



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 16:13-24

“Final Personal Words to the Corinthians”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks again our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the forgiveness of our sins. We thank Thee for the marvelous provision for justification, the gift of righteousness one by our lord, we thank thee. We thank thee for the confidence that that gives us that as we stand before Thee in him, clothed in his righteousness, that Thou hast and will continue to accept us as the children of God. We praise Thee. We thank Thee for all that has been accomplished for us.

We ask, Lord, that our lives may be pleasing to Thee and in a very practical way may represent him who loved us and has loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood. We pray for guidance and direction in our lives and ask that we may be pleasing to Thee. Give us, Lord, guidance by the Holy Spirit. Enable us to walk in Thy will. And we pray that we may be fruitful in our testimony, in our relationships within our family, among our friends and our businesses. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to be truly a sweet savior of Jesus Christ in this world. We thank Thee for the great apostle. We thank Thee for guiding him and directing him to write the messages of the word of God that Thou didst enable him to write. Give us illumination as we read and ponder these words.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, the subject for this evening, as we finish up our study of 1 Corinthians, is Final Personal Words to the Corinthians. One of the commentators in his comments on chapter 16 has said that the very practicalness and ordinariness sheds a vivid light on the day-to-day life of the early church. That's very true, and I think chapter 16, verse 13 through verse 34 continues that emphasis. We get a very good insight into the daily lives of the Christians in the days of the Apostle Paul. Everything is practical. Oh, of course, lying back of it is a great deal of biblical doctrine but things are practical. They are ordinary, the kinds of things that even you and I face in our lives 1900 years later.

I think it's interesting that in the very first verse the apostle says watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave. The Authorized Version has quit you like men. I think that's very fitting. That word is right up-to-date. It's the words *andrizo*, and it's in the middle voice, and it comes from the word *aner*, which means man, but man in the sense of a male, not man in the sense of generic man. It's not the word “mankind” but the word “man.” It's almost as if the apostle has thrown us right into the middle of the kinds of revolutions that we have in our society today and tells us to quit ourselves like men, like males. In other words, the characteristics that are usually attributed to the male, not entirely but characteristically, strength, courage, these are the things that are found in that expression, quit you like men. My text has simply, be brave. Taylor Caldwell was -- I'm not sure she's still living but one of the most widely read women authors in the world. She wrote such things as the Devil's Advocate, never victorious, never defeated. Tender Victories: Your Sins and Mine. Great Lion of God. Some of you may remember that.

Speaking in the context of women's liberation, she said, In the past few months I've talked with thousands of women, and I think I have at least come up with a sensible explanation of this movement. The girls do not express their opinions and their yearning

explicitly, but in their fumbling answers to my more or less delicate questions, I think I discovered what is mainly eating the poor things. That was her expression, not mine. And I don't blame them. Frankly, unless things improve, I might join them. You heard me, boys. For, you see what America now lacks is a majority of men -- I don't mean actual numbers of the sex as my grandmother used to call the lad's fondly, I mean in character, probity, masculinity, honor, courage, bravery, and lustiness. Why a girl can go weeks, months, even years before she finds an honest-to-God man in America these day. That was an article she wrote called a real man.

That's not very popular language, even though it's written by a well-known woman but it expresses, I think, in essence I think what the apostle is talking about when he says of all Christians that we are to quit ourselves like men. There are certain things that pertain to the male sex that are special. And these are the things that in the Christian life are things that Christian males should exhibit. Quit you like men. Be brave. Be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.

The exhortations that the apostle gives are not purely general, but they're given in the light of the doctrinal and the eschatological. For example, in verse 13, watch. Watch? Watch for what? Well, watch for enemies, watch for the coming of the Lord, for this is the term that our Lord uses, for us to watch for the coming of the Lord. So the exhortations then are both doctrinal and eschatological.

