

(1 Corinthians) ch.15:20-16:24

by Zac Poonen

The resurrection of Christ guarantees eternal life for believers, and faithfulness determines the degree of glory in the resurrection body.

Duration: 44:23

Topics: "Faith And Love", "Spiritual Courage"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having love as the motive behind our actions. He provides four exhortations from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The first exhortation is to be watchful for spiritual danger at all times. The second is to stand firm in the faith and not be shaken by others. The third is to be courageous and not be afraid of demons or men. And finally, the fourth exhortation is to always have a loving attitude towards one another. The preacher concludes by reminding the audience that our human abilities and intelligence cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but through Jesus Christ, we can have victory over sin and death. Therefore, we are called to be steadfast, watchful, and courageous in our faith, and to let all our actions be done in love.

Transcript

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 20. In the previous verses we were considering in our last study how Paul says that everything is lost if there is no resurrection from the dead. If Jesus Christ is not risen from the dead, then we are deceivers, our preaching is vain, your faith is in vain, the people who died have perished, and we are of all men most miserable.

Verse 19, because we suffer so much with no hope of ever getting anything in the future, it's just a lot of waste of time. And your faith is worthless and on top of that you're still in your sins, you're deceiving yourself that you're really converted at all. But he says, praise God, verse 20, Christ has been raised from the dead.

That's not a figment of our imagination, it is the truth. And he is the first fruits of those who are asleep. In other words, he's the first one to come forth from the grave, alive, from the dead.

And not just for himself, first fruits means there are other fruits coming along later on. And he says in verse 21, since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. It was through Adam that death came, and it was through Jesus Christ who became a man just like us that the resurrection of the dead has also come.

As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. In other words, everybody who is related to Adam by birth dies automatically. He doesn't have a choice, because he's related to Adam by birth, he dies.

In the same way, when we are related to Christ in the new birth, it is in Adam that all die. And every one of us are born in Adam. But not everyone is in Christ.

This phrase in Christ is restricted to those who have committed themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ. In Christ all are made alive. That is, those who are in Christ alone.

But he says in the final day, in the resurrection, it will be according to a particular order. Christ is the first fruits. That's already taken place.

And that's the foretaste of our resurrection. After that, those who are Christ's at his coming. When Jesus comes again, there will be the completion of that harvest.

And then, after that, comes the end. After the thousand year reign, finally, he delivers up the kingdom. After Satan is cast into the lake of fire, as we read in Revelation 20, Jesus hands over the kingdom to God the father.

When he has abolished all rule and all authority and all power. And so we find here that Jesus Christ is going to come back, and then he's going to set up his kingdom. And finally, after he's abolished all rule and all authority and power, contrary to submission to him, particularly relating to the devil and his evil spirits, he will hand over the kingdom to his father, as a man, as our elder brother, as our representative.

For he must reign. Jesus Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. And that time is going to come when every single person and spirit and everything contrary to Christ will all be brought under his feet.

And Jesus Christ will be acknowledged as Lord throughout the whole universe. And finally, there'll be that one enemy called death. The last enemy that's going to be abolished altogether.

You read about that in Revelation 20, where death itself is abolished and sent away permanently. There'll be no such thing as death after that. For he says, in the Old Testament it says in Psalm 8 verse 7, he has put all things in subjection under his feet.

But when he says all things are put in subjection, it is evident that God himself has accepted who has put all things in subjection to Christ. And that's clear, that God himself is not going to be subject to Christ the Son. He's accepted.

And when all things are subjected to Jesus Christ, when finally he's destroyed the devil's power and the devil and all the other authorities that have rebelled against him, finally the Son, Jesus Christ himself, will be subject to the Father. To the one who subjected all things to him. Notice, it says here that the Father was the one who subjected all things to Christ.

The Father is different from Christ. Christ has now become a man. Once equal with the Father from all eternity, he has taken upon himself our flesh.

And now he's the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And to him as a man, God has subjected everything. And will manifest it in due course.

And finally, Jesus is a submissive man. Will submit everything to the Father in himself also. So that God the Father may be all in all.

Now we think of submission as a disgraceful thing because our thinking is so influenced by the spirit of the world around us. But there we see something of a glorious submission. In eternity we will see that submission is not a disgraceful thing, but a glorious thing to submit to authority.

