

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 16

by Brian Brodersen

In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul emphasizes the importance of giving cheerfully and with a right attitude, and provides instructions for the collection for the saints.

Duration: 54:51

Scripture: Matthew 23:23, 1 Corinthians 16:2, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 9:5-7

Topics: "Spiritual Vigilance", "Gospel Proclamation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being alert and watchful as Christians. He highlights how Christians often fail to pay attention to false teachings and are unaware of the signs of the times. The speaker encourages believers to have faith in the power of the gospel and to boldly proclaim it, despite facing adversaries. The sermon concludes with the example of the transformation that occurred in the ancient society of Ephesus when the gospel was preached, and the speaker laments the lack of focus on preaching the gospel in the modern church.

Transcript

We come now to basically the conclusion of our study in 1 Corinthians, having begun quite some time ago, back in the first chapter, and we've made our way all the way through looking at each chapter, and at times taking even just specific statements and considering and analyzing what the Apostle was saying to the Corinthians. We saw how this epistle has tremendous application to the current situation. It seems to be quite relevant indeed to the present condition that we find in the Church, for the most part, all throughout the world.

As I pointed out to you initially and have reminded you on the way through, this is primarily a corrective epistle. There were many things that were amiss in the Church in Corinth. There were many problems, many areas of inconsistency, and there was false teaching, all kinds of things going on.

And there we see the parallel with so much of what's going on in the Church today. And so as we just take a quick review of the epistle, Paul began, you remember, by dealing with the issue that was very prevalent among them concerning their love for human wisdom, how they had exalted human wisdom above the wisdom of God, and how they were divided up one against another based on their preferred teacher, based really upon those who were demonstrating the most human wisdom. And Paul rebuked them for their enamoration with human wisdom.

And he showed how their love for human wisdom would lead them into practices that were contrary to what God had called them to. We saw that they had developed quite a tolerance for sin. And their love for human wisdom and wanting to be approved of by the world, they were beginning to approve of things that God disapproved of.

So Paul had to correct them for that. And then he dealt with issues pertaining to marriage, marital relationships, sexual relationships. He dealt with issues that had to do with Christian liberty.

And they had abused their liberty. He dealt with the issues of the gifts of the Spirit. We talked at length about that.

They also had a distorted understanding of those things. And that led to confusion in the congregation itself. And then the final thing that Paul dealt with at length was the subject of the resurrection.

They had actually come to a point of denying the physical resurrection. And so he contended with them, showing them that if that were the case, then Christ had not risen. And if Christ had not risen, then their faith was futile.

He went on to not only argue for the reality of the resurrection, but then he went on to show them certain things about the resurrection, the resurrected body and things of that nature. And then he went on to disclose this mystery that had not yet been made clear to any of the others. This mystery of the miraculous transformation that will take place at a point in time where a whole generation of men, women and children will not experience death, but their bodies will be miraculously translated.

And that's the subject that we commonly refer to as the rapture. And so Paul closed the 15th chapter with teaching on the rapture, then an exhortation to the Corinthians in light of the fact of the rapture. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

And so now we come to chapter 16 and we come to Paul's final words to this church. Words of instruction, words of exhortation, some of it is very personal. And of course, there's not really much application for us.

We're just reading Paul's final statements to these people. But he does say a few things in his closing statement that do have quite a bit of application to us. So we'll try to highlight those things as we go through.

So he says now concerning the collection for the saints. As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collection when I come.

And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters, I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. Now, Paul had a plan to bring a gift to the saints in Jerusalem.

The church in Jerusalem had fallen upon hard times. And so the people were suffering. They were being deprived and there was a real need to help them out in a practical way.

There was a need to help that church out financially. And so what Paul did is he went among the Gentile churches, the churches that he had founded, many of them, some he had not founded, but he had been ministering to them. And he was taking up an offering from the Gentile churches that he might take to

Jerusalem to be a blessing to the church in Jerusalem.

And Paul saw this as right and fitting. Actually, on another occasion, he said it was the proper thing to do because we Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual bounty. Because we've been made partakers of the spiritual bounty of Israel, we ought to assist them in this material need.

