

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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1 CORINTHIANS 15-16

I want to talk to you tonight about *the greatest day of your life...* I'm not talking about your *wedding day...* or your *graduation...* or your *retirement date...* or *the day after the election when the campaign calls finally end...* or *the day you make your last mortgage payment...* or *the day your probation ends...* or *the day the Braves finally win a World Series...* No! I'm talking about **the greatest day of your life!** The day Jesus snatches away His Church. If you follow Jesus that'll be your very best day! 1 Thessalonians 4 tells us on that day the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout - the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God will sound - the spirits of those who died in Christ will come with the Lord in the clouds. Their bodies will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits. Then we who are alive at the time, will be transformed – we'll be beamed up to heaven – Jesus will snatch us up to live forever with our Lord. *It'll be a good day, alright!* This is the day Paul has in view in 1 Corinthians 15...

Verse 1, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you." Notice, **saving faith is standing faith.** It's not enough to *simply believe* you must *cling to* and *continue in* your faith. Paul says it clearly, *"you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you..."*

It reminds me of the Monday Night Football Game in 2008 when DeSean Jackson of the Eagles slipped behind the defense to catch a 61 yard bomb from Donovan McNabb. He glided into the end zone, and did his touchdown dance. *There was only one problem...* Jackson accidentally tossed the ball down on the one yard line. The Cowboys recovered and negated the score. It just goes to prove you've got to finish the drill. You can't score without the ball. And likewise with salvation - *you've got to cross the goal line with your faith in tact.* It's not enough to have faith, if you don't finish with faith. People ask me, "Do you believe in eternal security?" And my answer is, "Absolutely, as long as you're trusting in Jesus you're eternally secure." Salvation has nothing to do with works – what I do or don't do. It's all about faith, but a bonafide faith perseveres and endures. Paul says, *"hold fast that word which I preached to you..."* Don't fumble away your faith!

Verse 3 "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received..." The Gospel Paul preached wasn't his own invention. He delivered what he received. He was just the messenger. And here he lays out the Gospel... "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..." Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement all describe in detail the death of the Savior. The whole Levitical system foreshadowed the cross.

"And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..." Several OT passages predict Jesus' resurrection. One of the clearest is Psalm 16:10. It's a messianic prophecy. "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." But where does the OT state that Jesus will rise *"the third day?"* You've got to delve a bit deeper. It's mentioned metaphorically three times... **First is Jonah.** As a type of Christ he was three days and three nights in the

belly of a fish... **Second is the feast of first fruits.** It occurred three days after Passover. Likewise, Jesus was the first person resurrected – three days after His death on Passover. **Third, three days elapsed from the time Abraham committed to sacrifice his son until God delivered Isaac from death on top of Mount Moriah.** Metaphorically, Isaac rose the third day.

Paul's is pointing out that Scripture predicted Messiah would rise from the dead on the third day... And what Scripture predicted, history affirmed. In the next few verses, Paul mentions numerous eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Verse 5, **"And that He was seen by Cephas (or Peter), then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep."** Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians around 57 AD. That means it had been 25 years since Jesus' resurrection. Paul is noting that many of the eyewitnesses were still alive and kicking. If the Corinthians doubted his Gospel all they had to do was trace it down - check it out for themselves. God based the Good News that saves us on objective, historically verifiable events. Jesus stepped into the real world. He occupies a point on the timeline. Other religions are tied to metaphysical speculation and vague promises, but Christianity is built on evidence. The enemies of the Gospel could've shot Christianity down before it got off the ground. All they had to do was present the body of Jesus. *They didn't, because He was alive!*

Verse 7, **"After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."** Years after He had ascended to heaven, the risen Christ made a special post-resurrection appearance to Paul on the Road to Damascus. I believe Paul was one of the twelve apostles. He just joined the band a little late. **Pete Best** was the Beatles original drummer. But when you think of the Beatles it isn't, **"John, Paul, George, and Pete."** It's **Ringo!** Everybody considers Ringo Star the fourth Beatle. Likewise, Paul was one of the 12 apostles - *he just got to the party a little late!* He was **"born out of due time."**

And Paul talks about his apostleship. **"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."** Paul was a persecutor turned preacher and apostle. It's interesting, he wrote 1 Corinthians in 57 AD, and called himself **"the least of the apostles."** He wrote Ephesians three years later, in 60 AD, and called himself **"the least of all the saints."** When he wrote 1 Timothy five years after Ephesians, 65 AD, he called himself **"the chief of sinners."** The longer Paul walked with Jesus the lower the estimation he had of himself. This should be true of us, the more we hang with God - the more conscious we are of His glory - the smaller we'll become in our own eyes.