And Jesus has manifested that so clearly from his own life. So that's just in parenthesis that he says all that. He comes back to the subject of the resurrection from the dead.

And he says in verse 29, If there were no resurrection, he says, then what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? And why are we also in danger every hour? Now this is a question that's come into the minds of many people as to what does it mean to be baptized for the dead? Now notice very carefully, he does not say that we baptize people for the dead. Neither does he say that there are people being baptized for the dead among you. The pronouns used there are not we or you.

But if you read carefully, it says those or they. That is, people who are not Christians, people who don't have our faith, heathen people. He's referring to the heathen.

He's referring to a heathen practice that among certain heathen groups in Corinth that the Corinthians knew about, they were having a form of baptism where somebody got baptized in place of a dead person as a substitute for him. Because the dead person didn't take baptism. And he says this testifies that even those heathen people have a faith in a resurrection.

And so the argument there is how much more you people should have that when they even seem to have more faith than some of you. If the dead are not raised at all, why in the world are these people having that practice? The practice, of course, is completely wrong. But the fact is these heathen people seem to have some faith in the resurrection and it's a shameful thing that some of you Christians in Corinth are not too sure about it.

That's the point of verse 29. And then he speaks about ourselves in verse 30. He says we.

That is, we apostles. Why are we in danger every hour? Why are we wasting our time living in danger in our daily life, preaching the gospel? Why are we? If there is no resurrection, that's a waste of time. It's unnecessarily suffering here in this life.

No, he says, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. He says by the pride that I feel in you through my union with Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul gloried in these Corinthians.

And that was through his union in Christ Jesus. He says I want to tell you something. I die daily.

In other words, I run the risk of dying every single day because of my ministry. People are against me. People threaten my life.

And I run the risk of dying every day. Every day I'm like a dead man. Why? Because I believe in the resurrection.

He says if according to man or we could say if as the saying is, as the popular expression goes, I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus. That is, I fought with those people in Ephesus who were like wild beasts

towards me. What's the use of all that? What's the use of all the struggling with all those men who behave like wild beasts towards me if there is no resurrection, if the dead are not raised? He says the best thing for us to do is do what the heathens say, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

That's the best philosophy of life, if there's no resurrection. It's absolute waste of time denying ourselves and taking up the cross and following Jesus if there's no resurrection. He says don't be deceived.

Don't be deceived. There is a resurrection. And it's the bad company that you're keeping that's corrupting you.

Corrupting your character. Be careful. Bad company is the ruin of a good character.

And don't be deceived that you can keep company with worldly minded people and not be influenced by them. You will be influenced, he says, and that's why some of you have got this wrong teaching. Now he says some of you should become sober.

Wake up. Be sober minded as you ought to be and stop sinning. You see, this is what was happening because the hope of the resurrection had gone out of their lives.

They had begun to become lax towards sin and that's always what happens if we believe there's going to be no final judgment, no final reward, no final having to give an account of our life. When we stand before the Lord in the final day, then we will take life easy. When a person takes a loose and a lax attitude towards sin, it proves that whatever he may theoretically believe about the resurrection, he does not live his daily life in a way that he practically believes that one day he'll give an account of his life, of every deed he has done and every word he has spoken to God.

Here is the proof of whether we really practically believe in the resurrection and the fact that we have to stand before God for a final judgment. We will become sober and stop sinning. He says some people just don't seem to have a knowledge of God in the midst of you Corinthians.

I speak this to your shame. That's a disgraceful thing. Notice verse 33 and 34.

It's bad company that's corrupting you. You stop believing the resurrection and you become loose in your attitude towards sin. He says a great seriousness must come into your life.

You don't have a knowledge of God. That's why you're sinning. Now keep company with God and his word and not with those evil people who corrupt you.

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 35. Paul is continuing on the subject of the resurrection of the dead. We considered some of this in our last two studies.

And he says here how a loss of faith in the resurrection of Christ leads us to a loose attitude towards sin. He said that in verse 34. And he says that someone for argument's sake will say but how are the dead going to be raised and what kind of body do they come? This body which we had on earth is going to be reduced to dust when we get into the grave.