And so that's what Paul is referring to here. He's referring to this collection, this offering. And what we find from his second epistle to the Corinthians is that they had actually suggested this thing themselves.

They had suggested that they give something to the church in Jerusalem. So Paul is just now saying to them, OK, you made this suggestion. You want to give something to the church in Jerusalem.

Go ahead and do that. And then when I come, I will collect it and I will take it to Jerusalem with me. Now, whenever we come to the subject of collections and we come to the subject of money, it is very unfortunate today that there has been so much abuse in this area.

And because of the abuses and because of the excesses that we see all around us, there's a tendency for people like myself, especially to not even want to address these kinds of issues. But yet it is proper to address them in a biblical fashion. So in other words, when the subject comes up in the scripture, we can't neglect it simply because certain charlatans are exploiting people and taking advantage of God's people.

There is a legitimate biblical basis for giving, and we as Christians have the responsibility to give. Now, we're not going to spend a whole lot of time on the subject, but I just want to point out to you that Paul lays down a principle here, and this is the principle that we sort of operate by when it comes to this whole thing of giving. On the first day of the week, that's today, by the way, on the first day of the week, let each of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.

Now, in this particular case, of course, as I already mentioned, Paul was taking a gift up to Jerusalem, but I think the principle is valid that we do give on a regular basis to the Lord. We lay something aside. Now, the thing that you'll find about the New Testament as you study it is the New Testament never tells us how much we are to lay aside.

Under the Old Testament, there were certain mandatory requirements for giving. There was what you call the tithe. There was that initial 10 percent.

But then there were other things that were to be given also under the Old Testament system, which averages out to, I can't remember, twenty five percent or something like that of a person's income and whether that would have been money or in the Old Testament. A lot of times it was grain and different types of things like that to supply the priesthood with food and so forth. But when you come to the New Testament, there is not a specific amount that is placed upon the New Testament believer.

Now, commonly, even in churches today, we hear the emphasis being placed on the tithe and we hear people, you know, telling Christians that they need to be tithing and that it's the obligation of a Christian to give 10 percent. That really isn't accurate, according to the New Testament as taking an Old Testament principle and bringing it over into the New Testament. Now, if one chooses to give 10 percent, that's fine.

If one chooses to give more, that's fine. But I think. The standard is clear from this second verse here, let each one of you lay something aside.

The point is, is we need to be giving, we determine how much it is that we're going to give. That's up to us. Now, the emphasis in the church on tithing, as I said, is based on a lot of Old Testament principles that people have brought over into the New Testament era.

The only time you can find tithing mentioned in the New Testament is when you're reading through the Gospels. But you have to remember the Gospels, in a sense, are not New Testament instruction. They are in one sense, but in another sense, they're not because the context of a gospel is Jewish.

Jesus lived under the law as a Jew, and he was dealing with people who lived under the law. And until his death and resurrection, people were still bound by the requirements of the law. That's why you have tithing mentioned in the Gospels.

But when you come to the epistles, which are instruction for New Testament believers, you never have a mentioning of the time. You never have any command for a believer to tithe. You never have any specific amount that is set forth for the believer to give.

But there are principles, and this is one of them, setting aside, setting aside. Something according to how you have prospered, and then if we look real quickly over into the second epistle to the Corinthians, we have a further principle. Now, remember here, Paul is dealing with the same group of people about the same matter.

And listen to what he says to him in chapter nine, verse five, he says, therefore, I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised. So he's making reference back to the gift that they had promised to give. And this, again, the context is all for the church in Jerusalem.

He says that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. But this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver and God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things may have an abundance for every good work.

So you see the principles of Paul is out here. Number one is that if we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly. So, in other words, if we're not going to be generous in our giving, then we can't expect to have generosity shown toward us when it comes to this subject.

So there is to be a generosity. There's to be a bounty when it comes to giving. You see, when I give, I actually do, I really demonstrate my faith.

Because when I give what I'm saying to God is, God, I'm giving this and I'm trusting you to take care of me. I mean, it's really an act of faith to give to God. Now, that's why Jesus pointed out the superiority of the gift of a widow over the gift of those wealthy men who were putting into the offering.

