

“Love is the Last Word” (1 Corinthians 16:13-24)

While serving as a staff pastor in our previous church, I remember receiving a loving exhortation from my wife. This is the gist of what Lori said to me: “Keith, when you teach your adult Sunday school class of 30-40, you are so passionate, yet whenever you preach to the entire church family, your passion wanes. You rise or sink to the level of your listeners.” Ouch! Lori put her finger on a blind spot in my life. You see, in my adult Sunday school class, I had 30-40 people who brought their Bibles to class, eagerly leaned forward when I spoke, and hung on every word that I said. Now contrast that with the preaching service where there were 300-400 people that seemed to struggle just to stay awake. I was passionate about my class because of their spiritual hunger and maturity. I rose to their level of excitement. In the Sunday morning worship services, I sank to the level of the lack of passion and interest in the body.

I received that rebuke from Lori and have been working on this weakness of mine ever since. For, as my chiropractic mentor, Dr. Greg Zimmerman, states, “On any given Sunday, only one or two people really get it. Don’t be discouraged by the masses, instead focus on the one or two people that will truly get what you’re saying.” Today, I ask you this question: will you be one of the few that get it? Will you apply God’s Word to your life and be changed? We have finally reached the conclusion of the book of 1 Corinthians. We are about to wrap up this year-long study. My prayer is that as we conclude this book we will all “get it.” In 1 Cor 16:13-24 Paul will suggest that *love is the remedy for church ills*. In this passage, Paul provides three elements of spiritual maturity.

1. The Exhortations of Spiritual Maturity (16:13-14). In these opening two verses, Paul unveils five moral exhortations:¹ **“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”** These five exhortations are all present tense imperatives demanding continuous action. Therefore, we must recognize that God’s commands are not good advice. They are not optional. God’s commands are not like a cafeteria where we can pick or choose what we want. All five commands are incumbent upon the believer. The first four commands employ military metaphors to encourage resoluteness in the faith,² while the final command summarizes the previous four.

- ***Be on the alert.*** This command is a warning to watch out for those that seek to bring about division. Paul urges the Corinthians to be watchful regarding danger from inside as well as outside the church.³ Most of the problems in Corinth, and in most of our churches today, arise from within the congregation, so we must be especially alert. The expression “be on the alert” sometimes occurs with anticipation of the Lord’s coming, so that may have been in Paul’s thinking as well.⁴ We should expect the return of the Lord at any time, and our behavior should reflect the Lord’s values and should not be characterized by deeds of darkness.⁵
- ***Stand firm in the faith.*** This is a military image that urges the Corinthians “to hold their ground” and not retreat before an enemy.⁶ The command to “stand firm” has already served as the bookends for chapter 15 (15:2, 58).⁷ The phrase “the faith” here probably denotes both the body of Christian teachings⁸ and our own personal relationship with the Lord.⁹ Since there are many temptations out there that can cause us to depart from the faith we need to be vigilant and stand firm. Are you standing firm in the faith or are you like shifting sand?
- ***Act like men and be strong.***¹⁰ These next two commands should be taken together.¹¹ The verbs are frequently combined in the Old Testament to exhort God’s people to have courage in the face of danger, especially from one’s enemies.¹² The word Paul uses for “be strong” is in the passive in voice, meaning “be strengthened.” We cannot strengthen ourselves; that is the Lord’s work. Our part is to submit ourselves to Him.¹³ General George Patton summed it up well, “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”¹⁴

The fifth and final command is the glue that holds the other four together. In 16:14, Paul exclaims,

- ***Let all that you do be done in love.*** Paul makes his point especially clear by framing this letter's closing: "Let all that you do be done in love" (16:14), and "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus" (16:24).¹⁵ This love involves both love for the Lord (16:22) and love for one another (16:24).¹⁶ Paul earlier challenged his readers with the fact that "knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies" (8:1). Love is the greatest motivating force for ethical behavior.¹⁷ The old saying is still true that "People need to know how much you care before they care how much you know." *Love is the remedy for church ills.*

[What does love look like in the body of Christ? We don't really have to speculate because Paul paints a picture of it for us in the next six verses.]