What kind of bodies the dead person going to come in? You fool he says. That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies. He says take a lesson from nature.

That which you sow into the ground is seed. You do not sow the body which is to be. You expect a great big tree to come forth but you don't plant a tree there.

You plant a small seed which is so different in appearance and shape and everything from that tree which is going to come. But what do you do? You take that seed and put it under the ground and there's a world of difference between putting a stone under the ground and a seed under the ground. A stone is buried.

A seed is planted. And so it is. We are not going to be buried.

We're going to be planted. When you're a Christian, you're a believer you've got a hope. And if you die and they put you in a grave it's not burial but planting.

Let's never forget that. It's a seed planted and it comes to life only after it is buried under the ground. And he says that which you sow is not going to have the same body which it's going to come forth in but a bare grain maybe a wheat or something else but God finally gives it a body just as he wished.

He gives it a body of a tree or some other plant. And to each of the seeds a body of its own. God has determined that and he says that's a picture of the resurrection a planting of the seed into the ground and from that comes forth a body in resurrection.

So he says it's happening all over. Resurrection is happening all over around the world in the plant kingdom. And then he says I'll tell you something else he says in verse 39 All flesh is not the same flesh.

There is one flesh of men another flesh of beasts another flesh of birds another of fish. That makes one thing very clear that there is only one flesh of men not two. And so when we say that Jesus Christ came in the flesh it's very clear from this verse that he came in that one flesh which all men have.

And through which he was tempted as we are and overcame because he was tempted through the desires in his flesh and he overcame and he's called us to follow and thus we can walk in his footsteps because he has rent the veil that is his flesh. There is one flesh of men. Then he says in verse 40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies and the glory of the heavenly is one and the glory of the earthly is another.

He's trying to contrast the fact that there will be a glory in the resurrection body which is going to be quite different from the glory we have in our earthly body right now. And he says there is one glory of the sun, verse 41 another glory of the moon another glory of the stars for star differs from star in glory. When we look up at the sky it's true that the stars are at different distances but it is also true that the stars have different degrees of brightness even in themselves and also to our appearance some look brighter, some are dimmer but they are all stars.

They all have light some more, some less. So also, verse 42 is the resurrection of the dead. That teaches us one very important truth that in the resurrection of the dead although all of us will become like Jesus Christ as it says in 1 John chapter 3 verse 2 yet the degree of our lightness is going to be different just like as it says here the different degree of light in the different stars and just like the sun is much brighter than the moon and so there will be a difference among believers because all believers have not been equally faithful during their time on earth.

We can say that the degree of glory that a believer is going to partake of in eternity is directly dependent on the degree to which he has been faithful in temptation here on this earth because it is through our trials

and temptations that we partake in glory. In 2 Corinthians 4 he makes it very clear that our light affliction which is but for a moment works for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory 2 Corinthians 4 verse 17 so it's through trials and temptations that we get the glory if he says in verse 18 there we look not at the things which are seen but the things which are invisible in other words if we are faithful to God and to his word and the unseen things of eternity and heaven then in every trial and temptation that comes our way every day we can partake of a glory. A glory that will be ours for all eternity and there we will see the advantage of having been faithful.

Here we don't see it so clearly. Here it looks as though the believer who is unfaithful and the believer who is faithful are more or less the same. It's not a question of gift.

It's a question of faithfulness with what God has given us. There will be a difference and there we shall see that some will be like 0 watt bulbs and some like 25 watt bulbs, some like 100 watt bulbs, some like 2000 watt bulbs and some with a fantastic brightness like the brightness of the moon and the sun. What a difference there is between a 0 watt bulb and the glory of the sun.

So wide will be the difference between one believer and another depending on their faithfulness now in their earthly life. So also, he says, the resurrection of the dead. He goes back to his illustration of a seed.

The seed is sown, a perishable body like our body but our body is going to be raised an imperishable body. We're going to have a body just like Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's body was made of flesh and bones.

Jesus said that in Luke chapter 24 when he appeared to the disciples after his resurrection and he asked them for some fish to eat he said to them don't you see? A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have. Luke 24 39 the only thing he didn't have in his body was blood that was shed at the cross but he had flesh and bones and that teaches us that our resurrection body will also be like his without blood but with flesh and bones for we read in Philippians chapter 3 verse 21 that he will conform our body to the likeness of his own body in glory. So it will be raised an incorruptible imperishable body.