Perhaps you remember the story. There were men putting in lavish gifts and then there was one widow who put in just a mite. And Jesus said to his disciples, he said, I want to tell you that that woman put in more than the rest of them.

And they marveled. How could that be? She just put in a mite. Jesus said she gave out of her need.

They gave out of their abundance. You see, it didn't really cost them anything to give. There was no step of faith.

There was no act of faith involved. There was no trust in God. It was like, oh, this is just extra.

I don't really need it, so I'll give it to God. But this woman needed every mite she had, but she gave her last one to the Lord. You see, that was a great step of faith.

She was trusting God. And so Jesus said she actually gave more than anyone else. So this is the principle when we're giving.

We want to demonstrate. Our faith, so there are times when we give, even though it's going to be sacrificial, even though I'm not really in a position where I'm going to be comfortable in doing it, yet I give as an act of faith and I say, Lord, I'm trusting you. But I must always give cheerfully.

I must always give cheerfully. If I'm not willing to give cheerfully, then I better not give it all. That's what the apostle says here.

He says God loves a cheerful giver, but he says don't give grudgingly or of necessity. To try to force people to give is such it's so absurd. It's so contrary to the New Testament to try to manipulate people into giving, which we see happening so often today.

Quite honestly, so much of what is passed off as Christian ministry today is nothing more than money grubbing. It has nothing to do with Christian ministry at all. And so many of these men that claim to be prophets and men of God and men with power and healing abilities and all this, it's just rubbish.

It's nothing but a scam to get your money. Those are the facts. And if you want to believe otherwise, then I feel sorry for you because you're going to be taken advantage of.

In the Royal Albert Hall, Benny Hinn visited and you can't find a greater phony than Benny Hinn. And there was a cost of seven pounds to get into the meeting initially, and I knew that in advance. I'd read some of the press on it and it's going to be a seven pound charge and so forth.

But I knew in my mind that not only would there be a seven pound charge to get in, but I knew for certain that there would be several offerings that were taken. And certainly there were. And one of the men who works at the Albert Hall told me that Benny got up and he said, blessed are those who give or something to do with giving and receiving.

And then he twisted and he said, but it doesn't say blessed are those who pay. So you see, you paid, but that doesn't qualify. If you really want to get blessed now, you've got to give.

And of course, the whole motive is to put money in his pocket. You know, he's buying a home in Beverly Hills. He's got a large home in Florida as well.

And the thing that absolutely amazes me is that people give to this guy. Now, I don't have any problem referring to Benny Hinn by name and referring to him as a heretic by name. If you want to talk to me personally about it, I could give you a list of heresies that he has publicly proclaimed on television.

You can pick up his books and read them and you find the heresy right there. But this whole word faith movement, all of these kinds of people, they're in it for one thing. They're in it for the money.

And they are written about in this book, the Bible. They're written about in Second Peter, chapter two. They are the false prophets of the New Testament era.

They are the false prophets of the New Testament era. Peter said there were false, the false teachers. Peter said there were false prophets among the people of Israel.

There will be false teachers among you. And he said the thing that would identify them is that they would exploit you with deceptive words. They would make merchandise of you.

And their whole basis for everything they did would be covetousness. And that's exactly what you see with these people. So, of course, they're the ones who are emphasizing, they're the ones who are manipulating.

They're the ones who are coercing people. They're the ones who are making, giving a necessary thing. And they're the ones who are telling us things about Jesus concerning his own ministry, how he had a wealthy ministry.

There's one man that drives me absolutely mad. His name is John Avenzini. And he claims that Jesus wore designer clothes.

He wore a designer robe, Armani. But, you see, they have to make these kinds of outrageous claims because that is their method of justifying their own lifestyle. That's how they justify the way they live, the way they dress, the excess and all of that.

They do it simply by making these outrageous claims. And I remember listening to this guy and, you know, going off about Jesus and his designer clothes, going off about the whole, you know, financial empire that Jesus had developed and all of this. It's just rubbish.

It's nonsense. There's absolutely nothing in the Bible that would ever indicate anything like that. It's all them reading things into the text.

And again, it's to justify their own lust and their own greed. So, don't be fooled by these people. Don't be fooled by their claims.

