

8.1 A Pastor's Plea to the Church Without Love

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[0 : 01] We're going to turn now to our Bibles though, and we were in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 this morning, and we're going to finish off that letter this evening in chapter 16. And Josh Johnson's been leading us very ably through these chapters recently, and we come to the end of this remarkable letter, a long letter, to a real church full of real issues that are still just as live in the real church today.

And so let's pay attention as we read 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Now says Paul, concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as they may prosper, so that there'll be no collecting when I come. When I arrive, I'll send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

If it seems advisable that I should also go, they will accompany me. I'll visit you after passing through Macedonia. If I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I'll stay with you or even spend the winter so that you may help me on my journey wherever I go.

I don't want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I'll stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me.

[1 : 35] And there are many adversaries. When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you. For he is doing the work of the Lord as I am.

So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace. And he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers. Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers.

But it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity. Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men.

Be strong. And let all that you do be done in love. And now I urge you, brothers. You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia.

And that they've devoted themselves to the service of the saints. Be subject to such as these. And to every fellow worker and laborer. I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaia.

[2 : 38] Because they've made up for your absence. For they refresh my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men. The churches of Asia send you greetings.

Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

My love be with you all. In Christ Jesus. Amen. Well, do turn for one final time in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians and to chapter 16.

What will it look like to see a church disempowered? What steps will reveal a church that has embraced the cross and its pattern for life?

[3 : 58] What will it look like for Corinth to repent of their supposed might? Very often, the answers to such questions are much more down to earth and ordinary than we might think or expect or want.

And chapter 16, in many ways, is the conclusion, the final paragraph that sums up all that's already been covered. Or perhaps we could say that this chapter is like any preacher rounding off their sermon, pulling the strands together and landing the plane.

Final implications, final examples of what it will look like to put flesh on all that has been taught. It can be tempting for us to gloss over these parts of the New Testament letters as if the varied

instructions have little to do with life today.

Random people who we've never heard of, we know little about, being commanded or instructed to move around. But Paul puts flesh in chapter 16 and all that he's been saying throughout the letter. And he brings to the Corinthians some of the plain responses that will flow from their repentance, from their heeding the word of the Lord. And it shouldn't surprise us, having seen what we've seen throughout this letter, that the responses all center around love.

[5 : 19] Love for other gospel works. Love for real gospel workers. Love for real gospel works.

Giving examples of his own love. And the love of other faithful workers who have followed after Paul. We've seen throughout this letter and all the familiar chapters, we've seen that when we read them with the Corinthian problem in mind, Paul's words take on even more significance.

They have an even more pointed meaning. So think of the great and familiar love chapter, chapter 13. That isn't just Paul wanting to write some beautiful poetry, although it is.

He's poking the Corinthians in particular where it hurts. Exposing to them that they are the opposite of love. And he's laying before them the example of the one who is truly loving himself, the Lord Jesus.

Seen most fully in the cross. And that same thing rings true in this chapter. These aren't random commands, random tag-ons to the letter. These are the implications that flow right from the cause of the Corinthian problem and which picture the cure to the Corinthian problem.

[6 : 57] And Paul has three final pleas to this church without love. What can they do to embrace their need to be disempowered? What will it look like to abound in the work of the Lord?

Well, firstly, verses 1 to 9, it will look like prioritizing love that costs. Prioritizing love that costs. Real investment with gospel workers and gospel churches that hurts you but helps them is cross-shaped love.

Paul here commands the Corinthians to sacrificially share in the giving and support that many other churches have taken up. And he then models in himself the desire that drives that kind of sacrifice. So verses 1 to 4, there is the edict. And then 5 to 9, we have Paul's example. So first, the edict. And that is that the Corinthians should participate in the collection for the saints along with the churches in Galatia, verse 1.

This would seem to be Paul speaking of the collection of money that there was for the Jerusalem church. It's mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. And notice again how Paul lines up the Corinthians with other churches.

[8 : 15] They aren't special. They aren't stand out. The Corinthians may think themselves special, but the reality is that they're bound together with every other true church. They don't get a free pass.

And what a helpful thing to do to emphasize that the Corinthians aren't just to learn to love one another, but actually to learn to love all the saints. They aren't the special church out on their own. And so their money, their support, oughtn't just to be for those ministers who carry the Corinthian seal of approval. They're to support churches in need.