It is sown in dishonor. Here on this earth if you are faithful to Christ we have dishonor but in that day it will be raised up in fantastic glory. Here we have so many weaknesses in this earth and vessel but that will all disappear.

It is sown in weakness verse 43 but it's going to be raised in the fantastic power of the almighty God. It is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body and that we will understand more fully when we come there at the resurrection. If there is a natural body there is also a spiritual body.

So also it's written he says in verse 45 the first man Adam became a living soul. That's in Genesis 2 7 but the last Adam that's Jesus Christ and he's called the last Adam because he finished with the race of Adam on Calvary's cross. Our old man was crucified with him once and for all.

That's why Jesus Christ is called the last Adam and that also proves that he came in our flesh. He came in our flesh otherwise he could not have put that last Adam the entire race of Adam the old man to death on the cross. The last Adam has now become a life giving spirit through his resurrection.

Notice the difference here between soul and spirit. Man lives in the soul the race of Adam but when we are united to Christ we live by the spirit. Our contact with God in the spirit is the means by which we live.

Jesus Christ has become a life giving spirit. He seeks to contact our spirit having rent the veil that divided the holy place from the most holy place. However Adam did not come first no the natural came first verse 46 then the spiritual the first man is from the earth and here is another title for Jesus the second man.

The last Adam and the second man. He's not the second Adam no the last Adam he's finished with the race of Adam but he is the second man. He's not the last man because we are his younger brothers.

Romans 8 29 says that Jesus is going to be the first born among many brothers. So we need to understand these two titles. The last Adam verse 45 describing the end of the old creation in Jesus Christ and the second man the beginning of a new creation and as the first man belongs to the earth and his mind is set on earthly things.

The second man is from heaven and those who are part of this second man their mind is also set on heavenly things he says in verse 48 as is the earthy so also are those who are earthy in other words when a person's earth minded he's always occupied with earthly things and money and material things and food and the opinions of men and all earthly things he says he's living just like a follower of his forefather Adam but as is the heavenly so also are those who are heavenly.

If we are really united to Jesus Christ and living as he wants us to live then our attitude will be heavenly our mind will be set on the things that are above and so he says it's not just a question of having a theoretical belief in the resurrection of Christ the resurrection is going to lead us into an altogether different world and that's the world we are to live for and therefore a person who has this faith really will manifest it in living for eternal things and finally he concludes in verse 49 by saying as we are born the image of the earthy one day we shall then bear the image of the heavenly as well let's turn now to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 50 he has just been speaking about the resurrection of the dead which we considered in our last study last week where he says our

glorified body is going to be quite different from the type of body we have right now and the glory the degree of glory we have in that body is also going to be different and this is why it's so important to be faithful a loose attitude to sin is because we don't believe that there's going to be a different degree of glory in eternity for each believer as star differs from star in glory and that's why it's so important that we who have become part of that heavenly second man have the same attitude of mind that he had towards heavenly things and the same attitude that he had towards earthly things this is the sum and substance of verses 47 to 49 and now he says brethren verse 50 flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God no our human abilities and intelligence and everything that we

are as human beings this is all summed up in the word flesh and blood we cannot inherit the kingdom of God no this perishable cannot inherit the imperishable it is only through partaking of the divine nature that we can inherit the imperishable but he says I'll tell you a mystery that if we have been linked to that heavenly man we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed does that mean everyone in the world will be changed no he's speaking about those who are heavenly verse 48 and those who will bear the image of the heavenly verse 49 such people will all be changed verse 51 in a moment in the twinkling of an eye of the last trumpet this is the time when Jesus comes in glory and the trump of the archangel will sound and the voice of the Lord that last trumpet the trumpet will sound

and the dead will be raised it's called the seventh trumpet in the book of revelation the last trumpet it will sound and the dead will be raised in a moment imperishable in the twinkling of an eye and we know how fast the twinkling of an eye is that we hardly miss seeing anything by the blinking of our eye in the same