Benny Hinn, of course, he claims to have healed multitudes of people and all these great healing that have taken place. In all of the research that's ever been done, there's not one legitimate case of healing that's ever been documented. Can't document any of it.

Now, if somebody's legitimately healed, I believe in healing. I've seen people be healed. I'm not questioning God's ability to heal.

I'm questioning their ability. You see, it's all just a sham. It's all to get you to do what they want you to do.

And that's put money in their pocket. So, don't be deceived by that. It's proper to give, but don't give to that type of a thing.

I won't even call it a ministry. That is definitely the wrong term to use, because ministry means service. And this is self-service.

It's not serving the body of Christ at all. But don't do that. It's proper to give.

It's right to give. You ought to give. Primarily, I think giving is to go to that place where you're fed and built up in the faith, where you feel that this is your home as a Christian, that local fellowship.

And we give primarily so the ministry of the gospel can be furthered. That's what happens with giving, according to the New Testament. We give to benefit people and to help them.

We give to further the gospel. So when Paul's writing to them about this whole thing. We see that, yes, indeed, in spite of all of this other nonsense that goes on, there is a legitimate place to give and there's a proper attitude to give with.

God loves a cheerful giver. And we want to adapt the biblical view of these things in the biblical mentality. Now, one of these days I'll do a very thorough teaching on all this, but.

I just thought today we could touch on it for a moment. So as we move on now to verse five, now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia, for I am passing through Macedonia. And it may be that I will remain or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey wherever I go, for I do not wish to see you now on the way.

But I hope to stay a while with you if the Lord permits. But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. Now, again, here we find Paul just speaking to them about his personal plans.

He says, I'm going to tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost for a great and effective door has opened to me and there are many adversaries. So Paul, of course, his ministry was one of church planting primarily, and he went from place to place planting churches and he would spend some time with each church as he would plant the church. He would spend some time, he would seek to get them grounded in the faith, and then he would put others in charge of that particular church.

And then he would move on to do the same thing in other locations. And so Paul has left Corinth and he's come to Ephesus. If you follow the the course of Paul that's laid out for us in the book of Acts, that's exactly what you find having taken place.

Paul was in Corinth, he ministered there for about a year and six months and then he moved on from there. He went to Ephesus and he did indeed find in Ephesus a door that was opened. The world that the apostles went into was a world that was filled with vice.

It was a world that was steeped in idolatry. It was steeped in sexual immorality. It was steeped in violence and hatred.

All the things that we are experiencing in our modern society are the very things that the apostles encountered when they went out with the gospel. And that gospel that they went out with in just a short period of time transformed that world. As a matter of fact, in that city of Ephesus itself, there were a multitude of metal workers that formed.

They formed a sort of a labor party against the apostle because he was taking work away from them. He was teaching people that idolatry was wrong and he was teaching them to turn to the true God. And these guys were were being put out of business.

So they formed this party. They came together. They brought a complaint and they said, this man and these with him, this is what they said.

They have turned the world upside down. And that was the testimony of the apostles in the first century. They had turned the world upside down.

More accurately, they had turned it right side up and put it back the way it was supposed to be. Men were worshiping and serving the true God and no longer were they worshiping and serving false gods and all of the ramifications of that. This all happened through the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, we today have come to a place similar to where they were when they initially went out for many, many centuries. Some sort of a Christianity had an influence on society. And so people live for many centuries under what you might call a sort of a Christian umbrella.

And a sort of a Christian consensus as far as morality and things like that go, values and so forth. But all of those things are now things of the past. And we've actually, in many ways, come back to a similar kind of environment that the apostles originally went into.

We've actually come around once again to a pagan culture, to a culture where man is deified and where nature is deified and where man being deified is seen as the ultimate. And so man is serving himself and living for himself. And so all of the consequences of that are being seen all around us.

Now, this is my point. These men were able in just a few decades to alter the course of human history through the preaching of the gospel. And that same gospel is the gospel that we have today.

But you see, the problem today is that the gospel, we have it, but it's distorted in many cases. It's neglected in other cases. The church no longer believes in the power of the gospel as these men did in the early days.