2. The Characteristics of Spiritual Maturity (16:15-20). In these six verses, Paul shares five characteristics of spiritual maturity: service, submission, friendship, hospitality, and affection. All five of these are essential aspects of growing to maturity in the Lord and in our relationships with God's people. In 16:15-20, Paul writes, "**Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca¹⁸ greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.**" Let's now consider the five characteristics of spiritual maturity.

- ***Service.*** Stephanas and his family were Paul's first converts ("first fruits")¹⁹ in Achaia, the province in which Corinth stood (1:16). They had given themselves selflessly to serving the Corinthians. They were probably loyal to Paul and may have been the source from which he received some of his information about conditions in this church. Verse 15 states that the household of Stephanas "devoted themselves for ministry to the saints." The King James Version translates the verb "devoted" as "addicted." I like this! They were serving in ministry so consistently, so regularly, that it was like an addiction; they were hooked on ministry. That's not such a bad addiction, is it? Could anyone accuse you of this?

Last week, I talked with one of our longtime members, Barb Mansfield. After retiring from approximately twenty years as one of our children's Sunday school superintendents, Barb immediately took on more ministries. She currently performs women's follow-up, serves in our coffee fellowship hour, and is discipling a new Christian. I had to gush over Barb's commitment to service that stems from a love for Christ and His church.

- ***Submission.*** The Corinthians had a problem with submission to authority. They were competitive, stubborn, and even arrogant at times. Many in the church wanted to do their own thing. Verses 16-18 would have encouraged them to appreciate some less flashy servants of the Lord. Submission is not earned by holding an office; it's earned by godly character and service. There's no indication that Stephanas was a pastor, or even a church officer. He was apparently just an ordinary Christian with extraordinary love. But he deserves as much respect as pastors and elders.²⁰ *Mutual* submission is a key theme of Spirit-filled living.²¹ All believers are to submit to each other (Eph 5:21).²² Service, not status, should be the basis for honor in the church. Are you submitting to the various servant leaders in our church? Do you esteem them above yourself? Do you seek creative ways to honor them?

- **Friendship.** Apparently, when the financial support for Paul’s missionary work dried up, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus bailed him out. But even more meaningful is the fact that they “refreshed” his spirit. One of the finest compliments that can be paid of another Christian is to say that he or she is refreshing to be around, picks up your spirit, and encourages you to keep going. I know a lot of people in our church who are like that; I always feel better after being with them. They are a blessing to everyone they come in contact with.

Let me ask you: when you enter a room, is there more joy, peace, and love than before you arrived? When you leave, is the atmosphere and attitude better? Do you refresh your fellow-believers or bring them down? And let me ask another question: when you experience refreshment from other believers, how should you respond? Paul says, “Such people deserve recognition.” Thank them. Write them a note. Give them a hug and tell them how much they mean to you.²³

As a pastor, I occasionally have people tell me that they like our worship services but are not making friends in our church. They tend to assume it is the fault of our church. I used to take this personal until I began to notice a trend. Those individuals that approached me with this grievance didn’t want to be involved in a small group, an adult class, or in any type of service. It quickly dawned on me that that problem did not lie with us. It has been well said, “We don’t find friends, we make them.”²⁴ Emmanuel is a wonderful place to cultivate lifelong friendships, but we must invest in the body in order to reap the benefits. *Love is the remedy for church ills.*

This section closes with two additional marks of spiritual maturity: hospitality and affection.

- **Hospitality.** Aquila and Priscilla opened up their home and hosted a church. According to the New Testament, this dynamic ministry couple lived in at least three different cities—Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome—and in all three places they had a church in their house. Furthermore, it was at their house that Paul stayed during his very first visit to Corinth, probably for more than a year and a half. There may be no greater tool for ministry than the Christian home. Because the home is a testing ground for the power of love and acceptance, it serves as a living demonstration of God’s love for those seeking to be part of God’s family.

The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer and his wife, Elizabeth, moved from America to Switzerland and started L’Abri (“shelter”) in their home in 1955. Soon they were inundated by students and others seeking answers to life’s questions. They provided biblical truth, acceptance, and hospitality to all who came to their door.

