

Christ Community Covenant Church
1st Corinthians and Paul: Final Thoughts
June 11, 2017

We are finishing up 1 Corinthians today. We're going to spend most of our time at the beginning and the end of the book, but hang on; we will be surfing all over the place.

1 Corinthians 16:10-18 ¹⁰ When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹ So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.
¹² 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.
¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.
¹⁵ Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— ¹⁶ be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. ¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, ¹⁸ for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people.

2 Timothy 4 ⁹ Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.
¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.
¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.
¹⁶ At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Beginning thoughts: Grace and Peace

The epistles of Paul begin with a salutation that always includes the words, “grace to you and peace” or “grace, mercy, and peace” as in the case of 1 and 2 Timothy. Paul’s salutations include the writer, the recipient, and the greeting proper, all of which follows the style of other letters of his time. Paul’s salutations add a new flavor, however, due to the meaning of the words “grace” and “peace” for believers in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

While “grace to you and peace” recall the normal Greek and Hebrew greetings. Paul basically coined a slight variation to connote the deepened Christian truth of grace.

Charis (“grace”) goes beyond the typical *chairein* (“greetings”) used by most of that culture. By doing this he placed the focus on the unmerited blessings given to believers in Christ. Through God’s marvelous grace sinners are delivered from their sins and brought into a saving relationship with a holy God by the work of God on their behalf completely free of charge. This grace does not cease with salvation from sin’s penalty, but continues on as the foundation of the believer’s life with God throughout all eternity. These blessings of grace Paul and his associates wish for their readers.

Charis: “that which God does for mankind through His Son, which mankind cannot earn, does not deserve, and will never merit.” ~ Charles Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*

Ephesians 1:3, 6 ⁶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places . . . ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Grace is summed up in the name, person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For many believers, the concept of grace goes little beyond the basic definition of “unmerited favor” or “the free gift of God.” But since grace is at the very heart, indeed, it is the very foundation and fountain of true Christianity; we should have a better grasp of this important word and its truth.

The ramifications of God’s grace to us in Christ vitally affect our lives on every hand. Throughout the New Testament the effects of God’s grace are emphasized. Everywhere we turn, we run into this word -104 references in the New Testament. In fact, the Lord Himself is described as the very epitome and manifestation of God’s grace.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,

Furthermore, the doctrine of God’s Grace in Christ is multi-faceted, a cut diamond of benefits. As a foundational doctrine of the Word it touches every area of truth or doctrine in one way or another. I think it could be said that every aspect of doctrine is related to grace. It is no wonder grace is an important word and one that Paul desires to be experienced by all. Jesus was not only truth incarnate but he was grace incarnate too . . .

John 1:14, 16 ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

Grace always brings benefits and one of these benefits is reflected in the word “peace” which the Apostle always associates with God’s grace.

“Peace” was a typical Jewish greeting. Shalom is a term filled with meaning but for the Christian, it carries a much deeper meaning than it did among the ancient Hebrews. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Shalom is Eiréné.

Eiréné: “to join,” a state of untroubled tranquility, a state without war or dividing factions or enmity, a state of harmony and well-being.

Eirene is a big word. It is peace of mind, it is international peace, and it is peace between relatives and friends. It is the peace you get when all your debts are paid and you still have money in the bank. But it is bigger than all that. Its biggest meaning in the context of Paul’s writings is to be at peace with God. To be able to sleep the sleep of a man or woman that enjoys a clean conscience - completely forgiven their iniquities past present and future . . .

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Middle thoughts: Our lives in Christ, uprightly lived, matter very much to God

Divisions in the church
Concerning Christian marriage and Christian relationships
Warning against idolatry/Freedom in Christ
Varieties of spiritual gifts/Unity in the midst of diversity
Love - The more excellent way
Paul's Gospel and the resurrection of Christ

Divisions in the church (Chapters 1, 3, 4, 8, 11)
Concerning Christian marriage and Christian relationships (Ch. 7)
Warning against idolatry/Freedom in Christ (Ch. 8)
Varieties of spiritual gifts/Unity in the midst of diversity (Ch. 12, 13, 14)
Love - The more excellent way (Ch. 13)
Paul's Gospel and the resurrection of Christ (Ch. 15)



Final thoughts: Where does the 'dash' direct you?