But I personally believe that God is able to do today what he did back then. If there will just be a band of men who will rise up and say, we believe this book, we believe this gospel, we believe in the power of God and we're ready to live and die for what we believe. If there are a generation of men that will rise up and take these things to heart, I believe that God could once again do something similar to what he did back at that time.

I believe that a great and effective door can be opened as well. But you see, we've got to put our faith in the gospel once again. We've got to believe that this is the power of God to salvation.

And we've got to go out fearlessly and proclaim that this is indeed the power of God and salvation. That's what Paul did. And this particular place, Ephesus, was transformed so much so, as I already pointed out, that this whole group of people had to come against the apostle, try to drive them out of town.

People who were involved in sorcery, witchcraft, magic arts, all of those things. It says at one point they brought all of their literature, all of their books that dealt with those kinds of things. They brought them together.

They put them in a pile and lit fire to them. That's how incredible the transformation was in this ancient society of Ephesus. And that's the same kind of thing that can happen today.

That's the same kind of thing that does happen when the gospel begins to be preached. The unfortunate thing about so much of the modern church is that the modern church is doing everything but preaching the

gospel. This method and this new technique and this new program, we've got it all.

But there's a great reluctance to preach the gospel. It's a lack of faith. It's a lack of believing that this is indeed the power of God.

But we've got to get back to that place where we realize it is just proclaiming this message and trusting that as we proclaim it, God will work in relation to it. Now, he said, for there is a great and effective door open to me and there are many adversaries. And of course, whenever we take a stand and whenever we are going to boldly proclaim the gospel, there will be adversaries.

But that won't stop us. That shouldn't stop us. It didn't stop the apostle Paul.

He simply was saying this is the case and he was trusting no doubt that they would pray for him. You know, as you take a stand for Christ, as you begin to share your faith, you know about those adversaries. Sometimes it's the person you live with, your husband or your wife or your children.

Sometimes it's the people that work next to you. Sometimes it's it's the people that you go to school with. Sometimes it's friends that you've known all of your life.

Suddenly they're an adversary. Why are they an adversary? Well, because Satan stirs them up. The God of this age blinds the minds of those who don't believe.

One of the ladies in the church was telling me this morning that a friend of hers phoned her this week and said, where's your church? I'm coming to it. Saunders said, oh, brilliant. She said, don't say brilliant.

It's not brilliant. I'm coming to see who's brainwashed you. I want to see who's done this to you.

You know, a person who was a friend for years is now an adversary. What happened? And, you know, she's concerned at the brainwashing and what Saunders said is, you know, we never say anything to her. You don't have to say anything.

It's just your presence. It's Christ in you. Why does this bother people so much? It's because men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil and the light, you know, it's just like when you're in the darkness and suddenly the lights come on.

Oh, you don't want to see that. That bothers your eyes. Well, that's what's happening to people spiritually.

So there will be many adversaries, but yet the two things go hand in hand. A great and effective door is open. So regardless of the adversaries, we want to go through the door as God opens the door.

I believe that God is opening a door. I believe that God is opening a door. Now, there's all kinds of talk about revival and all of this.

Many of you have heard it all. And, you know, you hear the reports about it. And, you know, again, I'm on a negative roll today.

I'll just say it again. It's all rubbish. It's just it's nonsense.

There's no reality to it. It's men with fertile imaginations going off in their imaginations. I was reading a book the other day by one of these so-called prophets.

And he was talking about his experience going to heaven and speaking with Jesus and talking to the Apostle Paul. And you know what? I just was I was sick when I finished reading it. I was sickened and I was angry, too.

Because it's just not reality, it's a man's imagination and in his imagination, he gets so carried away. He even goes to tell us that the Apostle Paul told him this is this great message to the current generation that you're misinterpreting me. You're you're acting like my words are as authoritative as the words of Jesus.

That isn't true. And you need to repent of that. If that's not heresy, I don't know what is denying the inspiration of the scriptures under the guise of being a prophet.

And that particular man in the ministry that he's connected with has had a tremendous impact in this country, and they're the ones who are behind this whole revival hype thing. You know, there might be a revival. I'll tell you what, it's nothing like they think it's going to be.

