in rebellion against our loving Lord and Savior, let them go on to their own destruction. “Curse” and “Come Lord” have an interesting, repeated sound: anathema - maranatha. Maranatha is of Chaldean origin and refers to coming divine judgment - thus the similarity in sound. Christians often say it with the hope of Jesus’ return to rescue us from this fallen world and raise the dead in Christ. That is part of the implication, but the main meaning is judgment upon the evil in the world. Do we understand God's heart in this? Evil expressed as sin is the source of all pain and suffering. It is a rejection of all that is good. To end it, all rebellion toward God must be put down and those who persist in rebellion against goodness must be judged (Amos 5:18<sup>xxix</sup>).

*<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup> My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.* 1 Corinthians 16:23,24 Paul always closes with a request for the Lord's grace to be with the church. Do we understand how much we need that grace and what a gift it is? We all stumble in many ways, but grace saves us from many of the consequences and keeps guiding us on the right paths for our good. Grace overcomes squabbles. Grace forgives and forgets and allows love to prevail. Grace is Christlike.

Paul prayed that his love in Christ for them be a present sense that they carried with them. He called them his children and referred to himself as their father in 4:14,15<sup>xxx</sup>, his beloved in 10:14<sup>xxxi</sup>, and his beloved brothers in 15:58<sup>xxxii</sup>. As the founder of the church, he felt a very real father like connection with them. This is the only letter

that he closes like this. Paul had a pastor's heart for this congregation. We saw that in his passion to correct them and encourage them as well.

We have come to the end of the first letter and will begin on the second next week Lord willing. But let us not forget the themes of the letter. If we truly love God's Word, over time we should become familiar with the substance of each book of the Bible. This letter began by addressing a crisis of division that was taking place when people gloried in one leader over another. They were forming cliques which is a common problem today resulting in division. Paul made sure they understood each leader was vitally important. He wanted them to understand that we do not compete with one another in a worldly way (2:4,5<sup>xxxiii</sup>). The preaching of the cross is foolish to the world (1:23<sup>xxxiv</sup>), but Christ is the wisdom and power of God (1:24<sup>xxxv</sup>).

He wrote in chapter five and six to keep ourselves from sexual immorality, for our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19<sup>xxxvi</sup>). Chapter six commanded them to deal with issues among themselves instead of taking them to an unbelieving judge. Chapter seven addressed marriage duties and the gift of being single to devout oneself to the Lord. Chapter eight and nine tell us to give up our rights if demanding them might stumble a weaker brother or sister. Chapter nine ends by telling us the Christian life is like a race, and we should run all out to win the prize (9:24<sup>xxxvii</sup>). Chapter ten warns us of the pattern of idolatry that Israel fell into. Instead, we are to do all for the glory of God (10:31<sup>xxxviii</sup>). Chapter eleven tells of the practice of modesty in the church and of keeping communion as a sacred meal. He warned that those who take communion in an unworthy manner were suffering afflictions as a judgment on their behavior.

Chapter twelve and fourteen tell us of the gifts of the Spirit and how they should all be used to build up the body of Christ. Chapter thirteen is that beautiful chapter on agape love. It reminds us that without love our actions are meaningless. It tells us love is the greatest gift (13:13<sup>xxxix</sup>). Chapter fifteen is the most descriptive chapter in the Bible on resurrection, its importance to believers, the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, and the certainty of our own. And in this last chapter we have Paul's encouragement to see the Corinthian church as a part of the worldwide church and our obligation to help churches that are in need. And today's closing passage has shown Paul's heart for the church of Corinth, the heart of a pastor for his congregation. Those are just some of the highlights. What a blessing from God that we have this letter passed down to us today for our spiritual growth and instruction.

I think Paul would say the same thing to us that he did to the Corinthians at the end of chapter 15, *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:58 And in our passage today: <sup>13</sup>*Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.* <sup>14</sup>*Let all that you do be done in love.* 1 Corinthians 16:13,14 Amen! God help us to do so for His glory.

Questions:

1 How does Paul refer to Apollos? Why is that important? 2 What are the five imperative commands? 3 How can we live out verse 14? 4 How do we live out verse 16? 5 What is the example of the three men in verse 17,18? 6 What did you learn about Aquila and Priscilla? 7 What does greeting with a holy kiss imply? 8 Why do anathema and maranatha go together? 9 Summarize the letter to the best of your memory. 10 The whole letter is for us, but what two verses might Paul speak to us today?

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<sup>i</sup> **1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

<sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

<sup>ii</sup> **Revelation 3:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

<sup>iii</sup> **Philippians 1:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

<sup>iv</sup> **2 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

<sup>v</sup> **1 Kings 2:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man,

<sup>vi</sup> **Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

<sup>vii</sup> **Ezekiel 22:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.

<sup>viii</sup> **1 Corinthians 14:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

<sup>ix</sup> **John 13:34-35 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

<sup>x</sup> **Romans 13:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

<sup>xi</sup> **1 Peter 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

<sup>xii</sup> **1 Chronicles 16:34 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

<sup>xiii</sup> **1 John 4:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

<sup>xiv</sup> **Galatians 5:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

<sup>xv</sup> **1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Matthew 20:28 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

<sup>xvii</sup> **Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

<sup>xviii</sup> **1 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

<sup>xix</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, [1340](#)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>xx</sup> **Romans 13:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

<sup>xxi</sup> **1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Acts 18:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because

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Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,  
<sup>3</sup> and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Acts 18:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, [1344](#)

<sup>xxv</sup> **Romans 8:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, [399](#). Fee (*First Corinthians*, [836](#)) notes that in the Old Testament background the kiss was the evidence of reconciliation ([Gen 33:4](#)).

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Galatians 6:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

<sup>xxviii</sup> *Phileo* is to be distinguished from *agapaō* in this, that *phileō* more nearly represents "tender affection." The two words are used for the "love" of the Father for the Son, [John 3:35](#) (No. 1); [John 5:20](#) (No. 2); for the believer, [John 14:21](#) (No. 1); [John 16:27](#) (No. 2); both, of Christ's "love" for a certain disciple, [John 13:23](#) (No. 1); [John 20:2](#) (No. 2). Yet the distinction between the two verbs remains, and they are never used indiscriminately in the same passage; if each is used with reference to the same objects, as just mentioned, each word retains its distinctive and essential character.

*Phileō* is never used in a command to men to "love" God; it is, however, used as a warning in [1 Cor. 16:22](#); *agapaō* is used instead, e.g., [Matt. 22:37](#); [Luke 10:27](#); [Rom. 8:28](#); [1 Cor. 8:3](#); [1 Pet. 1:8](#); [1 John 4:21](#). -Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.

<sup>xxix</sup> **Amos 5:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,

<sup>xxx</sup> **1 Corinthians 4:14-15 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.<sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV)**

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,<sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> **1 Corinthians 1:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

<sup>xxxv</sup> **1 Corinthians 1:24-25 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.<sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> **1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

<sup>xxxvii</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

<sup>xxxix</sup> **1 Corinthians 13:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.