

# True Love or Consequences: The 1 Corinthians 16:22 Anathema as Prescription

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## INTRODUCTION

Churches and their leaders today are seeking irreducible minimums for their church's health and growth. One church growth expert argues that a purpose-driven church is committed to tasks that Christ ordained for his church the first of which is to love the Lord with all your heart (Matt 22:37; 4:10; Ps 34:3).<sup>1</sup> It seems obvious that in light of the universality of the Great Commandment and the amplification of it by other NT writers, being driven by it in one's life and church ministry is critical to NT Christianity.

One of the most serious injunctions in the Bible concerning love for God is found in 1 Corinthians 16:22 where Paul says, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha." Yet the apparent abruptness and seemingly undue harshness of this anathematization raises important questions. Why does Paul bring this radical language into a letter that argues for unity? Can it have any benefit for the church today? If one does not truly love the Lord are there really such grave consequences? It is the contention of this paper that an understanding of the context of this injunction and the nature of this crime against the Lord and its consequences will provide significant implications for Christian discipleship and ministry today.

## CONTEXT

At first glance, Paul's utterance of this anathematization at this point in his letter does seem abrupt and out of place. It appears to be erroneously sandwiched between affectionate greetings and his gracious and loving benediction. Nevertheless, several things can be observed from the immediate context that can give us some amount of clarity as to why Paul put this significant injunction here. First, as Paul attempts to answer the Corinthians' questions starting in 7:1 with its "Now concerning . . .", his focus is on service to the community in love. He reminds them about their need to serve their spouses (7:3-5, 33), those with weak consciences (9:22; 10:24, 33), one another at the Lord's supper (11:33), one another with spiritual gifts (12:7, 24-26; 13:1-13; 14:1-5, 12, 17), others in the Lord's work (15:58), the Jerusalem church with their gift (16:1-4), and Timothy when he comes (16:10-11). He then exhorts them to "do everything in love" (16:14). The church may be facing many other issues but it appears that Paul wants the Corinthians not to lose their identity and purpose as a believing community.

Second, Paul presents models of devotion to this kind of service. He notes that Timothy "is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am" (16:10). Those of the household of Stephanas "have devoted themselves to the service of the saints" (16:15). More specifically, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus supplied the affection the Corinthians were unable to give Paul, possibly gave him the letter or questions from the Corinthians, and refreshed the spirits of Paul and the Corinthians (16:18). Men such as these, Paul exhorts, "deserve recognition." So again, he is stressing the identity and purpose of the church as exemplified by these individuals who were obviously close friends of Paul and the Corinthian church.

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<sup>1</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 102-3.

Third, in the final section of the letter, he acknowledges a warm family-like connection among the Christian community. He relays the “warm” greeting of Aquila and Priscilla (16:19). All the brothers send their greetings (16:20). Their own greeting practice should be of warmth and affection since he commands them to greet each other with a “holy kiss” (16:20). Paul himself culminates the greetings with two endearing statements, which would foster a sense of intimacy between him and the Corinthians (16:21, 24).

Fourth, there is a visitation theme in the last part of the letter. Paul has emphasized the visitation of various leaders to the Corinthian congregation. Paul himself plans to visit them after his time in Macedonia to receive the collection for the Jerusalem church (16:3-6). He also exhorts them on how to welcome Timothy should he visit (16:10-11) and has urged Apollos to visit them with “the brothers” (16:12). It is interesting to note that Paul not only emphasizes Christ’s coming kingdom at the trumpet blast in 15:51-52 (cf. 11:26 “until He comes”), but concludes his injunction of 16:22 with the future-oriented “Maranatha.” So with this theme Paul emphasizes the need for the church to be ready in light of these impending visits.