Already the enemy was active in the apostle's days, and he was active in the churches and active in Corinth. Anyone who reads Corinthians knows that. He was very active in the church in the city of Corinth. John Calvin once said, a pastor needs two voices, one for gathering the sheep and the other for driving away wolves and thieves. Well, that's certainly true and that's true today. We need two voices, one for gathering the sheep, but one also for driving away the wolves because the church is filled with wolves. And the evangelical church has many wolves that are within its own auditoriums, within its own rooms, within its own families. So I think you will see, as we just read through

this very personal section, that lying back of almost everything that Paul says, these ordinary things, these everyday things, these general things it might seem, there lies significant Christian doctrine and exhortation. So we'll look at it now, and we will read first verse 13 through verse 18, Paul's final words to the church. Notice the imperatives.

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that* you *do* be done with love. I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*.

I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.”

You notice as verse 13 begins, notice the imperatives, watch, stand fast, be brave, be strong, let all that you do be done with love. Five imperatives. Now, you can almost sense a commander giving orders to his troops, because the military metaphors are obvious. Watch, be brave, or stand fast, be brave, be strong, and then one that I don't imagine the generals would be giving, but nevertheless the Christian army it is very fitting, let all that you do be done with love. The first four especially have the military background. They are like a commander's orders to the sentinel. Watch.

Now, this term is a word that refers not only to moral vigilance. I think most of the time when we think of watch, well, we think about the dangers that face us morally in our every day lives, in relationships with our family and with our friends. That is, there should be no immorality, watch. And, of course, we would also include the temptations to follow satanic disturbances or satanic guidance, perhaps. But this is also a word that has to do with eschatology, watch in the light of the day in which we live and watch for

the coming of our Lord. In fact, the term itself is a term that frequently is related to the things that our Lord himself has spoken in his ministry.

For example, in one of the gospels we read these words from our lord, watch therefore for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. If the Lord were to come tonight, would he find you sleeping? Well, this is one of the things that's so necessary for us, because we tend in our society today, to live our lives as if our Lord is not coming any time soon. Every day, morning through the middle of the day through night when we get down by the side of our bed or have an evening prayer, it should be done in the light of the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Scriptures set that forth for us and vigilance is something that should characterize the Christian, eschatological vigilance. He has already said something about that in 1 Corinthians. We so easily forget these things. Chapter 7 in verse 39 he said, for this I say brethren the time is short so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none. And then in chapter 15, the immediately preceding chapter in verse 51 and following, behold I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, and so on. I have lost lots of friends who believe in the pretribulation rapture of the church so they think of the Lord's coming as imminent, but do our lives really connote that to others? Do we really think that our Lord may come at any moment in our lives? So watch, he says. Notice also that he says stand fast in the faith, not in faith -- of course that's great to stand fast in faith, to stand trusting, but the article is probably important, stand fast in the faith, that is, the doctrine of the word of God in the Christian truth, stand fast in that truth, don't waiver with reference to it. In fact, in the last verse of the preceding chapter, he had said, therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. So stand fast in the faith.

So the picture we get here from the apostle as our commanding officer is that our lives are to be characterized by the things that he speaks of here. We are to be looking for the coming of our Lord. That's something that should be a practical force in our lives. We are to stand in the faith. We are to quit ourselves like men to be courageous in our Christian work, in our Christian testimony. We are to be strong and everything is to be done in Christian love. Stand fast in the faith.

Well, I know that some of you will remember me as an admirer of Stonewall Jackson, but when I read here stand faith in the faith and then in the preceding chapter we read immovable, then of course there comes to some people's minds the first battle of Bull Run where General Barnaby, looking off at the brigade which was commanded by Stonewall Jackson said there is Jackson standing like a stone wall, and, of course, he got name. One of the nicest things about that is that Stonewall Jackson was not only a Christian man but a sound Christian man and one who had a great faith in the sovereignty of God as we understand it from the word of God. Stand fast in the faith.

Now, after those imperatives the apostle moves on to some other points, primarily having to do with brotherly submission. In verse 15 and verse 16 he says, "I urge you, Brethren, you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia. (Achaia, of course, is the district where Corinth was) and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints--that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*."