To support churches that don't overflow with signs of already being rich, as the Corinthians do. And isn't it the case that we're seldom so interested in something or someone as when we are committed to them financially?

Our wallets reveal what we truly love. And so very often, we want to make sure that our investments are sound ones, set up to flourish. And so Paul says that the Corinthians are to join with other churches in contributing to gospel work outside of their parish.

[9 : 28] And he gives them three directions on how to give in godly and sensible ways. Now, the first, he says giving should be regular. Paul says support for gospel work, which is costly love for others, should be regular and planned.

Look at verse 2. He says, On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up. Now, I don't think we need to make overly simplistic applications from this, as if the proper and only right way to give is once per week instead of monthly or something else.

But it is right that we mark in our gathering together Sunday by Sunday our giving, as we do when we have the time for the offering. It's a right part of our worship.

But Paul's point here is that it's planned and regular. He says at the end of verse 2, It isn't to be done as he arrives. It's not an opportunity to put on a shoe.

Oh, the apostle Paul's appeared as an apostle in town. Let me get my wallet out so he can see just how sacrificial I am. But it's also to be ready when Paul arrives, so that the need can actually be met on time.

[10:44] It can be swiftly passed on to the church that needs it. And notice that he says the giving is every week. Not some of the time, not when you get around to it, not when you remember to.

But regular, ongoing, committed, and intentional. So every week, and he also says, Each of you. Not some people doing the heavy lifting, and others not involved. The regular and planned nature of giving is also seen in Paul saying to set it aside, to store it up.

Giving isn't to be, Well, let's just see what's left over, and toss that in a basket. It's to be regular and planned.

So the first thing that marks costly love, that supports gospel work, and gospel churches, is to have thoughtful, considered, regular giving. But he says, secondly, that giving should be according to your riches.

[11:43] After all, all that we have, has been given to us by God. It is at the Lord's hand that we have a little, or a lot. And our prospering, enables us to invest in that, which is worth investing in.

So Paul says again, verse two, Each should give, as he prospers. Giving isn't a tax, so that hitting a certain threshold of income, means giving more.

Giving is recognizing, that all that we have, comes from the Lord's hand. That he's given to us bountifully. That we've received everything we need.

And it recognizes, that we've been given, every spiritual blessing in Christ on top. Of course, we cannot give, what we do not have. In our church, we recognize that, in our voice of membership.

We commit together, in our membership, to give a fitting proportion, of our time, and our talents, and our money. And at God's hand, we all prosper in different ways, so our giving will be different in that.

[12:47] But we have all received grace, upon grace. More grace, even than the Old Testament, believers who tithed. So how much more, out of our prospering, ought we to display, costly love, to the Lord, and to his people here, and further afield.

And it is costly, isn't it? In a world, that lives beyond its means, to forego the trappings, of this world, that all our colleagues, and friends, splash out on all the time.

It's costly to do that, in order to lovingly, enable the gospel, to be proclaimed, more effectively, and fruitfully, in Cyprus, in Zambia, or in Pakistan, where various, of our mission partners, do that, or in Govan Hill, or the city center, or here in Kelvin Grove.

But that same cost, that we feel, and we gave until it hurts, is no different, than what Paul was encouraging, the Corinthians to do. Remember back in chapter 7, Paul talked about, a present distress, in Corinth.

That may well have been, some kind of famine, or such a thing. Costly love, is modeled, on emptying oneself, as the Lord Jesus did. And it's possible, because this life, is a seed to be planted, invested in that, which will last.

[14:09] So our giving, is to be regular. Giving is to be, according to your riches. And Paul says, thirdly, giving should have, a relational focus. It's prudent, and wise, that giving is bound up, with people who are known, where a relationship, of mutual interest exists.

Paul says, verse 3, that he will send, those entrusted, by the Corinthians, to take the gift, to Jerusalem. Verse 4, Paul may go to, but certainly, some of the Corinthians, are to accompany the gift.

Paul's concern, all the way through, is that the Corinthians, don't see themselves, as special. They aren't, the special church. And so it was vital, that they were, engrossed in ministry, outside of their own.

Interested, in gospel work, elsewhere, to broaden their perspective. And it was good, and right then, that their gift, served to join them, more tangibly, with other churches, and other believers.

Their costly love, would produce, ongoing fruit, for themselves, as well as, for the recipients. We've seen, seen that in a real way, in our church. Having, a number of years ago, raised significant sums, for a building project, we also gave away, a tithe, to a project, a building project in India.