Verse 10 is one of my favorite verses. **"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."** Paul was the poster child for God's grace! He went from Christianity's *chief opponent* to its *main proponent!* He was gripped by the grace of God. Paul received God's offer of free forgiveness, free favor, free blessing – then he spent the rest of His life finding ways to say thanks. **People today take pride in being a self-made man. Paul rejoiced that he was a grace-made man.** All that Paul accomplished he chalked up to grace! I'm hanging on a slender thread called **"grace,"** but the longer I do the more I learn it's stronger than a thousand ropes. **"Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."**

Verse 12, **"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen."** Greek philosophy and Jewish theology were at odds on the issue of resurrection and the afterlife. The Greeks taught that the body was the cage of the soul. Man's ultimate triumph is to free himself from

his fleshly prison. The Jews on the other hand, taught resurrection - man's ultimate triumph was not freedom *from the body*, but transformation *of the body*. Our victory isn't complete by merely *escaping the flesh*, but there needs to be a *reshaping of the flesh*. The Jews believed God's goal was the elimination of sin's effects. God would raise our bodies uncorrupted by sin. The Corinthians were Christians - they believed in Jesus' resurrection - but they held onto a Greek concept of the afterlife. Paul sets them straight... They're contradicting themselves. If they don't believe in the resurrection of the body, how can they embrace the resurrection of the body of Jesus?

Verse 14, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." Paul understood without the resurrection of Jesus Christianity is a house of cards - *it all falls apart*. If Jesus isn't the Lord of life He's just another dead guy - like Buddha, and Mohammed, and Moses. "Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up - in fact the dead do not rise." Paul is saying if you deny the bodily resurrection of the dead; then the Gospel of a risen Lord is a lie, and it's preachers liars.

"For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" Jesus had a human body, so to deny the resurrection of the body is to deny the resurrection of Jesus. And if we deny Jesus' resurrection there's no hope for any of us. We might as well trash our Bibles, sell off the church building, then go out and get drunk... *If life stops at the grave, then it's eat, drink, and be merry.*

And neither would there be any hope for our loved ones who have already died. Paul adds, "Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." If Jesus didn't rise from the dead you can forget about seeing your believing mom and dad, or spouse or friend. Paul sums it up, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." Paul is saying if there's nothing more to life than the here and now, then the sacrifices called on to live the Christian life just aren't worth it! If Jesus never rose from the dead, then "the last person with the most toys wins."

But that's not what life is about! Verse 20, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." The fact is Jesus has risen from the dead, and He dwells in the glory of His Father. His resurrection now paves the way for you and I to follow. The person who presents their body to Jesus a living sacrifice, will one day see Him transform that dedicated body. We'll be resurrected like Jesus.

Paul calls Jesus "the first fruits" of the resurrection. There was an OT feast known as "First Fruits." It occurred three days after Passover. The priest would bring a bundle of wheat before the Lord. The sheaf of wheat was the first of the spring crop. It represented the rest of the harvest - thus "the first fruits." When the priest waved it before the Lord He was saying there was more to come and it all belonged to God. This is why Paul compares Jesus to "the first fruits" of the harvest. Jesus was the first of many followers who's bodies will one day rise from the dead.

"For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." People who are born once share the destiny of their father, Adam - they die and rot. But people who are born again spiritually - in Christ - are destined to be like Jesus. Their body will live forever. But there's an order... Jesus was resurrected at His first coming in 32 AD. Our bodies will experience the same

metamorphosis when He returns.

Verse 24, "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." 1 Thessalonians 4 tells us we'll be resurrected at the rapture, but the mass exodus of the Church will be followed by seven years of what the Bible calls "Great Tribulation." During this time God's wrath will be poured on this wicked world. This climatic period of judgment ends when Jesus triumphs over all His enemies, and establishes His Kingdom on the earth. At His first coming, *salvation was on His mind*. At His second coming, *domination is on His mind*. Gentle Jesus will crush His enemies. He'll take kings and rulers by the scruff of the neck and drag them into submission!