Now let's take just a look at this for a moment and notice the fact that this is willing and spontaneous service. Notice how the apostle describes Stephanus. You know the household of Stephanus, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia; that is, they were the first converts of the preaching of the apostle, his house, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints. The expression in the original text is something like they have arranged themselves for that. In other words, the implication is that it is

something that he himself was given by God in his heart so that he determined to serve the Lord first and foremost. They've devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.

Now, we all know, of course, that to be first in something doesn't necessarily mean that a person has superiority. It's often the case that when the Lord works and works in a way for the first time there is a special work done which lasts for a long time, but that's not necessary. There are many who have been first who turn out to be last, but nevertheless these -- Stephanus and his household, they were first, and they evidently gave themselves to the work of the Lord and the church in Corinth. I also want you to notice also that it's not stated he was an elder, that he and his house were. I don't know whether he was or not. I don't remember anything that would give us any light with regard to that. In the early church it was not so much status that counted. It was function. That's very important in a local church. In fact, the description of the officers of a local church are descriptions that have primarily to do not with office but with function.

In fact, it's very difficult to find the word office in the New Testament. That's striking. It's function that is really important. There are people who seem to have the idea that if they appoint an elder, then they will function as one. No. That's the wrong way. You should, if God has appointed you -- it's the Holy Spirit who appoints elders, remember, not a bond of men, not a bond of elders. They don't appoint elders. They recognize them. They don't appoint them. It's the Holy Spirit who appoints elders. That's plainly stated by the apostle when he spoke to the Ephesian elders. Take heed to the church of God over which you elders have been given authority by the Holy Spirit. So function, not office is the important thing.

Often young men -- when I was serving as a professor in a theological seminary -- I actually am doing a little teaching now in a little seminary starting in Fort Worth. It's composed of just a few men. I have about a dozen who come, and we do a Greek exegesis, but in theological seminary, you will often have a lot of young men who say, I want to be an elder. I'm looking forward to being an elder. I'm working towards being

an elder. That's a nice thing to desire the office of elder, of course. But there's something first that must be there, and that's the functioning as an elder. In other words, the elders who appoint elders normally look and see if there are any in the local church whom the Holy Spirit has appointed as an elder and who have begun to function as an elder even though they have not been recognized as one yet. It is those are who are functioning who are to be recognized, not those who are not functioning, as if when we lay hands to them that they will begin to function. That's the reverse of the way of which the appointing and service of an elder should take place. There should be the evidence that the Holy Spirit has worked in their hearts and has brought them into the office of elder, whether we recognize them or not. It would be our failure, of course, not to recognize those who are functioning as elders, if they meet the qualifications. So just remember, it's function in the local church that's important, not status. So the deacons, the elders, are those who should, first of all, function, then be recognized by the body of elders in the local church.

The best evidence that you are elder material is that you are functioning. What does that mean? That you have concern for the saints, that you are exercising some oversight in a personal way with individuals that you have -- you meet the qualifications of Scripture, of course, but that you're actually serving as an overseer of individuals. So the household of Stephanus -- I don't know whether Stephanus was an elder. He was the firstfruits of Achaia, but they devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints so the evidence would seem to be that they would be recognized by the church in Corinth as one of the functioning serving men of that church. I want you to notice, from what we've been reading in Corinth -- about the Corinthians, it wouldn't have been easy for someone to serve in the church in Corinth as Fortunatus and his household had done because notice what they've done about him. They've devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints, that you also submit to such. So they are submissive themselves to the saints and

the Corinthians are urged, also, to do work that could be called submission to them and to everyone who works and labors with us.

So why would that be so difficult for the Corinthians? Why, if you read this epistle, you know that one of the most difficult things for the Corinthians to do would have been submit to anybody, just go back and look at those chapters. You will see it would have been hard for them to submit to others. And the apostle brings before them the shining illustration of Stephanus and his household, firstfruits of Achaia who devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints and, in the light of their example, Paul calls upon them to submit to such, that is, to submit to Stephanus and to everyone who works and labors with us. That's a very -- a very practical statement that has to do with the work of the church.