way in a moment we will be transformed suddenly when Jesus comes in glory and this is the hope we have we shall all be changed and this perishable must put on the imperishable this mortal must put on immortality then we shall never die death would have been overcome and when this perishable verse 54 has put on the imperishable and this mortal has put on immortality then that old testament saying in Isaiah 25 verse 8 will be fulfilled death is swallowed up in victory it has

already been potentially swallowed up in the resurrection of Jesus Christ but it will be fully fulfilled in our life in that day and then we can say oh death where is your victory this is also a quotation from Hosea 13 and verse 14 oh death where is your sting the sting of death is sin which means that it is because of sin that death has power over us sin is what gave death power over us but now you will never be able to hurt us this is how it says in the living bible you can never hurt us again death because our sin which gives you power over us will be gone and that teaches us that it is our sin which makes us afraid to die it is our sin which gives death a power to put a fear into our hearts if we are living free from sin we will also be free from the fear of death the fear of death

dwells in the heart of a believer who is not free from the power of sin and the only way to be free from the fear of death is by being free from the first of all from the power of sin because the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law in other words it is the law which reveals our sins and that is no longer upon us and death is overcome finally and he says thank god who gives us this victory through our lord Jesus Christ through his resurrection that we can also now partake of this glorious resurrection ourselves so what is the conclusion of the whole thing is it just a theoretical fact that we rejoice in and sit down in our easy chairs and say well praise the lord i am waiting for Jesus to come no he says in verse 58 therefore if you believe all that i have written in

these 57 verses what will you do then my beloved brethren be steadfast that is unshakable since this future victory is definitely going to be ours continue to be firm incapable of being moved we must not be shaken by temptation we must stand firm in temptation we must overcome in our life and abound in the work of the lord the two things mentioned here in verse 58 one is our personal life where we have to be steadfast unmovable because we overcome in temptation and overcome Satan as it says in Ephesians 6 in the evil day to stand and secondly in our ministry we must always be abounding keep yourself busy in working for the lord active in the lord's service always doing something for the lord living for god because you know and the living bible paraphrases it beautifully again you know

that nothing that you do for the lord is ever going to be wasted as it would have been if there were no resurrection if there were no resurrection then all that we did would have been a waste of time but it's not going to be like that praise god there is a resurrection therefore brethren be steadfast that's the conclusion of this section be steadfast immovable in your life and in your ministry always abounding not lazily like a few drops of water coming out of a tap but overflowing like rivers of living water in our service for the lord abounding and overflowing always committed offering yourself to the lord for him to use you wherever he wants to use you and thus he concludes that section now we come to chapter 16 and verse 1 he's finished with the teaching sections in the letter to the

Corinthians and now we come to certain concluding exhortations in this closing chapter of 1 Corinthians and he speaks about the collection for the saints and it's very good for us to bear in mind that Paul's attitude to the collection is so different from the attitude of most preachers he puts the collection last in the last chapter after he's spoken about everything else he says now i'll come to some of the other matters like collection for the saints that's not uppermost in his mind what is uppermost in his mind is that the

corinthian christians should be built up spiritually but finally in the last chapter he does say a word about collection and that teaches us concerning our use of money for the lord's work as well as i directed in the churches of galatia so you must also do paul's

teaching was consistent in every church in the first day of every week that's the day they earned their salary let each one of you put aside and save as he may prosper that no collections be made when i come there are two things we learn from that verse about giving one is we must give regularly whether it's the first day of the week or the first day of the month but it must be a regular habit if we try to do it whenever we feel like usually we'll never do it the second thing we learn here is that we're not to give ten percent there's not a single verse in the entire new testament after the day of pentecost when the new covenant was initiated where we are told to give ten percent no it says as he may prosper that means as god has prospered you how much you give depends on how much the

lord has helped you to earn the living bible says that depends on how much you've earned you give as the lord has prospered you you decide yourself according to your devotion to the lord how much you want to give so that no collections be made when i come now remember paul was not asking people to take a collection for himself never do we read jesus or any of the apostles telling other people to take a collection for themselves he says this is for the poor saints and the poor saints were in jerusalem paul was only going to carry it to them as he says in verse 3 when i arrive and whomever you people decide i shall send them with letters to carry your gift to jerusalem he says i don't want to take it because i want to have a clear testimony in this area you decide whom you will send with