1 Cor. 16:13-14 ¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.

Some have called this the five-fold walk of the Christian faith:

I. Be Watchful

The word translated "watch" means "to be alert, and be vigilant." What we are on guard for is spiritual danger and the attacks of the enemy. It is the opposite of being spiritually indifferent, careless, or easily deceived. We are to think less of literally watching with our eyes, and more about watching with spiritual perception. The way we do that is with prayer. Jesus said that we should watch and pray; the two go together. This is an interesting paradox. We generally pray with our eyes closed, and yet that is one of the best ways to watch. Why? It is because in prayer we ask for spiritual awareness and attain a heightened spiritual awareness. And you can't be watchful and spiritually alert apart from a regular prayer life.

But what are we watching for? Paul doesn't define what to watch for but from Scripture we can glean some specific objects of our watchfulness. I see four things in the Christian life that can derail us:

1. Satan - 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" and the lies of Satan have access to most homes in America through television and other media.
2. Temptation - In the Gospel of Mark Jesus warned Peter to "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." That was the night that Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus knew that Peter would be severely tempted that night, and so He said, "Watch and pray." And when we see temptation, we should flee from it.
3. Trials – We usually watch out for troubles and trials, and try to avoid them. But sometimes they are unavoidable. Then we must watch out for trials turning into temptations to sin. When troubles and trials come to some people, they are shaken in their faith in the goodness of God and sometimes turn against the Lord. They quit coming to church. Watch out! Trials may do you more harm than in just the physical realm.
4. False Teaching - In 2 Pet. 2:1 Peter warned of "false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in destructive heresies...." Some of the Corinthians had fallen into doctrinal error, as chapter 15 indicates. They had allowed their previous pagan ideas and habits to come back into their lives and destroy their faithfulness to the Lord and their fellowship with each other.

II. Stand Fast

Paul also says in v.13, "Stand fast in the faith." This is an appeal to good doctrine. Too many Christians are lured away by false doctrine. Too many easily fall to temptation to an easy faith and a comfortable God. Paul says that they can avoid the problem of being spiritually immature and unstable through the ministry of pastors and teachers who teach the Word of God. Knowing the Word of God provides a solid foundation upon which to stand, and not be moved. Knowing the Word will help you recognize temptations and false doctrine. We spent a year learning the truths of 1 Corinthians because it is one of the great letters for practical doctrine in the entire Bible. I want you and this church to stand fast to the truth. And you can't do that if you don't learn that.

III. Be Brave

"Be brave" literally means, "Be men constantly!" (present tense). The word refers to having positive masculine qualities. That is why it is translated, "Be brave!" But I see it reading as; "Be like a man in contrast with being like a boy" - an appeal for maturity. Both apply. To be a strong Christian, you must have the maturity of a full-grown adult. Being a true Christian is not easy. It takes strength to take a stand for righteousness, and to resist the peer pressure of the world. In the spiritual battles of life, you must have courage. Paul is referring to the virtue of Christian maturity with its strong connotation of bravery and unflinching courage.

ILLS: John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, once said, "Give me 100 men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I will shake the world: I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; and such alone will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and build up the Kingdom of God on earth."

IV. Be Strong

Paul is not talking about physical strength, but spiritual strength. You need strength of character. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" - There is no excuse for weakness in the battle. This brings the idea of being resolute and persevering. This is the strength of a marathon runner – not a weight lifter.

Not only must we watch, stand fast, and be strong, courageous, and mature, but we must also:

V. Be Loving

Certainly the Corinthian congregation needed this admonition. They were divided and bickering with one another. Love was terribly lacking in their lives. So Paul wrote a whole chapter on the subject of love.

ILLS: An anthropologist once asked a Hopi why so many of his people's songs were about rain. The Hopi replied that it was because water is so scarce and then he asked, "Is that why so many of your songs are about love?"

Without love, watchfulness can deteriorate into a judgmental spirit. Without love these commands could make us militant and hardhearted. Love keeps our firmness from becoming hardness and our strength from becoming domineering. It keeps our maturity gentle and considerate. It keeps our right doctrine from becoming obstinate dogmatism and our right living from becoming smug self-righteousness.

Last week we talked about our plans to impact the Kingdom and our willingness to be interrupted for the Kingdom. What does your dash look like for you? Will you help move this church toward proven character, Godly behavior and reckless love. I'm going that way. I'd love for you to follow!