Closer to home are our own Nathan & Jennifer Cumming who have the gift of hospitality. Yet, interestingly, they could make use of all kinds of excuses to not be hospitable. Nathan just returned from serving our country overseas, Jennifer recently gave birth to a second child, and they have moved into a new house that demands care. Yet, they want to reach out and be a blessing to others.

By the way, as we consider these characteristics of spiritual maturity, it is worth noting that the entire household of Stephanas is recognized in 16:15. Parents, children learn love and service in the home, and they learn the lack of love and service there also. They learn hospitality as they see their parents practice it; they also learn to hold on to their stuff tightly as they watch parents who do that. As a parent, are you helping your children learn through observation and practice how to live out these characteristics?

- **Affection.**²⁵ Paul sees the custom of the holy kiss as a proper corrective to the cliquishness and bickering that characterized the church at Corinth. It could also serve as a remedy to the tremendous personal isolation that so many feel today. Why, then, has this custom of kissing one another on the cheek all but passed from the church? First, it faded because it was liable to abuse. Some people had trouble distinguishing holy kisses from other kinds. Second, it faded because the church became less and less of a fellowship. In the little house churches, where friend met with friend and all were closely bound together, it was the most natural thing in the world; but when the little fellowship turned into a vast congregation, and houses gave way to cathedrals, intimacy was lost and the holy kiss vanished with it. The kiss, of course, is not the important thing; a hug, or a warm two-handed handshake, or an arm around the shoulder can express the same feelings, and in some cultures might be more appropriate. The key is the love and intimacy that the gesture symbolizes. Who needs a hug or a holy kiss from you today? How will you communicate your love to others in the body of Christ? *Love is the remedy for church ills.*

[We have considered the exhortations and characteristics of spiritual maturity, but now Paul closes this passage and the entire book of 1 Corinthians with...]

3. The Mark of Spiritual Maturity (16:21-24). Please notice that this third and final point is singular, not plural. In fact, in these four verses, Paul boils down everything that he has said in this passage and in this letter to a single word: LOVE. First, however, he provides a note in 16:21: **“The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.”** This verse indicates that this letter, like most of Paul’s letters, is written by a scribe.²⁶ In our day, this is akin to an executive that dictates a letter to a secretary but signs it and adds a brief note at the bottom. The point is this: Paul picks up the quill and signs off this letter with a personal touch.

In 16:22, Paul’s personal touch is a verse with a curse: **“If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.”** This verse is rather sobering! The word “accursed” means “devoted to destruction.” The question is: does Paul have in mind *temporal* or *eternal* destruction?²⁷ Most scholars argue for the latter; however, there is no contextual reason to assume that Paul is now all of a sudden discussing unbelievers or false teachers. Rather, it seems that he is still addressing believers. True to form, some of the Corinthians do not love²⁸ the Lord.²⁹ Lack of love for the Lord refers to factiousness, self-seeking, strife, and carnality that practically denies one’s love for Christ.³⁰ In this context it means lack of obedience to Him in such things as exalting human wisdom over the wisdom of the cross, tolerating incest, attending idol feasts, dividing over spiritual gifts, and abusing the Lord’s Supper.³¹ Those that fail to love the Lord and other believers will face God’s curse.³² This probably is exclusion from fellowship in the local church.³³ The opposite of this is “Maranatha,” an Aramaic word that means, “Our Lord, come.”³⁴ This is similar to John’s final words in Rev 22:20: “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Paul now prepares to close the book of 1 Corinthians. **“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.”** Paul concludes this strong but loving epistle with a prayerful benediction of God’s grace.³⁵ This is the very same way that he began his letter: “Grace to you” (1:3).³⁶ What a wonderful reminder that people need the grace of God, for without it they are hopeless. The most loving act that we can perform is to show people God’s grace. First, we must share God’s grace in salvation. This means informing people that God’s love is not based on our own merit but on Jesus Christ’s merit. We receive salvation the same way that we would receive a Christmas gift. We simply open up our hands, receive it, and then express gratitude. We must also be messengers and dispensers of grace to those who are believers. This means not only do we proclaim God’s grace in salvation, but we exemplify God’s grace in being gracious.