These four themes seem to serve as strands that tied to Paul’s words in 16:22, “If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha.” The identity and purpose of every believer in the Christian community as a whole is clearly found in loving service, not in other false standards of spirituality like misused tongues-speaking (1 Cor. 12-14), or special knowledge (1 Cor 2). These believers should be aware of the intimacy and affection that this essential service can create in their community. It is perhaps a direct result of these endearing themes that moves Paul to address those in 16:22 who are failing to participate in the most profound realities of Christian discipleship. Godet observes that Paul’s salutation in verse 21 (“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand”) “implicitly contained a benediction; and here the apostle feels himself suddenly arrested. Can he really bless all the readers of his letter? Are there not some among them whom he is rather obliged to curse?”<sup>2</sup>

## EXAMINATION OF THE ANATHEMATIZATION

In order to understand Paul’s meaning and intent of these striking words, exegesis of the three basic pieces of this text needs to be undertaken. εἴ τις οὐ φιλεῖ τὸν κύριον, ἦτω ἀνάθεμα. Μαράνα θά. These may be divided into the crime, the consequence, and the call. In other words, what is the nature of such a serious violation, what happens to those who do such a thing, and what does Paul mean by closing this with an invocation?

Before examining the parts of this verse, it is important to view it holistically. There is evidence that this whole verse was a common saying in the early church with possible roots in the Aramaic speaking Palestinian church. First, the Aramaic term Μαράνα θά culminates the phrase. Bruce argues that the whole sentence may be a quotation that is part of a liturgical interchange as the counterpart to “If anyone loves the Lord, let him draw near” or “let him be blessed.” Since it is followed by the Μαράνα θά invocation, the congregations may have been confirming the anathematization.<sup>3</sup> Second, while Paul uses the anathema construction ἀναθέμα ἔστω in Galatians 1:8-9, the only place in all of his epistles he uses ἦτω is 1 Cor. 16:22. This supports the argument

<sup>2</sup>Necessary in light of what he alludes to in 2 Thess. 2:2 concerning others’ claims on his behalf.

<sup>3</sup>F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 162. Brock uses the term “liturgical formula”. Ann Graham Brock, “The Significance of φιλέω and φίλος in the Tradition of Jesus Sayings and in the Early Christian Communities,” *HTR* 90:4 (1997), 3. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 396 and Stahlin, “φιλέω,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 9:136.

that this whole verse is not part of Paul's regular vocabulary but something he obtained from another church tradition. Third, since Paul's only other use of the verb φιλεῖν is in Titus 3:15, he may be using it here because of its traditional use elsewhere (this term will be addressed below). Therefore, Paul's use of εἴ τις οὐ φιλεῖ τὸν κύριον, ἤτω ἀνάθεμα. Μαράνα θά appears to be a common statement.

The Crime: "If anyone does not love the Lord . . ."

Exactly who Paul is addressing is uncertain. The use of εἴ τις is general. Yet how is this lack of love demonstrated? How is it measured in order to know who should be under this anathema? The εἴ τις construction is a case of "emphatic denial."<sup>4</sup> Thus Morris is justified in arguing that "Paul does not speak of the absence of some special degree of love, but of the lack of love for Christ at all."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Godet aptly describes the reader's impression. "As every hearer listened to the εἴ τις, if any man, he was called to ask himself, like the apostles at the Holy Table: 'Is it I?' The more so because the conjunction εἴ implies the reality of the case."<sup>6</sup>

What does Paul mean by this lack of love for the Lord? He uncharacteristically uses φιλεῖν rather than ἀγαπᾶν. Etymologically, some see φιλεῖν as the love of friendship or fond affection.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, some see it as an inferior love<sup>8</sup> in contrast to ἀγαπᾶν, the self-sacrificing, valuing love of God that is to be present in the lives of all Christians. However, since ἀγαπᾶν is expected here due to Paul's overwhelming use of it rather than φιλεῖν, I would argue with Colin Brown that "the impossibility of rigid distinctions" between these two "loves" is justified.<sup>9</sup> First, at times the two terms are synonymous. John says that the love the Father has for the Son is ἀγαπᾶ in John 3:35 and φιλεῖ in John 5:20 with no apparent difference in meaning between the two. In Matthew 23:6-7, Jesus says that the Pharisees love (φιλοῦσιν) the place of honor, etc., but in Luke 11:43, they are said to ἀγαπᾶτε it. In John 11:3, Jesus is told that "the one whom you love (φιλεῖς) is sick," two verses later Jesus is described as loving (ἠγάπα) Martha and her sister and Lazarus, and at the end of the narrative in 11:36, the Judeans describe Jesus' love by saying, "See how he loved (ἐφίλει) him."