[15:30] And solidified, and fostered, our relationship with them. And despite us, losing the building, that we invested in, we still enjoy, the encouragements, of those partners, and all of their ministry, and their ongoing work.

Wasn't that the case, just this Wednesday past, at the prayer meeting? When we had an update, about that ministry, particularly the ministry, that happens in that building, that we helped, helped to pay for. Isn't that a helpful thing, that reminds us, that we're not, the only church in time.

Sacrificially giving, to gospel work, and taking an interest in it, is a real means, of guarding against, the Corinthian style of pride. It's a tangible display, of cross-shaped love.

Well that was Paul's edict, to give in costly love, to give financially, to these other gospel works. But he also follows, the edict up, with his own example, in verses five to nine.

Notice these are all, verses about Paul. And they conclude, with some striking words. He says he intends, to see the Corinthians, he wants to visit them, to invest in them.

[16:41] But also hopes, that they may help him, on his journey, verses five and six. Verse seven, he wants meaningful time, with them. And then look at, verses eight and nine. Whilst he would like, to see them, whilst he would like, to renew relationship, whilst he hopes, it might be of some, mutual benefit, that isn't to be, not just yet.

Look at what he says, he's going to stay, in Ephesus, until Pentecost. Why? Because a wide door, for effective work, has opened to him. So he doesn't do, what he might, most like to do.

Instead he commits, to doing that, which will be of most, help for the kingdom. He says there is, much opportunity. But notice verse nine. There are many, adversaries. Now Paul models, a genuine, cross ship ministry, again and again.

And we see it, once again, in chapter 16. Back to verse eight. He's staying in Ephesus. Remember he's already, talked about Ephesus, hasn't he?

Back in chapter 15. Ephesus, is the place, where he's been playing out, his dying everyday ministry. It's the place, where he's been wrestling, with beasts.

[18:02] And what's his conclusion? He has an out, he could come to Corinth, as a church, in need of great help, he could go there, and help them. They might receive him, they might repent, they might encourage him, and send him on his way well.

But he doesn't take the out. His commitment, is so thoroughly shaped, by the resurrection to come, that he's focused, on abounding, in effective work.

Support, for faithful gospel workers, is costly. It ought to be costly. Not just costing, our wallets, but also costly, to our place, in this world.

But adversaries, are not the sign, that Paul should move on. Adversaries, are not the sign, that we're making a mess of it.

Adversaries, are not the sign, that a church, is getting it wrong. The truth is, we can be as winsome, as possible. We can be winsome, all the time, in all of our interactions, in everything.

[19:04] And still, where there is, effective gospel work, where a wide door, presents itself, and many are being, confronted with, and comforted by the truth, then we can be sure, that adversaries, will follow.

Disassociating, with gospel workers, because they've provoked adversaries, is a dangerous game. Adversaries, are the cost, of faithfulness, in this world. And in the years to come, as Christian morality, and Christian ethics, become ever more heinous, to the world, the cost we may need to bear, could be being associated, publicly, faithfully, with those who end up in prison.

What if our prayer news, at our prayer meeting, ends up being the evidence, used to sentence us in court, because you associate, with these people.

Paul puts flesh, on his teaching, for the Corinthians, and it isn't glitzy. He models, and mandates, that the Corinthians, prioritize costly love, for faithful Christians, and faithful churches.

And he goes on, to say secondly, praise pastors, whose love is constant, verses 10 to 18. Praise pastors, whose love is constant.

[20:23] There is no better pastor for you, than the one who, through all kinds of ingratitude, and difficulty, keeps on lovingly, and robustly, standing on the truth, even if they're not the pastor you want.

Paul focuses on three different people, in these verses. Timothy, the pastor they despise. Apollos, the pastor they desire. And Stephanas, the pastor they've been dealt.

So first, Timothy, the pastor they desire, in verses 10 and 11. We've seen, throughout this letter, that Paul's relationship, with the Corinthians, is pretty rocky. But he is ever the pastor to them, even though they don't reciprocate.

And back in chapter 4, when Paul was urging them, to embrace his pattern of ministry, he says, he's going to send Timothy to them. He tells them, that they're a church, with many guides in Christ, but not many fathers.

And that was Paul's way, of saying to them, that you're not my true children. If you keep going this way, you're not my true children. You're not following me, as I follow Jesus.

[21 : 41] And so Paul says, he's going to send Timothy, to remind the Corinthians, of Paul's ways in Christ, as they're taught, in all the churches. And then the kicker, for the Corinthians.