Paul’s parting words are found in 16:24, **“My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen”**³⁷ ³⁸The last sentence of the letter, written in Paul’s own hand, reaffirms his love for all the Corinthians—despite their failings, despite their arrogance. Although Paul knew some pretty ornery people in the Corinthian church, and some of them made his life difficult, he sends his love to all of them.

Paul wrote thirteen letters, yet this is the only one that he ends with an affirmation of his love for his readers. It's amazing when you think of the church to which he expressed it. This was the church that resisted him the most, that was the most fractured in its love life. But he says, "I love you," not just in himself but because of the relationship with Christ that has transformed his life. Out of that he can express his love for the church, because he knows that's the only kind of love that lasts, the only kind of love that makes a difference, the only kind of love that's tough enough to survive in the face of the personal rejection and insult he has experienced from this church.

Who do you need to express love to today? Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to come alongside of? Who do you need to serve or to reach out to? Our church will advance when we show love for one another. As Jesus said, "All men will know that we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another" (John 13:34-35, paraphrase). *Love is the remedy for church ills.*

Copyright © 2007 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 16:13-24

John 15:20-21

Matthew 24:42-44

1 Thessalonians 5:2-6

1 Corinthians 1:7-8

2 Corinthians 11:12-15

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Study Questions

1. Which of the five exhortations in 16:13-14 do I struggle with the most? Why do I find this particular area so difficult? Who can help me master this characteristic? Which of the five exhortations have I grown in the most this year? How can I share what God has taught me with another brother or sister in Christ?
2. Would my church family consider me a submissive and respectful person (16:15-16)? Why or why not? Read Ephesians 5:21; 5:22; 6:1-3; Romans 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 5:5a. How can I cultivate a more submissive spirit?
3. Am I a friendly and hospitable person (16:17-18)? What recent examples can I cite that demonstrate this? In what specific ways do I “refresh” other believers?
4. For the married: how do my spouse and I participate in ministry together as a couple (16:19-20)? Over the years, what have we successfully accomplished together as a ministry couple? Where can we improve in our service together? How can we encourage other married couples to serve the Lord as a team?
5. Can I honestly say that I love the Lord (16:22)? How does my love for the Lord flesh itself out in my daily life? Read John 14:21, 23. Do I look forward to Jesus Christ’s return? Read 2 Timothy 4:8.

Notes

¹ A similar battery of five imperatives appears in 2 Cor 13:11. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 765.

² Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 337.

³ Cf. Acts 20:29-30. Paul uses the verb *gregoreo* (“be alert”) in Col 4:2 and 1 Thess 5:6, 10.

⁴ E.g., Matt 24:42-43; 25:13; 1 Thess 5:6, 10; Rev 3:2-3.

⁵ Cf. Acts 20:31; Rom 13:11-14; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:1-11; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 3:3.

⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 766.

⁷ Paul uses the verb “stand firm” (*steko*) in Rom 14:4; Gal 5:1; Phil 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thess 3:8; and 2 Thess 2:15. The only other NT usages are Mark 3:31 and 11:25.

⁸ E.g., 1 Cor 15:3-5; cf. 2 Cor 1:24; 2 Thess 2:15. Jude delivered to his audience when he wrote urging them to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3; cf. Col 2:6-7).

⁹ See 1 Cor 2:5; 13:13; 15:14, 17.

¹⁰ The verb *krataioo* (“be strong”) occurs only three other times (Luke 1:80; 2:40; Eph 3:16).

¹¹ See Ps 31:23-24, O love the LORD, all you His godly ones [cf. 16:22]! The LORD preserves the faithful and fully recompenses the proud doer [cf. 1 Cor 4:18-19; 5:2-6; 8:1; 10:12; 11:21-22; 14:36]. Be strong [*andrizo*, 1 Cor 16:13] and let your heart take courage [*krataioo*, 1 Cor 16:13], All you who hope in the LORD [1 Cor 1:7]. Hays writes, “Of course, Paul’s simple and straightforward exhortations make perfect sense to a reader who does not hear the Psalm echo, but those who do hear will understand that strength and courage are rooted in love for God and set in opposition to boasting and arrogance. Authentic strength is grounded in trustful waiting for the Lord; it is the opposite of the spiritual machismo that says, ‘I am free to do anything (6:12; 10:23).’” Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 289.