Second, it is true that the φιλία word group is used of close friends. However, again by way of contrast it is argued that ἀγαπᾶν is the highest kind of love due to its emphasis upon valuing its object and self-sacrifice. Yet Jesus tells His φίλοις μου to "not be afraid of those who kill the body" (Luke 12:4). Paul's closest φίλοι were those gathered around him who provided sacrificially for his needs in Acts 10:24, 19:31 and 27:3. That seems to echo the Corinthian

<sup>4</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 1160. Cf. also 2 John 10 and John 10:37f.

<sup>5</sup>Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Revised Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 243. Cf. also C. Spicq, "Comment Comprendre ΦΙΛΕΙΝ Dans 1 Cor. XVI, 22," *Novum Testamentum* 1 (1956): 204. "Le négation, très étroitement rattachée au verbe, n'évoque pas une simple absence d'amour."

<sup>6</sup>F. Godet, *Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 2:471.

<sup>7</sup>Godet, *Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2:471.

<sup>8</sup>Lenski argues, "Φιλεῖν means liking, affection, personal attachment while ἀγαπᾶν is much deeper, the love of full intelligence and true comprehension which is thus also directed by true and lofty purpose." R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937, 1963), 786. Robertson and Plummer argue, "the previous φιλήματι may have suggested the lower word. Or St Paul may have purposely chosen it, to indicate the poor character of the love indicated" Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911, 186), 400. Cf. also Grosheide, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 406, n. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Colin Brown, *φιλέω*, NIDNTT, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 2:548-49.

context. Furthermore, Luke uses *φιλία* eighteen times in Acts but does not use *ἀγαπᾶν* once. However, it appears that from what we have just seen that Morland is indeed correct in asserting, “According to Greek ideals, the closest fellowship between men was the total commitment to one’s friends (*φίλοι*).” He goes on to argue, “This was regarded as an exemplary relationship between humans, and terminologically it was transformed also to denote the exemplary relationship between humans and God(s).”<sup>10</sup> Earlier, wisdom itself says in the LXX of Proverbs 8:17, “I love (*ἀγαπῶ*) those who love me (*ἐμέ φιλοῦντας*).” Thus to force *φιλεῖν* here in 16:22 to only mean fondness, affection, or friendship is unwarranted.

So what is Paul meaning by *φιλεῖν* here? It seems that it is closely related to *ἀγαπᾶν* but may have nuances because they represent different Christian communities. Nonetheless, lack of love for the Lord is associated with a lack of loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Paul states elsewhere that in order for salvation to be gained one must confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9-10). Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul establishes that those who claim that Jesus is anathema are by definition devoid of the indwelling Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:3). Thus by implication there is no true love for Him present in their lives. Spicq rightly asserts that the protasis is a litotes that is analogous to Christ’s words against the false believer *οὐκ οἶδα ὑμας* in Luke 13:27.<sup>11</sup> Confession of and allegiance to Christ makes *φιλεῖν* “a comprehensive term for an attitude of faith which is completely oriented to Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus this love is tied to loyalty to Christ. Morland argues that since the love here is tied to a curse formula using anathema, that Paul, in light of his rabbinic training, is drawing from the covenantal tradition of the blessing and curses in Deuteronomy 27-30.<sup>13</sup> It is in casuistic form with other exhortations in 1 Corinthians (see below). Morland notes that Paul’s personal signature in 16:21 places his authoritative stamp on the instructions of the letter in the same way as Deut 27:26, “‘Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.’ Then all the people should say, ‘Amen!’” Paul even adds “Maranatha” in the same way as Moses adds the “Amen!” to confirm the importance to being loyal to the Lord’s commands. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 30:19-20 concludes the curses section by tying covenant loyalty, blessing and cursing together with loving the Lord, “. . . I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursings. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life . . .” Jesus restates this idea for His disciples, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). He equates this love and obedience to being his *φίλοι* in 15:10-15. Love for the Lord would then be directly tied to His commands given through His apostle, Paul, who personally signed the letter to give weight to its authority. Therefore, any Corinthian who is disobedient to Paul’s instructions as a representative of the Lord is guilty of being devoid of loyal love to the Lord Himself.