T.C. Edwards was a Welch commentator and wrote a great big volume on 1 Corinthians. It's not one of the best commentaries, but he has a few things in it that are very good. And something that he says about the last part of verse 16 is very true. He says the apostle says that you also submit to such and to everyone who works and labors with us. Edwards has a very simple little sentence. It's just five words. Listen to what he says. Many work, a few toil. Many work, a few toil. Well, that's what's said about these men. So they are individuals who truly work and toil.

And so the apostle says, submit to them, they work and labor with us, submit to them. Then Paul talks about -- gives thanks, really, for the fellowship of some of the others who have come to be with him. Notice verse 17 and verse 18, “I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.”

These men made up what the Corinthians were unable to do for the Apostle Paul. And so the apostle gives thanks for them. There's a little bit of difficulty in what is meant by your lack. Some have said perhaps that means my want of you or it could mean your want of me both are possible, each makes good sense. I'm deprived of you, but they

compensate for your absence, which is a pleasing way for expressing his functions for the Corinthians. I have a great lack for you. They've supplied a great want for you. They've supplied it. And, on the other hand, you can turn it around and say they have had the same for the apostle and the three have supplied it. You cannot all come to me, Paul says, but these who have come will do quite well and will stand for you in keeping me -- telling me what's happening in Corinth and letting me know the things that are needed there. So I'm glad about the coming of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours -- because, of course, the Corinthians knew they were coming -- therefore acknowledge such men. What does it mean to acknowledge such men? To recognize them, to give thanks for them, and to give them some encouragement, no doubt, acknowledge such men.

Now, verse 19 and 20. The apostle says, “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” These are some of the most interesting early Christians, Aquila and Priscilla. Ordinarily, not always, but ordinarily Priscilla was mentioned first. Her name was really Prisca. Priscilla is a kind of diminutive popular name, but Prisca is the name. So Aquila and Prisca or Prisca and Aquila usually, unusual Christians.

Now, I want you to notice this about them. You won't get this unless you just took down your concordance and read what it had to say about Aquila and Prisca, but they began their lives -- at least like Aquila did in Pontus, which was in Asia minor. Then they were in Rome. They were workers like Paul was. As you remember, they did the same kind of work Paul did, leatherwork. Some translated in the new Authorized Version tent making, but at least they did the same kind of work. They went from Pontus, if Priscilla was also from there. They went to Rome. And then when Claudius's decree was issued and the were Jewish Christians, and so they were forced out of Rome, they went to Corinth, and then they were in Corinth when the apostle preached there, and they are

now in Ephesus. So they were in Pontus. They were in Rome. They were in Corinth. Now, they're in Ephesus. And when Paul writes the Epistle to the Romans after this, he says great Prisca and Aquila and the church that is in their house. It almost as if Aquila and Priscilla were the traveling duo of the Christian church. That will give you an idea of how easy it was to travel in the ancient world perhaps, especially for those who made their own living. They were in Asia minor. They were in Rome. They were in Achaia. They were in Ephesus again and Asia. And then back in Rome and what they did after that, they were members of American Express, we do know that, of course, but beyond that, we don't know. It was easy to travel but notice that they had a church in their house in Corinth. They had a church in their house in Rome. These were working Christians. They weren't the kinds of Christians who attended church on Sunday morning, went to Sunday school and went home. That's all. These were working Christian people, a church in their own house.

Now, whether this is a church in which they had so many children that they had a church in their own house and all were members of their family, it's not absolutely certain that that is not the meaning, but normally you would think there were other Christians who met with them. You know, we have no indication -- no clear indication of a church building until the third century AD. So the early church met generally in homes, various homes, and there is some indication in some of the places like Rome and even in Jerusalem, that there were more than one church because there was more than one home, of course, and it was natural to have meetings in other places. But these individuals, Aquila and Prisca, were individuals so devoted -- Jewish Christians so devoted to the work of the Lord that wherever they went if there was no church meeting, they would have one.

