

Do Everything in Love!

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[0 : 0 0] now about the collection now about the collection for the lord's people do what i told the galatian churches to do on the first day of every week each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income saving it up so that when i come no collections will have to be made then when i arrive i will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to jerusalem if it seems advisable for me to also to go also they will accompany me after i go through macedonia i will come to you for i will be going through macedonia perhaps i will stay with you for a while or even spend the winter so that you can help me on my journey wherever i go for i do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit i hope to spend some time with you if the lord permits but i will stay on at a thesis until pentecost because a great door for effective work has opened to me and there are many who oppose me when timothy comes see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you for he is carrying on the work of the lord just as i am no one then should treat him with contempt send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me i'm expecting him along with his brothers now about our brother apollo i strongly urged him to go with you with the brothers sorry i strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers he was quite unwilling to go now but he will go when he has the opportunity be on your guard stand firm in the faith be courageous be strong do everything in love you know that the house of stephanes were the first converts in achia and they have devoted themselves to the service of the lord's people i urge you brothers and sisters to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it i was glad when stephanes fortunatus and achaeus arrived because they have supplied what was lacking from you for they refreshed my spirit and also yours such men deserve recognition the churches in the province of asia send you greetings achela and priscilla greet you warmly in the lord and so does the church that meets at their house all the brothers and sisters here send you greetings greet one another with a holy kiss i paul write this greeting in my own hand if anyone does not love the lord let that person be cursed come lord the grace of the lord jesus be with you my love to all of you in christ jesus amen thanks look for reading as i hobbled to the front if you keep your bibles open at page 1157 that would be really helpful i made the mistake of asking gordon here on the second row gordon saw on last monday how he used kettlebells and he said oh i come to my gym on friday i'll show you so i went to see gordon we did a workout and today i am broken so physically physically broken it's great to be in one corinthians remembering that one day we will get new bodies and um uh apparently it's for my good let's uh let's uh you can find an outline inside the notice sheet if you find that helpful let's ask for god's help as we turn to his word let's pray gracious and loving heavenly father we praise you that your ways are perfect and just and your word is a flawless word we ask that by the grace of the lord jesus you will build us up this morning in hope and in faith that we might be spurred on to labor prompted by love for we ask in jesus name amen well i don't know what your view of the christian life is um some of the christians in corinth seem to have bought into a kind of lord and lady grantham christianity if you know downton abbey they are the people who live upstairs not downstairs in downton abbey and back in chapter four it might just be worth flicking back to chapter four just for one verse that helpfully encapsulates some of the the thinking in corinth page 1146 chapter four verse eight paul with irony says in chapter four verse eight already you have all you want already you have become rich you have begun to reign and that without us how i wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you and in the first century if you were rich if you had everything you wanted and if you reigned if you were royal you didn't do work if you're familiar with jeeves and worcester the um the old stories by pg woodhouse bertie worcester was an upper class man he was an upstairs kind of man living off his auntie's regular allowance with no concept of what working life would be like and his butler jeeves has to kind of um with other butlers of other men like him kind of run the show so that people like

bertie worcester can just survive and the corinthians their expectations for christian living were a bit too much like bertie worcester especially in thinking about what we might sometimes distinguish in the christian life between the now and the not yet in the in the christian life there are some blessings from jesus when we become a christian that we can take hold of now before jesus return and some we live in hope for for the future and as we sort of change emphasis from the bible's emphasis there and draw things forward into the now um we might start thinking these are the days of triumph and the corinthians thought now are the glory days um they and they were seeking that glory in in worldly ways that became kind of self-seeking or self-centered and in some ways it can be very easy for us to drift into that kind of picture today with so many blessings coming to us from the moment you put your trust in jesus there are wonderful blessings but perhaps that can lead us to think let the good times roll now i'm living my best life now and the picture that paul has here in chapter 16 of being a christian is of being a laborer a worker we see it in paul's life as he speaks about his movements um but it's easy to think oh well i could never be like paul he was an apostle he was kind of unmatched although he does say earlier in the letter follow my example but this was a church that had deep affection for another leader who would come to visit them after paul apollo and if you look at verse 12 in chapter 16 he says now about our brother apollo i strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers he was quite unwilling to go now but he will go when he has the opportunity so apollo couldn't visit them in this season presumably because he is flat out in gospel work his foot's on the floor um as he as he works for the lord and then paul tells us about the example of the household of stephanus in verse 15 he says you know that the household of stephanus were the first converts in acai