This definition of love fits the context. Christian identity and purpose as mirrored in the context denotes love and service to the community and devotion to the work of the Lord. This loving service is an expression of one’s love for the Lord. However, this love and service is not simply relegated to volitional and rational acts of duty. The community in the context, of whom the Lord Himself is also a part, also expresses love with affection as we have seen.

<sup>10</sup> Kjell Arne Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 174, n. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Spicq, “Comment Comprendre *ΦΙΛΕΙΝ* Dans 1 Cor. XVI, 22,” 204. Cf. also Matt. 7:21.

<sup>12</sup> Stählin, “*φιλέω*,” 136-7.

<sup>13</sup> Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians*, 173-4.

It is not unique that Paul uses the term “Lord” (κύριος) here. He uses it in combination with Jesus Christ or by itself a total of 65 times in 1 Corinthians alone.<sup>14</sup> The Lord to Paul is Jesus, the crucified, risen, and exalted savior and ruler of all things now and forever. Paul may be using this curse formula, but his worship and adoration of the Lord drives his usage. He saw “Jesus our Lord” (1 Cor. 9:1), who is “the Lord of glory” (2:8). It is the *Lord’s* Supper that all true believers celebrate in loyalty to His great love (10:21-22; 11:20-27). It is His work that Christians undertake, even at great cost to themselves (4:4-5; 15:58; 16:10). It is under the name of the Lord that Christians unite themselves (6:17) and under whom they assemble themselves (5:4-5). It can be argued that this title “surpasses all others in significance for Paul.”<sup>15</sup> In this incredibly strong injunction in 16:22, it seems that the use of the name “Jesus” would not fit its legal and loyal thrust. For all those who truly believe in the Lord, it would be inconceivable to not love Him. This love for the Lord is the heart of Christian discipleship. This leads Paul to state with great force the serious consequences for those who lack true love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

### The Consequence: Anathema

Anathema is a graphic term to be used for the consequence for the crime represented here. In the OT, it only translates the Hebrew *חרם* (even though *חרם* is translated at times by other Greek terms). It denotes something devoted to the LORD and mostly for destruction. Most significantly, it refers to the punishment given those who attempt to seduce others into unfaithfulness and idolatry (e.g., Ex 22:20; Deut 13:12-18; Josh 7:1-26; 22; Ezra 10:8). In the NT, it is used at times as a self-imprecation (Matt 26:74; Mark 14:71; Acts 23:12, 14, 21 and Rom. 9:3). In 1 Corinthians 12:3, Paul refers to Jews who evidence being devoid of the Spirit of God since they proclaim *Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς*. They are rejecting Him as Messiah by pronouncing in effect, “Let Jesus who claimed to be the LORD (God) be dedicated to destruction, to be judged and destroyed by God as a seducing apostate.” Anathema then is the relegation or handing over of someone to the judgment of God for a serious crime of apostate idolatry or unfaithfulness. In other words, “This consigns the transgressor to God as his Judge.”<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, there is no reason to restrict this anathematization simply to an eschatological judgment when the offender “meets their maker” when they die. There seems to be an ecclesiological aspect. Paul had already given them instructions on excommunicative disassociation from immoral people in 5:9-12; restriction or censure of women judging prophecies (14:33b-35); the command to prophets and spiritually gifted to acknowledge what he wrote was the Lord’s command, which if ignored, they would be ignored (14:37); and the clear instruction that no one should refuse to accept Timothy into fellowship in their community (16:10-11). Bornkamm argues that this was an explicit formula that was a part of the liturgy of the Lord’s supper. He cites the parallel to *Didache* 10:6 “If anyone is holy; let him come. If anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.”<sup>17</sup> However, even with this later reference, there does not seem to be any explicit evidence showing such a narrow focus that anathema was a part of the liturgy or that there was a liturgy advocated by Paul.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, a significant social ramification of

<sup>14</sup>Two additional times he uses it as he quotes Old Testament passages in support of God’s omniscience (2:16; 3:20).