that money it's very important for christian workers to have a clear testimony in the area of finances that they do not handle it all by themselves there must be a clear testimony even a man like paul was very careful to maintain a clear testimony before the christians in corinth even though he had founded that church there was no church in corinth paul went there established a church but he would not take their money he says you send someone whom you approve with that money i'll send letters with them they can take it to jerusalem and if it is fitting for me to go also they'll go with me and i shall come to you he says in verse 5 after i go through macedonia for i'm going through macedonia and perhaps i shall stay with you or even spend the winter that you shall send me on my way

wherever i may go paul desired to travel to corinth again to encourage them and build them up personally it wasn't enough that he had sent them a letter he wanted to go down personally and encourage them but he says i have to go to macedonia first i've got a ministry there and then later on i'll come to you and he says that you can send me on my way wherever i go that means that you can speed me forward on the journey that lies before me that you can help me on to whatever points i may visit beyond you he desires their fellowship he does not despise them because they are carnal he says i want fellowship with you i do not wish to see you now he says just in passing for i hope to remain with you for some time if the lord permits but meanwhile i have to remain in ephesus until pentecost for

a wide door for effective service is open to me and there are many adversaries these two things usually go together that where there is a wide door for service there are also many enemies that the devil races up to oppose that so the fact that there are enemies doesn't mean it's god's leading in fact where there is god's leading there will be enemies but we shall be overcomers and do god's will as paul did in his life let's turn today to 1 corinthians chapter 16 and verse 9 paul says here that he is going to stay on in ephesus verse 8 until the day of pentecost because there was a wide door for effective service or a great opportunity to serve the lord and to do something useful has opened for him and there is much opposition many

promising opportunities and much opposition these two

things as i said in our last study go together many opportunities much opposition because where there is the possibility of doing a lasting effective work for god the devil is not going to leave that alone there is going to be opposition so much so that we could even say that where there is opposition it is an indication that we are doing something useful for god then some concluding exhortations he says if timothy comes see that he is with you without cause to be afraid for he is doing the lord's work as i also am and let no one therefore despise him timothy was a whole hearted brother a co-worker of the apostle paul but he was timid he was so timid that he would draw back and not come forward and there was a possibility that the corinthians could despise him because he did not have the

forceful personality that paul had and therefore he writes to the corinthians saying don't despise him because he is doing the lord's work just as i also am he is just like me doing the lord's work but send him on his way in peace so that he may come to me for i expect him with the brethren notice how paul urges the corinthians to respect that young servant of god timothy because timothy was a whole hearted brother and then concerning apollo he says our brother i encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren notice paul did not order apollo there was no such thing in the early church there was no potpourri there he encouraged him but apollo had the freedom to disagree with paul and this is a beautiful example of fellowship between christian workers in the early church that

even though apollo did not feel that he should go when paul urged him to go to corinth and apollo felt that it was not the right time and didn't feel like going he told paul that he couldn't go right now but paul says he will come when he has opportunity there we see such a freedom in the fellowship that the believers had with one another in those early days verse 13 be on the alert in other words the living bible says keep your eyes open for spiritual danger watch a very common word watch and pray what does it mean to watch keep your eyes open for spiritual danger watch be on the alert stand firm in the faith unshakable when people try to shake your faith and temptations shake you stand firm act like men means be courageous don't act like women cowardly but be courageous and bold don't

be afraid of men don't be afraid of demons be bold and be strong that is filled with the holy spirit and strong with the grace of god and a fourth exhortation there let all that you do be done in love in other words it's not enough that we do good things but the motive behind those actions must be love and here are four exhortations with which paul concludes this letter which are really worthy of close and careful study first watch out for spiritual danger all the time second stand firm in the faith don't let anyone shake you third be courageous at all times don't be afraid of demons or men be strong receive grace from god the power of the holy spirit and be strong and finally let your attitude to one another be always loving everything you do to your fellow believers and to all men must