and they have devoted themselves to the service of the lord's people i urge you brothers and sisters to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it so you see that language of work and labor so on my cycle into church each day um i go past a timber merchants and you see the men out there loading up trucks with timber um working hard early in the morning and then as you as i as a cycle ran onto great western road and they're building um a house there at the moment and some builders and this week they were up on the top of the roof at roof level bringing slates up up the scaffolding and working hard to get the the roof finished and here's the picture of the christian life you might think of migrant workers who come from eastern europe to scotland to work in the harvest fields in late summer that kind of picture of manual labor and for lots of british christianity i wonder if that picture is a little bit of a surprise maybe a bit less so here at saint silas in our church family but wouldn't lots of people think something like this about the spiritual dimension of life people might think my life is busy my life is stressful maybe we picture someone with a really demanding job and that that demands a lot of energy and drive during the week or um we could picture a mum with three children under five who is sleep deprived and frustrated and harassed and on a sunday these people walk into church and they think at last here is the chance to take a break my christian life is the time when i have a breather from the things that make me busy before i have to go back back out into the busyness of the rest of life and of course there is some helpful truth in in that picture if church is a place where we feel that we find support where we feel that we find encouragement where we're reminded of god's grace and feel that we are assured to go back out into the world where things are where we're serving jesus in all those places at the same time paul in this chapter is giving us snapshots of what it what a spiritually mature christian life looks like and the picture is of being a worker a hard worker so elon musk was in the news this week i don't know if you saw him front pages pictured at bletchley park meeting rishi sunak talking about ai and he said um ai will mean that humanity does not need to work again well for the christian even if ai means that in the next generation there is a radical change to the way that we work as humanity we we're all still called to be workers in one sense to be laborers for the lord and that work will continue until the day of christ so from the snapshots that paul gives us in this chapter what does it look like what does he mean by being a laborer in the lord our first point is labor for the lord displays courageous love and we see that from the heart of the chapter these verses um 13 and 14 where we have five quick fire commands have a look with me verse 13 be on your guard stand firm in the faith be courageous that's literally be manly though not here just a command to the men but rather for all all christians to display a virtue that traditionally is associated with masculinity of being brave so it's kind of be courageous be strong and that's that's true for that command is for for everyone in the church men women children so those first two commands are about they're an urgent charge for every christian in corinth hold on to the message that paul delivered to them the message about jesus and they need to be courageous and strong to be on

their guard and stand firm in that message for us today that means resisting every everything that might draw us away from the truth we've received just as they received it we receive it in the scriptures that's where we receive the apostolic message about jesus and it's sobering to think that paul ends this letter with that charge and the corinthians did not heed that warning so just a few years later he writes second corinthians to them and certainly a significant number in that church by then have have not stood firm in their faith they have moved away from paul's gospel to follow people that he calls super apostles and they've replaced him with other teachers with a distorted gospel message and the temptation would be for any of us today that as time goes on we hear a distorted gospel that kind of chimes better with our culture or just gives us a bit more what what our itching ears want to hear maybe a gospel that's all about the here and now and and not about the future or a gospel that kind of minimizes or takes out from the bible the bits that our culture finds most offensive well paul says be on your guard against that so that you stand firm in the faith be courageous be strong and then he picks up the final he picks up the language of love with the fifth charge do everything in love and we're not to think of that as just a footnote as though he's saying be courageous be strong kind of flex your muscles get ready for battle and by the way you must make sure that you do keep stay loving rather love has been a key theme in the whole letter and we need to be strong and courageous if we're going to be loving in the way that jesus calls us to be through this letter um we it's a key theme in the chapter um but we thought about it uh for a whole week really when we looked at chapter 13 of this letter which was this great um uh treatise from paul about love and we thought in that that week when we looked at chapter 13 about how in our culture when we're told to be loving um we we often find that language difficult especially when it's about loving people rather than stuff or activity because in our culture the word love has often been sexualized or sentimentalized but paul talks about love as a key christian virtue and he talked about the character of love that a loving character is patient and kind it doesn't envy or boast and envy or boast and it rejoices in the truth it always perseveres and hopes it never fails and we heard that heaven is a world of love because god is there so love is the thing that will last from the church and a church a community of god's people most displays that god is here among us when we love one another because we're showing that god's love is here among the people and in this chapter we see that theme of love ringing out as paul comes to the end of the letter do everything in love he says and there are two more references in the chapter to love we're just going to look at them both and the next one is perhaps the more challenging one verse 22 he says if anyone does not love the lord let that person be cursed well the idea of being cursed is about being under the judgment of god paul is saying here that you