Now, the churches of Asia greet you Aquila and Priscilla. Greet you heartedly in the Lord in the church that is in their house. Remarkable people. You can only admire some of those early Christians who were persecuted by the Roman Empire, driven out of

Rome and still maintain the testimony and actually responsible for churches in areas wherever they were.

Verse 20, all the brethren greet you, Paul writes from Ephesus to Corinth. greet one another with a holy kiss. Paul said be imitators of me, so I guess that greet one another with a holy kiss would be something that maybe we are supposed to do. Calvin thinks that the kiss was largely ceremonial, and that's probably true. Kissing was common among the Romans and the Greeks and quite common among the Americans, too, for that matter. And some of you are looking up at me, Oh, did I hear him say that? Did he actually say that? Yes, I did. I actually said that.. It is common among Americans, too. And it's common perhaps some of you in this audience. It ought to be some of you here with your wives, husbands. I'm not sure. Maybe I need another kind of exhortation on love one another.

Well, anyway, kissing, if Calvin is correct -- this was a kind of a ceremonial thing. We do not know actually on a whole lot about the practice -- definitely about the practice of kissing in the early church, but we know that it was common among the Romans. There is no evidence of kissing in the synagogue, but then it was not uncommon among the Jewish people. It was an expression of friendship and affection. And so the kisses were exchanged among the early church members, probably in association with the Lord's Supper. That's one of the reasons, perhaps, why later on instead of the kissing of one another, it became the custom to kiss the Paten as it was passed. The Paten is the plate in which the bread is found, and it was usually a very expensive plate, the most expensive that the church could have, and that Paten was passed and then individuals later on kissed the plate in an expression of genuine -- genuine collective affection, supposedly. At any rate, Paul says in verse 20, greet one another with a holy kiss. I'm not sure my comments are very popular tonight, but it's a very, very important thing for you, Christians. I'm not saying, by the way, in Believer's Chapel we should greet each other

with a kiss. That's not what I'm talking about. I was just even suggesting among the family that that be carried out.

All right. Now, in verse 21 through verse 24, the apostle writes, The salutation with my own hand—Paul’s. This last part of the epistle is composed of a salutation, an admonition, a prayer for grace, an expression of love for the Corinthians. Now, the salutation is rather interesting because Paul says the salutation with my own hand - Paul's. This was designed to be the mark of authentication. Ordinarily, if we may believe some of the other things said in the epistles, the apostle dictated his letters. As you know, Romans was dictated. Tertius was the one who wrote the Epistle to the Romans. That’s one of the questions you can ask somebody: Do you know who wrote the epistle to the Romans? Paul. No. No. I, Tertius, who have written the epistle in the last chapter is the statement. He was Paul's amanuensis. In 2 Thessalonians, remember, the apostle makes some reference to that, too, because in 2 Thessalonians when is he is talking about the future, evidently some of the professing Christians were making claims concerning the doctrine of the prophetic word which the apostle did not agree with, and they were presenting it as if it were Paul's teaching. So in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 1 and 2, he says, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ (or the day of the Lord) had come.” And at the end of that Epistle in verse 17 of chapter 3 he says, “The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.”

So Paul dictated his letters generally, but at the end of the letter he would take the pen, and then he would write the salutation. So it would be his way of saying this is genuinely from me, Paul. The only one that he may not have written is the Epistle to the Galatians because there he was so concerned -- he evidently didn’t have access -- may not have had access to an amanuensis so he took up the pen himself. And you remember that in the 6th chapter, it's about verse 11, I believe, the apostle says, See with what large

letters I have written to you with my own hand. It was evidence of his concern over their possible apostasy from the gospel that he had been proclaiming, and so he wrote it with his own hand. Maybe he had eye trouble. We don't know really. He may have had eye trouble, and that may have been why he wrote with this large sprawling handwriting, the Epistle to the Galatians. At any rate, here he testifies himself as Paul the apostle, the salutation with my own hand - Paul's. So now, we come to the admonition and the prayer. Most interesting admonition. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. This was the watchword and the password perhaps of the believing community. It was the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the password. That's the watchword. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.