be done with love as the motive and then he says a few words about their leaders he says you know the household of Stephanas verse 15 that they are the first roots of Achaia meaning the first people who were converted in that region and they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints what a wonderful example of a spiritual leader that they have devoted themselves to serve they have devoted themselves to be servants to all the saints no doubt they have opened their home and they gave their time they gave their money they gave themselves to serve the saints a wonderful mark of spiritual leadership to such people he says in verse 16 you must be in subjection definitely when you see a man giving himself like that to serve you and who is a spiritual leader you must be in subjection and

to everyone who helps in the work and labors in other words be subject to your godly elder brothers who are seeking to lay down their life to serve you and to bless you and he says Stephanas himself has come to me and I rejoice over that verse 17 Fortunatus and Achaicus because they have supplied what was lacking on your part in other words they have done what you had no chance to do they have made up for your absence I rejoice in spirit in fellowship with them they have refreshed my spirit he doesn't say they brought money no he says they have refreshed my spirit verse 18 they have encouraged me Paul was in prison and he was so greatly encouraged by fellowship with these brothers who took the trouble to come all the way to meet him and to encourage him he says I value their encouragement

so much and he says I am sure that if all of you had the opportunity you would have done the same thing but what you could not do because of distance you could not come all the way to me here these brothers have come and encouraged me they are your elders and they have come representing you because they have such a spirit of service therefore verse 18 acknowledge such men in other words give them the respect that they deserve appreciate them deeply appreciate and recognize the work of such godly spiritual leaders verse 19 he says the churches of Asia greet you Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord they were in Corinth with Paul at the beginning of the work there we read in Acts 18 and they sent their greetings and the church that is meeting in their house sends their greetings

and all the brethren here greet you greet one another with a holy kiss that was the way they greeted each other those days the brothers would embrace the brothers and kiss them and the sisters the sisters in other words be warm in your affection and love for one another and in expressing it and finally Paul says this greeting is in my own hand Paul's he did not write these letters himself he dictated it and someone else took it down but invariably he would take the pen from the hand of the secretary and write it down these last words a greeting in his own hand and he says if anyone does not love the Lord Paul's not happy with just giving a greeting he says love the Lord with all your heart and if anyone doesn't love the Lord let him be accursed it's not just a question of believing Paul

says if anyone doesn't love the Lord let him be accursed it's not enough to be a believer in the Lord but to be a lover of the Lord and he says O Lord come Maranatha is a word which means O Lord come our Lord come it's an invitation to the Lord to come it's the cry of the bride that we read in Revelation 22 come Lord Jesus and as usual in all his other letters he concludes with saying the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you that grace which is sufficient for every need may it be with you at all times to strengthen you to live for him my love be with you all in Christ Jesus there we see Paul's concern for these Christians in Corinth he had a concern for all the Christians wherever he had established churches may it be so he says and thus he concludes this wonderful letter when we began our

study of 1 Corinthians we saw that it was really a study of the marks of a carnal Christian and in contrast we could see the marks of a spiritual Christian we saw in chapters 1, 2 and 3 how there was division in the church in Corinth they were able to eat they were able to drink only milk they could not eat solid food we saw that they were judging one another we saw that they were not disciplining people in sin in their assembly these were the marks of a carnal Christian they were going to court against one another, they did not know how to appreciate their bodies they did not know how to have a proper attitude towards the opposite sex and if we take these exhortations seriously which are given in these chapters we can turn from carnal Christians to spiritual Christians, their attitude to

weaker brothers, to those who ate things sacrificed to idols their attitude to money and Paul's attitude to money in 1 Corinthians 9 their attitude to entering the promised land, to their body described in 1

Corinthians 10, to the Lord's table, to the commandments of the Lord's order in the church to spiritual gifts and its exercise in the church chapters 12 to 14 and to the resurrection of Christ these were the means by which we could see the carnality in Corinth and thus we see the difference between a carnal Christian and a spiritual Christian.

It is very profitable for every one of us to go through this letter from chapter 1 to chapter 16 and say Lord help me to see what are the marks of a carnal Christian so that I can avoid them and thus see what it means to be a spiritually minded wholehearted disciple of Jesus Christ this was Paul's burden in writing this letter, this is why the Holy Spirit gave this letter through Paul to the church in Corinth and to us now so that none of us need remain carnal Christians anymore but be spiritual and be ready to be the bride of Christ to be raptured when Jesus comes in glory

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