It's going to be entirely different. A great and effective door might open, but there will be many adversaries. So God is opening a door.

The door is going to continue to open. It's a door for the gospel to be preached. And the goal is to get the gospel out, to get the message of Jesus Christ out, to get the message of what he did on the cross.

That's the thing. That's what we need to get back to. We need to get back to that simple message of what Jesus did on the cross.

And too many in the church today are ashamed of that message. Too many, like the Corinthians, are wanting to come up with a message that people say, oh, yeah, I can understand. Oh, well, now that you say it that way, oh, that's fine.

No, we have to get back to the message of the cross, Christ crucified. That's the power of God. And sometimes that irritates people, but that's OK.

The very irritation is an indication of conviction. You remember the Apostle Paul himself, he used to be Saul of Tarsus, he was extremely irritated when he heard Stephen preach. So much so, when people took up stones to kill Stephen, he said, here, give me your coat, I'll hold it for you.

And he held the coats of the men who stoned Stephen to death, and then he went on a rampage and he went all throughout the region attacking Christians and putting them into prison. And when he was on the road to Damascus, finally, Jesus met him, threw him off of his horse and he said, Saul, it's hard for you to kick against the goads. And that one statement is full of implication, the implication is this, you've been resisting the conviction of the spirit for all of this time.

That's what was happening from the day Saul heard Stephen preach, he was convicted. He knew that that young man was right and it haunted him and it tormented him and it led him to become a great adversary. But it finally led him to become the greatest promoter of the gospel that history has ever seen.

So you see, the effective door and the adversity sometimes go hand in hand. But God has his ways. And so we trust that the Lord is opening an effective door here as well.

Now Paul speaks to them about Timothy. We haven't had much time to talk about Timothy. Paul wrote two epistles to him later on.

He was a young colleague of the apostle. He was the one who was sort of Paul's son in the faith. He brought him up and in many ways saw Timothy as the one who would carry on his ministry when he when he finished.

And so he talks about him here. And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear, for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore, let no one despise him, but send him on his journey in peace that he may come to me, for I am waiting for him with the brethren.

Now, concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time. However, he will come when he has a convenient time. Now, Apollos, the Corinthians knew him.

He had he had been there among them at a certain point. So Paul is making reference to him. And now in verse 13, he says, watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

I love this exhortation. Watch. And the idea behind this is be alert.

How often as Christians, we're we're not alert, we're sleeping, we're not paying attention, we're not attentive to the things that are going on around us. Because Christians have failed to watch in the church, the church has become overrun with false teaching, as I was mentioning already today. And because Christians haven't watched in relation to the world, there's a multitude of Christians that don't have any idea what time it is in history.

You see, the Bible told us the events that would transpire just before the second coming of Christ, all those things are happening around us. But sometimes you tell a Christian, I say, oh, no, no, come on. That's that's not that.

You talk about Israel, you talk about Europe, you talk about a one world government, those things. You'll find Christian people saying, oh, no, no, that's no. Jesus coming again, thousands of years away.

Well, I would say that that's due to not watching, not being attentive. Watch, stand fast in the faith. Stand fast in the faith.

There's there's always something that's trying to move us. The faith is is a phrase that we find throughout the New Testament, and the faith means the body of doctrine that's declared in the New Testament. Stand fast in the faith.

So a lot of people today who don't want the faith, they talk about faith. They talk about belief, they talk about religion, but the faith, the body of doctrine revealed in the New Testament. They ignore that, they reject that.

And every wind of doctrine comes and blows them from place to place. There's tremendous instability. Paul said, watch, stand fast.

In other words, be firm, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. We live in such a flabby world today. Flabby generation.

You know, it's just it's sad where where the world has come to. Where men want to be women, and that's that's vogue, that's. That's really looked at as.

You know, men trying to be women, things like that, this flabbiness, this weakness. No one can ever say anything's wrong. No one can ever point and say that shouldn't be done.

Oh, no, no. We don't want to offend anybody. It's a flabby world we live in.

But the Christian can't be flabby. The Christian can't be weak. The Christian can't be like that.

Paul said, be brave, be strong. And we need to see men today like David of old. These kinds of these were great men.