<sup>15</sup>David Stanley, “Jesus, Saviour of Mankind,” *Studia Missionalia* 29 (1980): 67.

<sup>16</sup>Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Ed. by Helmut Koester. Translated by James W. Leitch. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969, 1975), 300.

<sup>17</sup>Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 147-48.

<sup>18</sup>Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians*, 173.

disassociation from the person under anathema can be seen in the context. It would be illogical and contradictory to greet this person under God's curse with a holy kiss (vs. 20).<sup>19</sup> It would be as inappropriate as the kiss of Judas. In summary then, if anyone does not love and obey the Lord through the teachings of the apostle Paul, they should be devoted to the Lord's rejection and judgment at His coming and subject to the church's discipline and disassociation.

So what is Paul expecting when he uses anathema here? Is Paul uttering an optative wish that these people would somehow be destroyed by God? Or is he calling upon God in a imprecation? Or something else? The phrase "Let him be" is a present imperative of εἶμί. This construction seems to mitigate against this being his merely uttering a wish. He appears to be enacting or enforcing something. 1 Corinthians is filled with other such injunctions using the first class condition εἴ τις. He does use the construction as a statement of fact when he declares in 3:17, "If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him." The same is true in 8:2, "If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know"; 8:3, "but if anyone loves (ἀγαπᾷ) God, he is known by Him" and 14:38, "But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." This supports the confirmation of fact aspect of the use of εἴ. However, in 3:18, Paul expects action from those who exemplify the protasis--"If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age let him become foolish." The same is true in 7:12, "if a brother has a wife who is an unbeliever . . . , let him not send her away"; 7:13, "and if a woman who has an unbelieving husband . . . , let her not send her husband away"; 10:27, "If one of the unbelievers invites you. . . eat anything . . . If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment"; and 14:37, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the anathematization injunction in 16:22 is virtually identical in form to Gal 1:9, where Paul says, εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐαγγελίζεται παρ' ὃ παρελάβετε, ἀναθέμα ἔστω. The faithful believer is expected to regard the offender as a cursed person, one dedicated to the Lord's jealous and righteous judgment.

### The Call: Maranatha

The expected judgment of God in this criminal case can be viewed as a combination of both eschatological and ecclesiastical sanctions. Paul immediately adds *Μαρινα θα* after his conditional anathematization injunction. The Aramaic term seems to have come into the vocabulary of the early church much like "amen" and "hosanna." Although it is a difficult expression to translate--"Our Lord is present," "Our Lord has come," or "Our Lord, Come"<sup>21</sup> --it is best to choose the last option.<sup>22</sup> The phrase "Amen, yes, come, Lord Jesus" in Rev. 22:20 is a strong parallel with "come" (ἔρχου) being a translation of *Μαρινα θα*. It is an expression of eager longing felt by the church in those early days for the speedy return of the Lord.<sup>23</sup> It is entirely

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology*, Trans. by Andreas J. Kostenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1922, 1999), 303 and Igor Kiss, "Der Begriff 'Fluch' in Neuen Testament" ["The Concept of 'Curse' in the New Testament"]. *Communio Viatorum* 7 (Spring 1964): 91.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. also James 5:12, "Do not swear but let your yes, be yes, and no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment." There are similar injunctions to the Corinthians without the εἴ τις formula in 5:4-5; 6:9-10; 11:29; 14:38.

<sup>21</sup>K. G. Kuhn, "Maranatha," *TDNT*, 4:466-72; BAGD.

<sup>22</sup>Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 300-1.