could have a person who does lots of good things in their life they're respectable maybe they they are a campaigner for against racism or against human trafficking and they provide for other people they're generous lots of good things and yet if that person does not have love for the lord jesus they are under the curse of god they're under god's judgment and when jesus returns it will be apparent that they are under the judgment of god now how can paul make that claim well it's because it would be impossible to have saving faith in jesus without loving him paul reminded the corinthians in the first four chapters of this letter that when he was among them his ministry could be summed up in two words christ crucified he he resolved to know nothing else among them except christ crucified in other words none of us on our own can be right with god we've all fallen short of god's standards but paul said that for anyone who trusts in jesus and his death on the cross he becomes for us our righteousness our holiness and our redemption that is that he is the one man who's ever lived who didn't deserve to die he lived a righteous life and he went to the cross moved by love for us so that at the cross he could bear the curse of god that was due for our sin our the ways we fall short everything we've done wrong so that when we trust in him god looks on us as righteous as though we've lived jesus righteous life and so for anyone who believes that promise from god we love the lord jesus because we've seen his love for us demonstrated at the cross when he died for you and me so where will we see that love for the lord well paul says we'll see it in our love for god's people so he ends the whole letter with verse 24 paul says my love to all of you in christ jesus and this is a church that when you look at the issues they had were actually not particularly lovable but paul loves them not because of them being lovable because he loves the lord and he demonstrates that love by loving god's people and paul is saying in verse 14 do everything in love that for every christian this is what spiritual maturity looks like that it shows itself in courageous love so that's our first point labor for the lord displays courageous love what does that look like our second point labor for the lord involves generous self-giving in verses 1 to 11 paul

gives us examples of that and the first is in disciplined financial generosity so let's pick that up again in verse 1 he says now about the collection for the lord's people do what i told the galatian churches to do so this is not just for them it's standard practice for paul on the first day of every week each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income saving it up so that when i come no collections will have to be made so here then is is true spirituality found not so much in a one-off experience or in doing good deeds with a great fanfare so much as in the fruit of a disciplined down-to-earth regular habit of generously setting aside money in those days people were probably paid every week so an equivalent today for lots of us might be giving monthly in accordance with when we receive money and paul says the giving should be proportionate he says in verse 2 in keeping with your income and the giving here is

[20 : 18] strategic this was a collection and that paul took from churches as he traveled around and the churches he took the money from as they generously gave were churches where the majority of the converts to christianity there were from gentile backgrounds non-jewish and he was taking that money to judea where the churches were predominantly jewish background believers in the messiah and by doing that he was showing that in the gospel of jesus christ a new humanity is being formed that takes down the terrible divides across the world even divides between jew and gentile in the first century could be broken down when people come to christ and it was being shown by this gospel generosity as people gave money to help those in need back in judea so it's strategic giving towards adorning the gospel then our next example of generous self-giving is not about money it's about paul's own decisions about where he lives and when he will move and where he will go so let's pick things up in verse 5 he says after i go through macedonia i will come to you for i will be going through macedonia that's a a journey that's hundreds of miles he could have gone on a ship to corinth he's going to travel hundreds of miles through the interior so that he can visit lots of churches that he's planted and encourage believers there then look at verse 8 he says but i will stay on at ephesus until pentecost because a great door for effective work has opened to me and there are many who oppose me so paul is not comfortable in ephesus in the last chapter he talked about how he's fought wild beasts in ephesus and we don't know whether they were four-legged beasts or it was people being beastly probably it was opposition in the churches in acts 20 he warns the ephesian elders where he was in ephesus about false teachers who resist his gospel and says they're like savage wolves so it may be that he's referring to that but either way he's not having an easy time in ephesus here's a question then why doesn't paul just leave ephesus if there's a lot of opposition and go somewhere he's more welcome and the answer is the first half of that verse 9 a great door for effective work has opened to me and it's not unusual for those both sides of verse 9 to come together and you hear about faithful ministers and faithful ministry teams in churches and they're being turbulence people leaving divisions forming and you can think well what what's going wrong at that church sometimes it's that the the ministry team are being faithful and they're looking to establish a jesus-centered bible-based ministry in a place where that is being effective and people are being saved but other people are resisting it and there are many who oppose them in that context so paul is is demonstrating here that in that kind of environment he resolves to stay for the sake of the effective work that can be done giving galatian generosity traveling paul where he goes working for the lord involves generous sacrificial self-giving and that should be an encouragement to lots of us here if you're someone who feels aware of what it's cost you to be financially generous in the christian life and other people don't see that in your life the things that you have sacrificed to give money to support gospel work well and or we could think about someone else if you're here and becoming a

christian has meant living in a different place that you wouldn't have chosen to live people who've moved more locally to saint silas to help with the ministry here or have not moved away from glasgow and maybe you don't really like glasgow but you stayed in glasgow because you could see that there was ministry here to do and gospel work to help with or maybe you're someone who's who bears the scars from facing opposition when you've been part of a ministry team and people have opposed gospel work well paul says in any of these ways this is what being a gospel worker often looks like and so be encouraged that this is a healthy pattern of mature spiritual living and paul tells us one of the goals of that self-giving in our third point labor in the lord is devoted to others refreshment so we've heard about paul's work that he was effective in making disciples and growing disciples and then he tells us about these other people these other men in verse 17 i was glad when stephanus fortunatus and achaecus arrived because they have supplied what was lacking from you