These were men who were courageous men. And it just seems so ironic that here in the heat of the battle in the final days, we don't see those kinds of men. Unfortunately, we see men in the churches who are weak and flexible beyond the biblical boundary.

You see, it's the biblical standard. I had a meeting a few weeks ago with some men. And I sat there in the midst of them listening to some of the things they were saying.

You know, there were two things I could have done. I could have sat there, nodding in agreement for the sake of peace, or I could have said, that's rubbish. And I had to do the latter.

I couldn't sit and just say, oh, yeah, right. Yeah. I just felt that I cannot leave this meeting with them thinking I agreed with them.

I would fail if I did that. And, you know, they went on talking about this, you know, and again, it's this whole tolerance thing. It's this broad thing.

It's, oh, it's so wonderful. And, oh, last week, our worship leader, they sing a Madonna song and the whole church was on its knees. And, oh, it was so wonderful.

And, oh, you know, the Beatles had an anointing on them. And, oh, and, you know what? And I just, I thank you that you invited me for lunch, but I've got to disagree. But it's this mentality that you just see.

It's this pleasing everybody else and, oh, what are they going to think and all of that. That is totally contrary to what the Bible calls us to do and the kind of men that the Bible calls us to be. Be brave, be strong.

We need to be brave and strong in these days. There's no place for weakness at this point in history. And, of course, it's not our own strength.

It's not our own bravado that we're talking about here. It's the strength and the power and the courage that comes from Jesus Christ living in us. It's the spirit of God living in us.

Let all that you do be done with love. Now, this helps us balance the whole thing out. I told you reading some of these books and listening to these people, my initial response is not loving.

I want to inflict bodily pain. I've often wondered if that would maybe be the best method with some of these. You read the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah, he came back to Jerusalem after he had been gone for some time. He set up the whole city again. He got everything.

He got the people back to worshipping the true God. He went back to Persia for a time. He came back to Jerusalem and he found that they had gone back into sin.

And you know what he did? It says he grabbed him. He plucked out their beards. He began to beat them.

And I think I like that method. I've often fantasized about pulling Benny Hinn's hair out. But then the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The Bible tells me that. So it's like, all right, Lord, you know, sometimes I just wish we were still back in Davidic times. Where, you know, somebody's blaspheming the Lord.

David said, well, go ahead, take his head off. That was as simple as that back then. Yeah, yes, I'm barbaric and certainly from another era, maybe.

But let all things be done with love. But listen, love does not mean flabbiness. Does not mean weakness.

Does not mean capitulation under pressure. It doesn't mean any of those things. Of course, Paul, we're going to study Galatians in a few weeks when we finish up here today.

We're going to skip 2 Corinthians and go to Galatians. But here you'll find Paul who's loving the Galatians, but they are extremely bothered by him. And he asked him at one point, he says, he says, do you despise me because I tell you the truth? He talked about his love for them.

His love for them was genuine. But yet his love for them was a firm love. It was a love that told him the truth and they didn't appreciate that.

And that happens today as well. Now, I urge you, brethren, you know, the household of Stephanus, that it is the first roots of Achaia. Achaia was a region there in Greece.

So this the household of Stephanus, they were the first believers in that area 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 Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus.

For what was lacking on your part, they supplied. So Paul mentions these three people, these households, and these were people that had taken it upon themselves to support the ministry of the Apostle Paul. They had been, no doubt, converted through his ministry.

They so appreciated what he had done for them. They wanted to see the gospel go to other people and they took it upon themselves. They said, we are going to minister to the saints.

That's that's going to be what we're going to do. So they were extending their gifts to the apostle, to further the gospel, for they refresh my spirit and yours, therefore, acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you, Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord with the church that is in their house.

Aquila and Priscilla, we read about them back in the Acts of the Apostles. They became the companions of the apostle. They were involved in the same trade he was involved in.

They were tent makers by trade. They were a Jewish couple. They were expelled from Rome under Claudius.

And then they met up with the apostle. And now Paul refers to the church that is in their house. See, in the early days of the church, they didn't have buildings, per se.