<sup>23</sup>Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 244.

possible to see with Witherington this curse formula being announced in the worship service and followed by a plea for the Lord to come as judge and act on the anathema.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, Fee's comments are most helpful as he ties anathema to Maranatha. "The Lord whom they reject is indeed coming, and those who do not love him are under the anathema and in danger of being rejected by him."<sup>25</sup> In other words, *Μαρανα θα* was intended to strengthen or reinforce the anathematization.

## IMPLICATIONS

The thesis of this injunction should now be clear: Paul's call for true love for the Lord serves to establish clear boundaries for Christian discipleship and community. This discipleship carries an intrinsic seriousness. To follow the Lord Jesus Christ demands focus and commitment, obedience and loyalty. Yet there is love as well as lordship. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The lordship of Christ should endear us to Him. It should prompt joyful surrender to His will and ways. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was struck by this from 1 Corinthians 16:22 when he wrote,

Truly I ought to love the one through whom I have my very being, my life, and my understanding. If I am ungrateful, I am unworthy too. Lord Jesus, whoever refuses to live with you is clearly worthy of death, and indeed is dead already. For whoever does not devote his mind to Your service is unreasonable, and he who cares to be anything except for You is good for nothing, and is nothing.<sup>26</sup>

With those powerful words, this injunction should also clarify Christian ministry.

A truly biblical philosophy of ministry should have as its foundation a loyal love for the Lord. The Christian's identity and purpose should be bound up in fostering an intimately loving and serving community in the Lord. Those who lead the church must bear the weight of this injunction as an assessment tool for successful ministry. The measurable love of believers for the Lord is to be celebrated passionately. Bernard of Clairvaux exhorted Christians in light of 1 Corinthians 16:22 and Christ's love for us to pursue this measurable love.

Learn, then, O Christian, from Christ the manner in which you ought to love Christ. Learn to love Him tenderly, to love Him wisely, to love Him with a mighty love. Tenderly, that you may not be enticed away from Him. Wisely, that you may not be deceived and so drawn away. Strongly, that you may not be separated from Him by any force. Delight yourself in Christ who is Wisdom, beyond all else, in order that worldly glory or fleshly pleasures may not withdraw you from Him. Let Christ, who is the truth, enlighten you, so that you may not be led away by the spirit of falsehood and error. So that you may not be overcome by adversaries, let Christ who is the Power of God strengthen you.

However, the measurable failure of those under their charge should cause fear and compassion. The gravity of the anathema itself should motivate attempts at reconciliation and restoration of lost love and loyal obedience to the Lord. Yet when those pursuits fail due to an unrepentant

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<sup>24</sup>Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 323.

<sup>25</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 839. Barrett is in agreement. "So here: the Lord's coming, for which the elect long as their salvation, would confirm the ban on those who do not *love the Lord*," Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 398.

<sup>26</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux. *The Love of God*. Abridged and Edited by J. M. Houston, (Portland: Multnomah, 1983), 184.

lovelessness for the Lord and his will, the offender must be viewed and treated as someone under the anathema of God. Lack of true love for the Lord has consequences.

Finally, this injunction should profoundly affect the church's view of evangelism and missions. The goal of evangelism should be tied to aiding, persuading, and urging the unbeliever to become a lover of Lord and all that means in making true disciples of all nations. Furthermore, the exclusivity of the Christian gospel should be affirmed. "Anyone" and thus everyone without exception must have a true love for the Lord Jesus Christ or face imminent and eschatological consequences.



**ABSTRACT**

True Love or Consequences:  
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In 1 Corinthians 16:22, Paul prescribes an anathema against anyone who does not love the Lord. Analyzing Paul's discourse to the Corinthians reveals his use of ἴτω ἀνάθεμα as a speech act having meaning, force and desired effects. The goal of this paper is to show what this Pauline anathema means his relegation or handing over to God the disloyal for His imminent and eschatological retribution. Furthermore, the force of this anathema is an exhortation to the Corinthian church to regard these disloyal people as cursed persons. Therefore, his desired effect of these anathemas is in some sense for this church to love the Lord in light of His imminent return and to disassociate themselves from people who do not. By doing this, the Corinthian church will avoid God's imminent retribution. Questions still remain as to if and how this prescription is to be applied by Christians today.