Timothy, is a true child of mine. Timothy was Paul's protege. He was a dying, everyday kind of minister. And Paul reminds us, of this again here, in verse 11.

Timothy is someone, who is doing the work, of the Lord. Timothy is someone, who is abounding, in the work of the Lord, that is laboring, that's not in vain.

It's the exact same word, used of Timothy, that Paul concludes, chapter 15 with, work. Work that's not in vain. But look at what Paul, has to say to the Corinthians, verse 10.

Put Timothy at ease. verse 11. Don't despise him. Here is a pastor, that is everything, that they hate.

[22 : 46] One who's just like Paul. And yet, he's coming to them. He's going to come, and deal with them. He's going to come, and pastor to them.

He's going to come, and die for them. So Paul says, welcome him, help him, send him on his way, well, that he might come to me. The question has to be asked, because it's a key question, a key feature, of the New Testament.

When there's a pastor, we don't like, why is it that we don't? A lot of the New Testament, is taken up, with distinguishing, between false teachers, and true teachers.

And Paul says, welcome Timothy. Welcome the pastor, pastor you despise, because despite appearances, he is a true teacher, after me, after Jesus.

A pastor who takes, all kinds of flack, in order to lead, and build up in the faith, those under his care, is a pastor to praise. Well, that was Timothy, but Paul also talks about Apollos, verse 12.

[23 : 57] And Apollos, remember, is the pastor that they desire. Again, earlier in the letter, in chapter 1, and chapter 3, there are the various tribes, that formed around personalities, the, the I follow Apollos mob.

And a key word, that Paul used, throughout that section, was the words, eloquent. Paul was intentionally, weak before them, he sought to win them, to Christ, by preaching, and patterning the cross.

And Paul warned, that great, and wise, sounding eloquence, might empty the cross, of its power.

And Apollos, in Acts, well, what's the word used, to describe him?

He was an eloquent man. And it seems, that in chapter 3, Paul narrows in, on the distinction, drawn between himself, and Apollos, by the Corinthians. There is a way, to minister, to preach, that can say, all the right things, but can, but that can, unhelpfully, sideline the cross, and overshadow the gospel.

Where people, are not captivated, by the life, that is offered, through the gospel, but instead, are captivated, by the method, the medium, the messenger. And so it seems, that throughout Corinth, Apollos, is the one they love.

[25 : 17] He played up, whether knowingly, or not, the very characteristics, the Corinthians loved. Well notice, what Paul says here, about the pastor, they desired.

Paul actually tried, to get Apollos, to visit them. What unbelievable, humility from Paul. He's in a fight, with Corinth, so that they, will heed his ministry, so that they, will accept him, as a pastor to them.

And look what he's, prepared to do, verse 12. I strongly, urged Apollos, to come to you. Paul didn't try, and keep Apollos away. He didn't play, popularity with them.

He didn't send them, a whole raft of preachers, who were dreadfully boring, who would make Paul, seem somewhat more, to their liking. He didn't tee up, someone so awful, that it would send them, running to Paul's arms.

No. Paul's concern, his love, is for the Corinthians. And so even if it overshadows, and outstrips Paul once again, Paul says, Apollos, please go.

[26 : 21] If only you might help, these dear Corinthian brothers. But as it is, Apollos isn't going to come. Perhaps, Apollos is now aware, of the unhelpful impact, his charisma and eloquence, had on

them.

So he's not going to come. Well, not yet anyway. So we've seen, the pastor they despise, the pastor they desire, and then Stephanas, the pastor they've been dealt, verses 15 to 18.

Paul wants the Corinthians, to heed, to follow, to appreciate, the pastor, who God has placed, in their midst. Stephanas is the main name here, although you can see, there are a few others, along with Stephanas.

And Stephanas also got a mention, in chapter one. He's one of the few people, Paul remembered, baptizing. And it's clear, that he was from this church. He was, in some way, a native.

He was one of them. In fact, Paul says, Stephanas, was the first convert, in Achaia, which was the region, of which Corinth, was the capital.

[27 : 31] And Stephanas, and his household, were the first fruits, of the work, inspired by the first fruits, of resurrection. And look, what Stephanas, was given to, verse 15.

He was devoted, to the service, of the saints. Verse 16, he was a fellow, worker, and a laborer.

Perhaps, not a big name, like Apollos, but the one, they'd been given.