What does he mean by Christian love? Does he mean to have just a fondness for Jesus Christ, a high regard for him? A great ethical teacher? Oh, yes, we love the Lord Jesus Christ. No, you know, if you are Christians, you know what he's talking is the love of adoration. It's the love that provokes worship, but it also the love of commitment. So the love of adoration and the love of commitment to him is what he's talking about. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Now, I believe that the apostle had in mind primarily outsiders. In other words, he's talking about individuals who were within the body but really weren't members of the body.

Well, did not our Lord speak about things like that? Yes, of course, he did. Back in the Sermon on the Mount he said not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.

There are many people who have been around Christian people enough to know exactly how Christians in our society act and many of them can make a pretty good copy of a Christian because they have all of the outward signs of being a Christian, all of the

things Christians do, they attend church. They attend the preaching service. They put money in the collection plate and so on. But evidently it's possible, so our lord was teaching, we know from other places as well, that there are people in our midst who are not really of us. That's true, Believer's Chapel also -- the chances are that is true. We have people in Believer's Chapel who are not really of us. The apostle warned about such when he gave his message to the elders at Mellitus, the elders at the church of Ephesus. He said things like this therefore -- well, I will go back a little bit. He said, I kept back nothing that was helpful. I proclaimed to you and taught you publicly from house to house. I testified to Jews and also to Greeks, the Holy Spirit testifies to me that in every city I'm having troubles, chains and tribulations await me, nothing moves me because of my desire to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed now I know that you-all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God will see my face no more, therefore I testify to you this day that I'm innocent of the blood of all men for of not -- I've not shun to declare to you the whole counsel of God. But, he says, I know this: That after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock also from among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves. Can that happen in Believer's Chapel? Of course it can help in Believer's Chapel. It may already be in progress. So what does he say? Therefore watch. Watch. And remember what the apostle had done, he had ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears, and he commended them to the word of God and the word of his grace which was able to build them up and give them an inheritance to all those who were sanctified. If so if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Oh, Lord, come.

Accursed. What a strong word. That's the Hellenistic equivalent of the harem in Hebrew, which was the ban. To submit someone or to give someone to the ban was to give it over to the divine curse, the harem. So if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Not if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him sit

aside for a while. No. No. Let him be accursed. Oh, Lord, come. The glib Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, those are rejected. Have we not served the lord? Did we not teach a Sunday school class? Did we not attend church regularly? Did we not listen to the preaching of the word of God? There's more than that. If anyone does not love our Lord Jesus Christ... You know, if there's any doubt in your mind, my exhortation to you is to go down -- go home tonight, get down by your bed or your chair or wherever and do it before you get there and give yourself wholeheartedly to the Lord if there's any question about your love for him and desire to serve him.

Let him be accursed. Oh, Lord, come. There's a remarkable statement by Pascal when he was outraged by what he considered to be the complaisant probablism, there was a theory that in disputed moral questions any solidly probable moral course may be followed even though a opposed course is or appears more probable. It would be possible to follow the course you were to follow. And they were debating things like that in the 17th century, that is, the Jesuits were. They calmly discussed, for example, how often it was necessary to love the Lord. How often should we love the Lord? Can you imagine theologians getting around and debating how often we should love the Lord and whether the precious blood of Christ did not exempt Christians altogether from the, quote, irksome obligation, unquote, of having to love God as the Jews had been required to do. And Pascal, someone has said, hurled this sentence at them: "Strange theology in our days." That's strange theology, that's true, but we have our strange theology, too, today. He said, "You dare to set aside the anathema pronounced by St. Paul upon those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Tis the mystery of iniquity fulfilled. The popular associations of love are so misleading that love for the Lord may not suggest what the apostle means. I say it's the kind of loyalty, the kind of wholehearted devotion such as joined on the Sermon on the Mount, no man can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other. This

incidentally is the last of three illusions to the love for the Lord or for God in the Epistle to the Corinthians, the first one.