¹² E.g., Josh 1:6-9; 2 Sam 10:12; Ps 31:24. In Greco-Roman society there were always people around who were ready to ridicule believers for their faith and even to persecute them (as Paul experienced [2 Cor 11:23-29] and was soon to experience in Ephesus). Thus believers needed continual encouragement to stand firm. See Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

¹³ Again, this is an area where the Corinthians were lacking. Oh, they thought they were strong. Sarcastically Paul speaks in chapter 4:10, “We apostles are fools for Christ, but you *so wise* in Christ; we are weak, but you are *so strong*.” That’s, of course, how they viewed themselves, not what they really were. Anytime a person thinks he is strong, he’d better watch out. That was the message of 10:12: “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” Michael P. Andrus, “Marks of a Community of Contagious Christians” (1 Cor 16:10-24): unpublished sermon notes, March 10, 2002.

¹⁴ Preaching Today citation: James P. Moore, Jr., *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America* (Doubleday, 2005); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, KY.

¹⁵ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 764.

¹⁶ Morris remarks, “In manliness Paul is not looking for aggressiveness or self-assertion, but the strength that shows itself in love.” Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 238. Thiselton states, “As Paul has argued earlier, *childishness* often takes the form of self-centered concern and short-term gratification. Hence he pleads that whatever the Corinthian Christians do, the motivation and attitude should be that of ‘love’, i.e., a concern for the good of ‘the other’ which embodies *respect* and seeks to *build them up* in the long term (cf. 8:7-13; 13:1-13).”

¹⁷ See Gal 5:22-23; cf. Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 12:31; 13; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8.

¹⁸ On Aquila and Prisca see also Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3-4; 2 Tim 4:19. In the NT “Priscilla” and “Prisca” are the same person. The author of Acts uses the full name Priscilla, while Paul uses the diminutive form *Prisca*. See NET study notes.

¹⁹ Blomberg writes, “‘The first converts in Achaia’ (v. 15) translates an expression meaning ‘firstfruits’ and raises the question of the apparent contradiction with Acts 17:34, in which several Athenians came to believe after Paul’s Mars Hill speech and prior to his arrival in Corinth. There are several possible solutions to this problem: Paul had actually met these men somewhere in the countryside even before arriving in Athens; he is speaking of the first ‘household’ rather than individual converts; or the few who responded in Athens did not seem like ‘firstfruits,’ that is, the promise of much more to come. But most likely Paul is simply using the term ‘Achaia,’ as certain ancient writers did elsewhere, for the more limited territory of Corinth and its environs (the Peloponnesus), rather than for all of the southern half of Greece.” Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 338.

²⁰ Prior writes, “We tend to give leadership to those who have received one particular kind of education, who have a measure of articulacy and general ability to think and speak on their feet, who measure up to worldly criteria of leadership... [But what Paul says] indicates that the authentic, solid leadership of a local church will come from people who give themselves to serving the saints. Such leadership does not depend on education, qualifications, degrees, or natural charisma. It comes from the grace of God equipping his people with gifts which enable them to be servants of others in the fellowship of believers.” David Prior, *Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church*. Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 283.

²¹ Paul deliberately plays on forms of the verb *tassein* when he says that “they devoted themselves” (*etaxan heautous*) and that the Corinthians are to be subject to each other.

²² Wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22). Children are to submit to their parents (Eph 6:1-3). Believers are to submit to government (Rom 13:1, 1 Pet 2:13). Younger men are to submit to older men (1 Pet 5:5a).

²³ Andrus, “Marks of a Community of Contagious Christians.”

²⁴ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *Your Church Sign: 1001 Attention Getting Sayings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 115.

²⁵ Cf. Rom 16:16; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14. Thistleton says, “In Graeco-Roman society the role of the kiss varies with geographical location and one’s place or level in society: ‘Graeco-Roman society treated the public kiss...with considerable reticence,’ although in some cases it ‘serves...as confirming reconciliation.’...We conclude that it constituted a physical sign in the public domain of respect, affection and reconciliation within the Christian community, and that its distinctive use among fellow believers *underlined and nurtured the mutuality, reciprocity, and oneness of status and identity which all Christians share across divisions of race, class and gender*: It was clearly open to abuse, as patristic sources demonstrate, and a counterpart is needed today that offers an effective sign in the public domain that accords with these aims.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1344.