One, who faithfully, was beavering away, ministering amongst them. And Stephanas, and his colleagues, are very much, patterned after Paul. They visited him, sharing fellowship, and encouragement, with him.

But also, the words used, to describe Stephanas, and his colleagues, are all joined up, with Paul's plea, at the end of chapter 15. These were pastors, who knew the power, of the resurrection, and were given, in this life, to hard work, to labor, to serving, to cross bearing, for they knew, that there was better, to come.

I think, by the time, we've got to chapter 16, of first Corinthians, that we can see, that pastoring, Christchurch Corinth, was perhaps, not the most, straightforward, of appointments. This was a church, riddled, with all kinds, of behaviors, that stemmed, from their superiority.

[28 : 52] And so, how challenging, it must have been, for Stephanas, to persevere, when perhaps, the church longed, for a different pastor. They loved the celebrity ones, they want one of them. One more to their liking, their longing.

How difficult, it must have been, to pastor a church, where, no doubt, all and sundry, thought they knew, better than Stephanas. And yet, still, Stephanas is there, pastoring this church, displaying, what must have been, the most patient, and constant of loves.

Laying himself down, again, and again, and again. And so, look at what Paul says, verse 16, be subject, to such as these.

Verse 18, if you're looking, to celebrate, and appreciate pastors, then recognize, such as these.

Those who labor, and toil for your good, those who go to war, week after week, for you from the pulpit, those who don't give up, those who take all the flack, recognize them.

Now, at the heart, of this section, with all these pastors, are verses 13 and 14. And they act like, the hinge, the crux, of all that Paul is saying, about different pastors.

[30 : 17] The characteristics, that mark them out. He says, to praise those, whose love is constant. Verse 14, let all that you do, be done in love.

And that love, is not a feeble, wishy-washy thing. It's manly. Verse 13, the love that a good pastor displays, is manly, strong, firm, watchful.

Bearing the cross, is not being a doormat. Dealing with a church like Corinth, required serious strength. Paul couldn't be a shrinking violet, in the face of a problem like Corinth.

His words throughout, have been strong and piercing, firm, but all the while loving. Because the truth, and the truth, that we need to hear, are always loving.

We've gotten so mixed up, as a society, haven't we? With all the talk of, love is love. What people really mean, is that, to love people means, not upsetting them. Not challenging them.

[31 : 24] Allowing them to do, what they think best, even if it will be ruinous. Well, here, love goes hand in hand, with being firm in the faith. Cross-sheet love, is man-sized.

It's not for infants. Love requires real strength. It requires a watchful eye, and a watchful mind. So Paul says, praise those pastors, who are driven in love, to see, where the world, and the gospel clash.

And he will keep, standing on the truth. Keep bringing it before you. Keep challenging, and lifting your eyes, to see that, which is truly glorious, and lasting. Recognize Stephanas, and recognize, and honor pastors, after him.

Praise those pastors, who are prepared, to embrace, and to use their, God-given manliness, for the building up, of a church. Praise, and recognize, and be subject, to those pastors, who are strong, in love, for the sake, of those in their care.

Paul's final plea, to the Corinthians, is not rocket science. He said, to prioritize, costly love, to support, other gospel works. He says, let your Christian love, take hold of your wallet.

[32 : 45] And he says, look out for those pastors, who genuinely love, and love consistently, and love constantly. Don't be subject, to any articular, but to one, whose love, makes them strong, on your behalf.

The tonic, for a church, grouped by pride, is to support, genuine cross-ship ministry, with their pounds, and with their praise. And he says, finally, practice love, that draws you close, verses 19 to 23.

Practice love, that draws you close. It is, incongruous, for a church, to be divided, within itself. It's incongruous, for coldness, and distance, to fester, in a church.

Particularly, over some sense, of superiority. Look at verse 20. I'm sure, we've all given, at least a hint, of a thought, to the Bible's, encouraging us, to greet one another, with a holy kiss.

Even if that soul thought, is a sigh of relief, that we don't take that literally, and we do that, in culturally sensitive, and appropriate ways here. Maybe many of us, have a sigh of relief, knowing that, if Paul was writing this church, to the Britons, he would have said, surely, that we should, greet one another, with the right hand of fellowship.

[34 : 10] Or if it was the Scottish Presbyterians, perhaps just a simple nod of the head. But I think we somewhat miss, just exactly, what Paul is saying here, when we take this, as a verse, to kind of explain away, or to reinterpret, for our setting.