for they refreshed my spirit and yours also such men deserve recognition so these men they are being commended by paul and he's saying recognize what they've done not because they were kind of we don't know that they were preachers or anything like that they they traveled from corinth on a dangerous costly journey to visit paul to refresh him to encourage him they probably took with them as well the questions that paul's been answering in his letter so in that sense they are trying to refresh the believers in corinth as well and then we see um uh people looking to refresh the corinthians in verse 19 so he says aquila and priscilla greet you warmly in the lord and so does the church that meets at their house all the brothers and sisters here send you greetings so this is what love looks like in the church there are people here who see a connection with one another in christ a warmth of relationship that they're committed to that involves serving for others refreshment for their upbuilding and paul wants the church to give recognition to people who are looking to refresh others in the christian life and help them to keep going so why would we be willing to bear the cost of all this to be generous givers of ourselves in relationship with others for their encouragement well in chapter 15 over the last three weeks we've been on lofty heights as paul urged us to see afresh christ is risen and in him we all have resurrection hope he brought us face to face again with the reality that jesus died he was buried he was raised he was seen by over 500 people alive again and crucially in chapter 15 paul said jesus is the first fruits of a great harvest when he appears in glory he will raise to life everyone who's died trusting him and he will give new glorious indestructible bodies to every christian who's been waiting for him this week's chapter is much more down to earth in the nitty-gritty of comings and goings that show examples of working for the lord but the bridge into that came in verse 58 at the end of the last chapter uh the the last verse where he said therefore my dear brothers and sisters stand firm let nothing move you always give yourself fully to and we asked last week what would we expect to see there having talked about the resurrection always give yourselves fully to the joy of the lord paul says always give yourselves fully to the work of the lord for you know that your labor in the lord is not in vain now we've been in this letter on and off for over a year now and we're coming to an end today and we called the series hope-filled holiness that is that our future hope drives us as the rescued people of god to live for god now and be distinctive and as we look back over the letter we could also add to that that when a church loses hope it loses love that's what we've seen in first corinthians it was a church where there was loveless disunity we saw in chapters one to four because they'd lost sight of what jesus has done for them and where they're heading it was a church of loveless immorality in chapters five and six not concerned with what they did with their bodies they were loveless in their use of their freedoms and their rights in chapters eight to ten and they had loveless church meetings in chapters 11 to 14 but in two words right at the very end of the letter paul reminds them of how we are to live now in light of our resurrection hope at the end of verse 22 he says a prayer come lord it's that hope that means it makes perfect sense to be gospel laborers now it makes sense because this is our spare life our airbnb life and indestructible sinless joyful life will follow and it makes sense because when we labor in the lord specifically when we're looking to witness to jesus we're giving others the opportunity to share that resurrection hope that defeats death and will take away its sting one day so three potential people hearing this sermon this morning just a word for each if you're here this morning and you're not a christian yet you're just looking in and you want to understand better why it is that your christian friend is willing to give their time to serve in their church well i hope you're seeing this morning that it's tied to them living for the future and the question to ask yourself is did jesus rise from the dead that's the crucial difference if you're here this morning and you've got a sense that yeah maybe your view of the christian life is a bit corinthian you feel as though maybe you've been looking for a kind of lord and lady grantham christian christianity well could you reflect on the examples that paul gives us here in chapter 16 of this is what the spiritually mature christian life looks like but what about if you're here this morning and you feel weary from serving jesus that could happen to any christian in a season in life if you've been aware of the busyness of preparing bible studies that you lead in a group or just meeting up with people to encourage them or giving up your friday nights for the youth ministry or catering for events or cooking to bring a meal round when someone has a baby or turning up on a sunday morning and you're showing jesus to our preschoolers through in the hall i hope you could feel encouraged by paul's words here he urges us to honor those who devote themselves to serving others in jesus name he reminds us that it makes perfect sense to be a worker when we have such wonderful future hope and he reminds us that we serve others out of love for the lord who first loved us if you think about the points that we've looked at this morning let's remember it's the lord jesus

who loved us with courageous love a love that didn't stop a love that endured the cross it's the lord jesus who loved us with generous self-giving love and he is devoted to our spiritual refreshment he saved us and he is ambitious for us that we will become more and more like him so that when he appears in glory he'll be able to present us without fault to be with him forever let's pray together heavenly father we thank you for our resurrection hope we thank you that you call us to a new purpose in life to labor for the lord jesus and we thank you for the warmth of relationship that we experience ourselves among your people may your spirit be at work in us impressing on us confidence that christ is risen and filling us with the love of jesus that we may be marked by generous self-giving for the good of others we ask in jesus name amen amen amen amen