²⁶ Morris notes, “It was Paul’s custom to dictate his letters to an amanuensis who wrote them down. But as his letters draw to a close the apostle would take the pen and write a few words himself. His handwriting, he says, ‘is the distinguishing mark in all my letters’ (2 Thess 3:17).” Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 241-242. See also Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; Phlm 19. It was also probably a mark of affection.

²⁷ The Greek word *anathema* (“accursed”) was routinely used in the Greek OT (the Septuagint, or LXX) to refer to temporal destruction and to cursing people and cities (e.g., Josh 6:17; 7:1-13ff.; 22:20; Judg 1:17; Zech 14:11). There are no clear examples of it being used in the LXX to refer to eternal judgment. *Anathema* occurs only six times in the NT. In three of those uses, Acts 23:14 and Gal 1:8, 9, the context shows that temporal judgment is in view. First Corinthians 12:3 is unclear, but quite probably refers to current alienation from God. Only in Rom 9:3 is eternal condemnation in view. The phrase “from Christ” following *anathema* strongly suggests that eternal condemnation is in view in Rom 9:3.

²⁸ Paul uses the Greek word *phileo* instead of *agapao* for “love.” Some scholars point out that he seems to be making a distinction between the two terms. But this is unlikely because Paul just used *philema* for “kiss in 16:20. Hence, it would seem that he is just playing off the noun form and *phileo* is the equivalent to *agapao*.

²⁹ This verse is the only place in the entire NT where the idea of loving the Lord occurs using the verb *phileo*. However, very similar expressions do occur and they clearly show that loving the Lord Jesus is not the same as believing in Him. In the Upper Room Discourse Jesus said to the eleven, all believers, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15; cf. John 21:15-17; Jas 4:4; and 1 John 2:15). The Lord wouldn’t have commanded His disciples to keep His commandments and thereby love Him if all believers automatically obey and love Him. But believers don’t always keep the Lord’s commandments, so they don’t always love Him! Loving Jesus Christ is not the same as believing in Him.

³⁰ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians Vol II*. Translated revised and edited by William P. Dickson and Frederick Crombie (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1879), 122.

³¹ Hays writes, “Love for the Lord is closely tied to love for all the members of the body of Christ. Those who love the Lord will necessarily seek to build up the community. Those who destroy the community are, virtually by definition, not loving the Lord. Thus, the curse of 16:22 is a thinly veiled threat against those Corinthians who have turned spirituality into a competitive sport, a way of aggrandizing themselves rather than adoring their Lord and maker.” Hays, *First Corinthians*, 292.

³² Contrast this with the promises to those who do love the Lord in Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; Eph 6:24. See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 773.

³³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 773. See 2 Thess 3:14: “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame” (cf. 1 Cor 5:9; Titus 3:10-11).

³⁴ See the translation of the NET, ESV, NRSV, and NKJV. The word *Maranatha* only appears here.

³⁵ Verse 23 substitutes Paul's favorite word for "grace" (*charis*) for the more conventional Greek "good-bye" (*erroso*).

³⁶ Fee makes this astute remark: "Grace is the beginning and the end of the Christian [*sic*] gospel; it is the single word that most fully expresses what God has done and will do for his people in Christ Jesus." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 839.

³⁷ Morris observes, "Notice the *all*. He has some doughty opponents at Corinth, and there were some whom he had had to rebuke sharply. But he bears no malice. He sends love to all of them, a love in Christ Jesus." Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 244. Thiselton "Paul wishes to assure his readers that whatever have been the stresses and strains within a vibrant, articulate, overly self-centered church, he never doubts the work of God's grace within them (cf. 1:4-9), and he holds them in his heart with genuine 'love.' ...He loves 'all' of them, not simply 'the weak' nor the most gifted, nor 'Paul's group' (1:12). It is as he sees them as One Body *en Christo Iesou* that he sends them his genuine 'love' to be 'with' them 'all'." Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1347.

³⁸ "Amen" means "So be it, I believe it."