In John 5:28-29 Jesus tells us there're actually two resurrections... "The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear (the Father's) voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." But these two resurrections occur at least a thousand years apart. Revelation 20:12 tells us after Jesus reigns over the earth a millennium of years, Hades will be emptied out. At that time the lost will also be resurrected - but not to life. Their bodies will be tossed into the lake of fire.

Verse 26, "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death." Revelation 20:14 concurs, "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." Man's archenemy, Death, will be no longer threaten those who believe. Next Paul quotes Psalm 8:6, "For '(Jesus) has put all things under His feet.'" That includes death!... Understand, the ultimate goal of God's eternal plan... *He intends for the whole universe to end up in submission to Jesus!*

In verse 27 Paul points out a technicality that ends up teaching us something about the unity of God. He says, "But when He says..." *Who was the author of Psalm 8?* In a sense it was David, but in a deeper sense it was the Spirit of God. Thus God "says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted." A son doesn't rule over His father, and Jesus isn't over the other members of the Trinity. Verse 28, "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." The Father exalts the Son; then in the end the Son will submit to the Father. The Godhead exists forever in an ordered equality.

Verse 29 is a puzzling passage, "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" Recall the context - Paul is trying to prove the resurrection of the dead. He brings up a pagan practice to make his point. The cults of Paul's day practiced what we would call "proxy baptisms." Cults today do the same. Mormons get baptized for deceased family members. Their religious observance supposedly conveys merits to the dead person. I'm sure Mitt Romney would like to pick up some proxy votes. Hear ye, hear ye, the NT never warrants such an idea! Not even here...

Notice carefully how Paul words his argument, "what will THEY do who are baptized for the dead?" and "why then are THEY baptized for the dead?" He doesn't say "us," he says, "they." "They" meaning the pagans. Proxy-baptism was never a Christian practice. It was an aberrant ritual performed by pagans... But the practice did indicated a belief in a physical resurrection. Why go to the trouble of being physically baptized for a friend if you didn't believe their physical body would one day be resurrected? Paul's point to the Corinthians is simply, "If even the heretical heathen can see the truth of the resurrection why can't Spirit-filled believers?"

Verse 30, "And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." Paul was persecuted on a daily basis for his belief in the resurrection. If it wasn't true, why was he killing himself trying to preach the risen Christ? He continues, "If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me?" Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus. He says he fought "*beasts*" for the sake of Christ. He's probably referring to evil men, but it's possible he was thrown to the lions a time or two.

And why in the world would he risk life and limb for a lie. If there is no resurrection then Paul was wasting his life suffering for a false doctrine. He says, "If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" Again, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead let's drop by the liquor store and pick up a pint of Jack Daniels. If all we have to look forward to is rotting in the grave, life is nothing but a cruel joke. Why sacrifice earthly pleasures for eternal rewards if there's no eternity? *If there's no forever, live for right now.*

Verse 33, "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." The reason some of the Corinthians had embraced false ideas is because they were hanging out with people who held false ideas. *Hang* with the wrong crowd and you get *hung!* Evil rubs off. Choose friends wisely! "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." You've heard the old saying, "Ignorance is bliss." Don't believe it! What you don't know can hurt you! Take for example the man from Bristol, England who dove headfirst off a local pier. He plunged 25 feet into the ocean - but what he didn't realize was the tide had gone out and the water was only eighteen inches deep. What he didn't know ended up having a tremendous *impact* on his life! Paul is saying we need to wake up, and give serious thought to what we believe. Some of us are ignorant of the Word of God that sits in our lap.

"But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Some of the Corinthians will ask about the mechanics of the resurrection. "Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies." Paul resorts to nature – to agriculture - to teach a little theology. And here's the first principle, *resurrection necessitates death*. Before a fruit sprouts a seed has to be buried. *Death always precedes resurrection*. "And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain - perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body." The new body comes only after the old body dies. A seed gives up the life that becomes the delicious crop. One form of life dies, and from it God resurrects a different form of life.

Verse 39, "All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds." God created different types of bodies because there're different environments. A bird needs *aerodynamics*. A fish needs *aquodynamics*. A body that's suitable to one ecosystem may not be adaptable to a another environment. The Creator fits all life with a body that's suitable for its surroundings.