Is it a handshake, or a hug? A smile, or a smooch? In many ways, this little verse, gets to the heart, of the solution, to the Corinthian problem. Notice even, what's said, all around verse 20.

And then let's read it, bearing in mind, the Corinthian problem. And we'll see, how biting Paul's words are. Verse 19, the churches of Asia, send you greetings.

All the Asian churches, greet you. Aquila and Prissa, they greet you, along with the church, that meet in their house. And they are sending you, very, very hearty greetings.

If all the Asian churches, send greetings, well this one in particular, they send the warmest, of greetings to you. Indeed, verse 20, all the brothers, greet you. All the churches, that Paul knows, all the churches, that have come to claim, Jesus is our Lord.

[35 : 19] All who share, in every blessing, in Christ, greet you. You can feel the warmth. It's sizable, significant. And then Paul's point. Greet, one another, with a holy kiss.

You can almost picture, the awkwardness, can't you? Oh, isn't that lovely, those Asians, how sweet, they're greeting us. And well, how fitting that Prissa and Aquila, their house, of course, they would send us warm greetings.

We're Christchurch Corinth, after all. And all the brothers, oh, just wonderful, it's lovely. And then the awkward silence, greets one another.

This is where the theme, that's present throughout the letter, of all the churches, being of a kind, wind comes to a head. Paul links all true churches together, in this letter, to expose Corinth as being an outlier, but not an outlier in the way that they think.

To be out of step with the true churches isn't an elevation, it's an expose. And here again, it's seen.

[36 : 29] All the churches greet you, all the churches have warmth and affection for you, all the churches display love for you. So love one another. But you don't, do you?

Paul is saying, all the churches greet you, so greet one another. Own your true Christian identity together. Don't see one another as foes, to exceed and to outdo.

No, see one another as family, to encourage and to honor. Paul wants them to greet one another, to actually engage in fellowship, that makes their distance jarring.

He's saying, don't let difference and pride breed division. Don't encourage rifts with your family, so that you keep at a distance. Don't be at odds with one another, so that you sit at opposite ends of the building, or away as far as you can in the balcony.

Isn't that the sort of thing, that you get with warring siblings? You get children, to resolve their issues with one another.

[37 : 35] They've been fighting and yelling at each other, and you can see the venom, and then the worst of all things, the parents make them make up. Apologize, and then the real kicker, kiss and

make up.

It's quite hard to keep the animosity going, isn't it? You're a brother and sister, you love each other, get over the petty feud. Kiss and make up. Practice love that draws you close.

And then Paul, once again, shows himself as the example. Verse 21, he gives Sosthenes, his scribe, a break, and he moves towards the Corinthians with another act of love, another act of affection.

I write this with my own hand. I want you to see the depth of feeling in all of this. Now, my wife is pruned to adding some flourishes to an envelope when she's sending a card.

Maybe some hearts drawn on, but almost certainly the abbreviation, Swalk. That's what Paul's doing here. Brothers, I love you.

[38 : 42] I'm sealing this letter with a loving kiss. But you really must love the Lord by loving one another. And that's how he closes.

Verse 22, if you don't, if you feel when these final pleas, if your love is still found wanting, if you'd prefer the distance, if you prefer the division and the pride, if you really would prefer the world and its standards and its glory, then you have no love for the Lord.

And you're accursed. You can be the church that's separated from all the others, but not as you'd like.

You can be the accursed church. Well, Paul finishes then by saying, this world is not the end. Verse 22, our Lord come. This life is not the main event.

And so he draws their minds to this truth that Jesus will come back. Corinthians, remember, this life is not the main event. Come Lord. He's yet to come.

[39 : 55] But as you wait, get on with the love. And then his last two verses. Until then, there is grace. There is great grace.

If you listen to these things, there's great grace for you, Corinth. But there is grace. And flowing out of a heart touched by grace is love. They go together, don't they?

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Love and grace go together. And then the message of Corinthians is that the cross is love embodied.

Those who knew the power of the cross having received grace, well, they pick up their cross and in love they serve and build up their brothers.

So what does it look like for a church to be disempowered? It looks like a church captivated by the cross, its message, and its manner.

[40 : 59] It looks like a church given wholly to one another in love. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are humbled and amazed at all that the Lord Jesus has done.

And we ask you yet for more grace. Grace that would help us as a church to model in our fellowship real love.

And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.