Now, there is one last little thing I want to talk about. It's rather interesting I think. You will notice he says let him be accursed. Oh, Lord, come. This is a most interesting expression because it really is marimatha. That's what it is marimatha. It's marimaic expression. *Maran* is Lord. *Marana*, our Lord. And the little suffix *tha* comes from Aramaic word that means to come. And so our Lord come. But it can be rendered in a number of different ways. It can be rendered, for example, just as is rendered here, Oh, Lord, come. It can be rendered, The Lord is come. That is a reference to the incarnation and the awe with which we should greet that fact, that God has visited this world of which we are a part. God has actually visited it in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, what tremendous awe that does produce to realize you and me in 1995 in this world in which we live is a world in which God has come in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an astonishing fact. And that would be a kind of ban on the person who doesn't love our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is come. He is come. It can mean, The Lord has come. It can mean, The Lord is coming. We have it here in the imperatival form, Oh, Lord, come, and here it has become a prayer.

We're not absolutely certain how this should be rendered so it can be the indicative past, Our lord has come, grateful all for the incarnation. It can mean, The Lord is coming. Or it can mean, Lord, come. I'm not sure that all of those -- that those are all of the possibilities, but they at least are the ones I know about on the spur of this moment.

In 2 Timothy chapter 4 in verse 8 the apostle wrote, finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will give to me on that day, not to me only but all who have loved his appearing. Loving his appearing. If any man doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Oh, Lord, come. That's a syrupy illustration of loving his coming.

I was in a Bible conference many years ago, and I wish -- I wish I had the full details of this incident. It's in my notes somewhere, but I couldn't remember where it was. My memory is not perfect. That was no revelation, was it? [laughter]

Anyway I vaguely remember something about this. It was about Dr. Lehman Strauss and Lehman Strauss and I were preaching in this conference and he told me about it. He said in a previous conference he had been in. He had mentioned that the early Christians, when they met one another, they treated one another with, marimatha, The Lord's coming. That's a good way to greet one another, instead of saying hello, hi. Marimatha. So he labored that a little bit, and he then the next morning there were people out near where they were getting ready to have breakfast in the conference, and they saw Dr. Strauss coming. I wish I could remember the precise words. It's much better than what I am going to say. What I am going to say is true to the spirit of it. One of the men said, I am going to greet him like he said for us to greet him. And so Strauss came up, he said, Hello, good morning, Dr. Strauss. Marimatha. Thank you, Martha. I wasn't really sure, but it was something very similar. I will find it in my notes one of these days, and I will give you the really actual meaning, but it was something precisely like that, so misunderstood.

Let him be accursed. Oh, Lord, come. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you-all in Jesus Christ. Amen. That amen, incidentally, is not found in some of the manuscripts. It doesn't add much or we don't lose much if we don't have it, so there's no need to comment about it.

One can see that the apostle, even in these practical session -- practical section of his epistle has made some points that are certainly very ordinary. As I mentioned in the introduction, they're very ordinary. They're very practical, but they also shed a great deal of light on the day-to-day life of the early church but one thing I think that stands out, you might expect me to say this, they all stand on the ground of biblical doctrine, on the ground of Christian theology. Everything that the apostle uses as an exhortation is

grounded in Christian theology. That's why Christian theology is so important. If you're here in our meeting, of course, and you're not a Christian, then what Paul has been talking about may be made yours personally as you give yourself to him, acknowledge him as the son of God who has come and offered his -- offered himself on Calvary's cross as a means of salvation for all who desire to find forgiveness of sins. And so the elders of this assembly, those who preach the word of God here, urge you, exhort you, invite you, of course, to give yourself to him, to enter the life that Paul calls the life of love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these marvelous chapters that the apostle has written in this great epistle. We thank you and we praise you for the edification that has been ours as we have again read through and pondered the things that this great man has written, not only for the Corinthians, but for us today in Believer's Chapel.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.