"There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." Just as there are different earthly bodies there're also *earthly* and *heavenly* bodies. "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory." Each star has its own mass, and luminosity, and density – it's own characteristics... "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Remember, resurrection works off death. New life springs from old life, *but only when the old life ceases*. Death is a necessary evil. Bodies only change in character

after they die... Resurrection kicks in only after death. That's when a body goes *from corruptible to incorruptible... from shameful to glorious... from weak to strong... from natural to spiritual...*

I'll never forget the young man who gave his life to Jesus on his death bed. He was in terrible pain. He had cancer. I baptized him in his bed. I remember asking him, "Mike, is there anything I can do for you?" He said rather matter-of-factly, "No, unless you can get me another body." *Well, guess what?...* I can't, but I know someone who can! One day Mike will get his new body - a pain-free, cancer-free body. In fact, everyone who trusts in Jesus will one day receive a brand new body.

Verse 44, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a lifegiving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man (Adam) was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man (Jesus) is the Lord from heaven." Adam was earthy. Jesus is heavenly. Adam came first - then Jesus. This is God's order – *our current bod is from sod, but our future bod is from God.*

Hey, I believe every teenager needs to drive a beater before they graduate to a nice ride. They'll appreciate the newer model after driving the jalopy. And the same is true with us. We're in the jalopy at the moment. But Jesus is going to put us in a brand new model, fresh off the lot. One day we're going to get bodies with no dents – we'll have a new car smell!

During the weeks after His resurrection, Jesus displayed the capabilities of our future bodies. He took His heavenly body on a forty-day test drive. The risen Christ was unhindered by time and space. He appeared to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, then disappeared as they were breaking bread. When He visited the disciples he came through the door - yet He held out his hands for Thomas to touch. Jesus was still flesh and bone. He even ate fish with the disciples for breakfast. His resurrected body was the same body, but He had supernatural capabilities!

Here's how I imagine our glorified bodies... *Lock your keys in the car?* No biggie, you'll be able to transport yourself through the door panel... *But who'll need a car? Want to take a jaunt around the world?* You'll be able to travel at the speed of desire. We're talking Star Trek stuff in real life! We'll all receive a body that will be *out-of-this-world!*

Verse 48, "As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly." On earth we get earthy bodies - in heaven we're upgraded to a heavenly bod. "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." When man walked on the moon, NASA knew a human body could never survive on the lunar surface. Our body wasn't fit for lunar life. That's why NASA designed a life-support outfit suited for the moon. Likewise, these mortal bodies aren't suited to survive the awesome, physical presence of God. If we enter pure holiness wearing flesh and blood we'll fry like wax on the hood of a race car. When we enter God's throne room we'll have to shed our earth-suits, and suit up in a spiritual body.

But how will it happen? Verse 51, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..." We use to have a sign in the nursery that quoted, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..." He writes, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." You would think a transformation *from earthy to heavenly* would take hours – even for the Great Physician. But Jesus plans to give

me a new body - not in a blink - but in a twinkle. A twinkle is even faster than a blink!

"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Kathy likes to plant bulbs in the spring - ugly, twisted bulbs. *Who would think a gnarly bulb would sprout into a beautiful flower?* Yet this is what happens when Jesus returns for His church. You and I are ugly, gnarly bulbs, but we'll suddenly sprout into gorgeous flowers. The caterpillars, will turn into butterflies. One day we'll shed these cocoons and sprout wings. I love the inscription on the tombstone. It read, "budded on earth to bloom in heaven." That's the destiny of all believers.

Verse 53, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Bodies designed for time and space aren't capable of occupying eternity. We'll need bodies redesigned for heaven. "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." I love this truth. Our Lord Jesus won't be satisfied until He's reversed every trace of sin and its painful consequences.

"O Death, where is your sting?" Jesus is like the antiseptic my mom use to use on our cuts and scrapes. "Bactine" the slogan, "It takes the sting out." Death is the only pest that stings before it bites. The worse aspect of death is not that it *stops life*, but that it *spoils life*. Death effects us long before we die... It casts a cloud over the good times knowing that one day they'll end. The wealthy man doesn't feel quite as rich knowing he can't take it with him. Fame loses its luster in the face of death. There're no marques in the graveyard, just tombstones. Death is a robber. It steals the joys of life. Death terminates relationships - busts up homes and hearts - creates missed opportunities - causes regrets that are never resolved. *Death stings!*

