

LET THE CHURCH, BE THE CHURCH

CLOSING COMMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

About 40 sermons ago, on September 20, 2015 we started this study of 1 Corinthians. Today we, by God's grace, conclude.

Verses 19-24 form Paul's final greeting and final remarks to the Church. One might wonder how do you study; how do you preach Paul's concluding remarks? Someone might even ask, "Is this important?" We are reminded that yes, it is important. Paul wrote Timothy and said, "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*" (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV).

The Greek word is pronounced "o-fel-ee-mos" and is the same word Paul used in this context: "*for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*" (1 Timothy 4:8, ESV). Everything God has said has value in every way. So as we read these final words we will ask the Pauline questions:

1. What doctrine or teaching is being presented here?
2. Is there a reproof or rebuke for me?
3. Is there a correction that helps me grow in godly behavior?
4. Is there some training in right living?

First we read the passage

II. TEXT 1 Corinthians 16:19–24 (ESV)

¹⁹ *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.* ²⁰ *All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.* ²¹ *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.* ²² *If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!* ²³ *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.* ²⁴ *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

As I studied this passage and compared it to some other closing remarks of Paul I noticed some similarities and some differences.

III. EXPLANATION

Some Distinctives

- A. “Paul sends greetings from the churches in Asia, the Roman province in the western part of Asia Minor of which Ephesus served as the economic and administrative hub ... This is the only place in his letters where he sends greetings from all the churches in a province.”¹ It is not uncommon for Paul to send greetings from some but this is the only place that he seems to envelope the international Church.
- B. “The closing is unusually sharp-edged in pronouncing a curse (ἀνάθεμα, *anathema*) ... upon those who do not love the Lord ...”² Then Paul exclaims the Aramaic *Maranatha* formula: “*The Lord come quickly.*” *Maranatha* serves to reinforce the curse. Some on the Lord’s return will understand this and others who love the Lord will receive His blessing. The coming of the Lord will determine, in judgment and in blessing, those who truly love Him.
- C. “Only in this benediction does Paul assert his own love for a community ...”³ Paul had stated in 1 Corinthians 4:15 that he saw his role as a father to this Church. A few verses later he stated the ambition of every good father in that we love to be kind and gentle with our children, but out of necessity, this letter was a “rod of correction.” As a good spiritual father he makes sure that they know that he loves them. A good father must, at times, discipline his children, but he should also maximize his love for them. Criticism and rebuke should always be immersed in love.

There are also 3 similarities to his other conclusions.

Some Similarities

- A. In 3 other letters Paul calls the Church to “greet one another with a holy kiss”. W. Klassen in his work, “The Sacred Kiss in the New Testament: An Example of Social Boundary Lines” is referenced and affirmed by Anthony Thiselton shows that in a secular setting the “sacred kiss” was a physical sign of respect etc. but within the Church its “use among fellow believers *underlined and nurtured the mutuality, reciprocity, and oneness of status and identity which all Christians share across divisions of race, class, and gender.*”⁴ There are greetings that are simply cultural, but when Christians greet one another there ought to be a holiness that embraces the fact that we are one in Christ.

¹ Garland, D. E. (2003). [1 Corinthians](#) (p. 771). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

² Garland, D. E. (2003). [1 Corinthians](#) (p. 773). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

³ Garland, D. E. (2003). [1 Corinthians](#) (p. 775). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁴ Thiselton, Anthony C., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A commentary on the Greek text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 2000, Page 1346.

- B. In 3 other letters, Paul authorizes and authenticates this letter with his own “signature”. “This means that the letter [to Corinth] to this point has been inscribed by someone else, probably Sosthenes (see on 1:1), and that the rest, from here through to the end (v. 24), would be in Paul’s own ... handwriting.”⁵ Paul’s ministry in letters often had the ring of correction in them so it would be wise to authenticate the reality that he, himself, is communicating.
- C. Paul is well known for his closing remarks pointing to grace. I interpret God’s grace this way: *God’s undeserved resources to create, sustain and empower the Christian life*. Paul is never left grace behind in this letter. Grace brings the wisdom of the “crucified Christ” to the believer. God’s grace nullifies every human approach and effort to become godly. Grace flattens all human status and ranking. Grace is the great equalizer in spiritual giftedness. Grace takes hold of the hope and the life to come. Grace enables us to say “no” to sin and love to others.

IV. APPLICATION

So from these closing words, let me leave you with 5 points of application. If we were reading this closing greeting and asking the questions from 2 Timothy 3:16, perhaps this what the Holy Spirit would impress on us.

1. The Corinthians had a significant ministry within the city of Corinth but they were part of a greater and larger family around the world; and so are we. At this point do we consider the Body of Christ, globally and internationally? For us in Elk Point, perhaps Paul’s greeting ought to remind us of our sister Church in the Philippines; Jun and Amy Fabra who serve that country; and even closer the pastors that are supported through Gospel for Samaria, encouraging and supporting First Nations Pastors.
2. Within our own community of faith, do we take the effort to greet one another in a culturally acceptable and holy manner? Do our greetings reflect the oneness that we have in Christ, beyond gender, race or culture? When we meet together do we each hear the words of Paul, “Greet one another?” Do we go out of our way to do that? Do we greet one another in a way that expresses the truth we are one in Christ?
3. When we are called to criticize, rebuke or correct do we confront personally and do we confront lovingly? Are we careful to say, “I love you” along with “you are wrong”?
4. The premise behind Paul’s condemnation and blessing is that God requires love (Deut. 6:4–6), and those who do not love the Lord can expect only condemnation. Do I have a Biblical

⁵ Fee, G. D. (2014). [*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*](#). (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Revised Edition, pp. 924–925). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

love for God? Is it expressed? Do people know? When others look at Elk Point Baptist Church, do they say, "My, those people really love the Lord?" If not, what needs to change?

5. Lastly, all that we are and all that we hope to be is by God's grace. Does our life and conduct represent the truth of Chris Tomlin's song: "Your grace is enough, your grace is enough, your grace is enough for me." Do we find God's grace sufficient when we are weak, comforting when we sin? Do we find his grace powerful enough to say no to sin with enough power to enable us to serve Him and others?

V. THE CLOSE

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:3–9, ESV)