The first Christians met in the in the colonnade of Solomon, in the temple in Jerusalem. But then from there, they began to branch out and to meet in the homes of other people. And, you know, it seems as God does fresh works at times, it kind of goes back to that.

It sort of begins in houses again. And then the house becomes too small and you have to go look for another facility. And then you end up, you know, in some sort of a larger venue somewhere.

But this this is a New Testament pattern. The church was there in their house. All the brethren greet you, greet one another with a holy kiss.

The salutation with my own hand, Paul's. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. And that is an Aramaic word that means accursed.

Let him be accursed. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Actually, every man is accursed apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul develops that in his epistle to the Galatians. He shows that God gave a law and God said regarding this law. That the man who did it would live by it.

But he also said, cursed is everyone who does not confirm all of the words of this law. So you see, this is the this is the dilemma that mankind finds himself in. Concerning the law, this is the standard.

Do it and you shall live. But cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the law. So you see, in actuality, everyone who doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ is cursed.

Everyone is under a curse. Why? Because every one of us have violated the law. None of us have confirmed all the words of the law.

Some of us never even tried to. We never even considered it. We began rebelling in an early stage and the thought of laws or rules or God's standard never even crossed our mind.

Others actually knew the law, understood the law, attempted to live according to the law, but found that they had failed to do so. You see what Paul points out in his epistle to the Galatians that we'll get to next is that the only way you can be justified apart from Christ is to keep the law perfectly and no one's ever been able to do that. I have to have loved God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and my neighbor as myself every moment of my existence.

And any inconsistency, any failure to do so for even one split second is a violation and causes me to break the law. And when I break the law, I come under the curse of the law. And so every man who is not in Christ is under the curse.

But every man who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, when a man refuses the gospel, Paul says, let him be anathema. Those are strong words. Those are not the words of a flabby man.

They're not popular words. This is reality. And of course, as we talk about the gospel today, this is exactly the kind of response we get from people.

You mean to tell me that if I don't believe this, I'm going to hell? That's what God said. I'm just telling you what he said. But, and then all of the reasons why that shouldn't be the case.

You see, God's the one who determines. God's the one who lays down the rules. It's, you know, we're used to making the rules in our small little world that we exist in.

But in the universe itself, God's the one who makes the rules. And the standard is this. If you do the things in the law, you'll live by them.

Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But you see, Jesus came to deliver us from that curse. But if we reject him, if we refuse him, then there's nothing left for us except the curse.

And so Paul says, let him be anathema. And then he says, oh, Lord, come. This is a Aramaic word, Maranatha.

You've probably heard that word, Maranatha. English translation is, oh, Lord, come. And isn't that the cry of our hearts? As I was just reading this last night and I came to those words, it was like, yes, Lord, oh, Lord, come.

That's our prayer. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.

Amen. So here the apostle finishes his letter to this church. And it's been a hard letter, no doubt.

It was hard for him to write and it was hard for them to receive, but it was necessary. But I really like the way he ends it. After all of the rebuke and all of the correction, he says the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And then he says, my love be with you. See, he loved them. He loved them dearly.

And that's why he put himself on the line to tell them the truth. And, you know, God does that. He puts his heart in his servants and he gives them a love for his people.

Paul, later on when he wrote the second epistle, he talked about, you know, some of the things I was kind of alluding to earlier. He talked about the church being led astray by false teaching. He said, do I not burn? Within, I think he had those same kinds of feelings.

I think he wished that the Davidic era was still around at times. In writing to the Galatians and the Galatians were another group of people that were deceived by false teaching and they had gone back into elevating the law and they were being circumcised. And Paul said at one point, those who trouble you, I would that they would castrate themselves.

Those are strong words, aren't they? But you see, Paul was not speaking merely as a man. I believe that he was speaking under the inspiration of the spirit, even with those words, because there's a serious and a severe judgment that will fall upon those who lead God's people astray. As a matter of fact, one final word in closing.

Jesus told us the severity of it. He said that for one who offends, one of the little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him if a millstone were hanged around his neck and he was cast in the depth of the sea. So you see, these aren't things that we can pass over lightly.

And Paul, out of his deep love for these believers, he told them the truth. The truth offended them at times, but nevertheless, it was necessary. And true love will always do that.

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