Once a little boy was allergic to bee stings. He and his dad were driving in the car when he saw a bee swarming over the front dash. He panicked. He screamed for his father who was driving to do something. The dad reached up and caught it in his fist. But after a minute, he released the bee. Again the boy came unglued. *What was dad trying to do?* That's when his dad opened his hand, and showed his son the stinger stuck in his palm. The dad loved his son, and had allowed the bee to sting him so it would no longer be able to sting the boy. *And this is what Jesus has done for us!* He took the sting of death in His feet, hands, side. Jesus was separated from His Father so we could live forever with Him. He paid the penalty of our sin so we could be forgiven. *Once and for all, Jesus defeated death.* Today, death is still there, like the bee in the car, but Jesus made sure it can no longer take anything of real and lasting value from the child of God.

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" Paul taunts the grave! Hades can no longer hold us. Jesus has sprung the lock. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Solomon took one look at life "under the sun" – life in the here and now - and cried, "vanity, vanity, all is vanity." Paul would've agreed if it were not for the resurrection. Because Jesus lives we will live with Him. This means what we do in the here and now does matter. Our lives really do count for all eternity. *Your work and labor for the Lord is not in vain.* This is why Paul says, "be steadfast (never give up), immovable (never give in), always abounding (never give out) in the work of the Lord..." Never give up, never give in, never give out... what you do for Jesus matters!

Chapter 16, "Now concerning the collection for the saints..." Paul was taking an offering from the Gentile churches for first church in

Jerusalem. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had fallen on hard times. Judea had suffered a famine and it had left many people hungry and homeless. Paul felt like the Gentile Christians owed the original church in Jerusalem a debt of gratitude. In a sense, the Gentiles' spiritual heritage began in Jerusalem. He continues, "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week..." (That's when Christians met then, and now. We meet on Sundays - the day Jesus rose from the dead.) When the church gathers, "Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." Paul wants the Church to take care of this matter before his visit.

"And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem." This was wise. He wanted a representative of the people who gave the money to escort the money to its destination. Paul was very careful to be accountable for monies given to God.

"But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. 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." For Paul it was always "Deo Volente" or "God willing." Paul was the Church's greatest leader, but he never stopped being a follower of Jesus.

"But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. (or late spring) For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." Notice, *the adversaries* didn't stop Paul from pursuing *the opportunities*. I would imagine if Christians were less intimidated by our adversaries we would also find a lot more opportunities to make a difference for Jesus!

Verse 10, "Now 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." Timothy was Paul's trusted ally. "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." Recall Acts 18. Apollos was the Bible teacher who Aquila and Priscilla tutored on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some teachers stop being teachable after they start teaching. To Apollos' credit he was not one of them. He was humble. Here Apollos disagreed with Paul. *Why we're not told*, but Paul doesn't condemn him. Apparently, he chalked it up as a difference of opinion. And that happens sometimes, even among serious and sincere Christians.

Paul tells the Corinthians in verse 13, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love." What a challenge to us. Five "Bs" - *beware, be constant, be courageous, be bold, be loving...*

Verse 15, "I urge you, brethren you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia..." This family was Corinth's first converts. "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." Apparently, Stephanas was not only the first believer, he was also the pastor of the church. He and his family had founded the church. Remember earlier in Paul's letter he rebuked the Corinthians for rallying around celebrity pastors. Folks said, "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Cephas." Here Paul says forget about the superstar pastors – *support the local leadership...* The faithful pastor who labors in the trenches and is committed to the Church – not the slick guy with the novel approach who sweeps into town and impresses everyone before they get to know him.

Verse 17, "I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied." For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men." This was the trio who reported to Paul the problems in Corinth. Paul knows they could be branded tattle-tails, so he urges everyone to show them respect. "The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." Hey, Aquila and Priscilla are at it again. Everywhere you find them in Scripture there's a church meeting in their house. They opened both hearts and their home to the Lord. Prior to Ephesus Aquila and Priscilla lived in Corinth. It was there Paul met this consecrated couple. Now they send their greetings to their friends.

"All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss." And the point here is whether we greet each other with a kiss or with a handshake it should be warm and sincere – and most importantly, "holy."

Verse 21, "The salutation with my own hand - Paul's." Paul's custom was to dictate his letters, then at the end add his signature to authentic the letter. "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." Then Paul adds an Aramaic phrase, "Maranatha" or "O Lord, come!" Paul closes his letter to the Corinthians, verse 23, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."