

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtminc.org Today's Date: July 28, 2019

## Love In All Things

By Dan Trygg

**“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like adults, be strong. <sup>14</sup> Let all that you do be done in love.”** 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

**This passage is kind of a benediction at the end of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.** It is helpful to recognize this, so that we can better understand the focus and purpose of the things the apostle mentioned here. **After a very long letter, a closing benediction or summary statement would be in order.** (The average letter in the first century was what would fit in about half of one page, basically a greeting, a paragraph or two for the body of the letter, and then the closing valediction. The book of Philemon is more the size of a typical letter. When you realize that, you can appreciate how unusual Paul’s letters were. Many people lived and died, and never in person *saw* a letter as long as Romans, or 1 or 2 Corinthians. Such letters would be very expensive to produce, and would have been very highly regarded simply for the time and expense it would take to produce and deliver. The unusual size and quality of these letters may have been partially the reason that they were so carefully kept, recopied and passed along. There was no postal service available, so letters would be given to travelers to be brought to people they knew, or a courier would be commissioned to deliver the letter. Certainly, a letter the size and expense of 1 Corinthians would have been entrusted to a co-worker or trusted friend to be hand delivered.)

**1 Corinthians covered a wide range of subjects.** Aside from the divisiveness that was the primary reason that prompted the letter, Paul seems to address a veritable laundry list of subjects, ...probably responding to questions relayed to him, or particular issues he had heard about. **If Romans is the most systematic and tightly-reasoned letter written by Paul, 1 Corinthians is the most disjointed and wide-ranging epistle in the subjects it addresses.** If there is a unifying theme, it would be the contrast between spiritual immaturity and maturity, ...living by *the flesh* versus living by *the Spirit*. Understanding even this brief summary gives some context to these final, summary words of the letter.

**“Be on the alert...”** – This was a good admonition. **The word means to “stay awake and alert, be watchful”.** It is fitting in this context, because Paul had described a number of problems that needed to be addressed and resolved. **They needed to “take care of business”, not be lax or spiritually unaware. They needed to monitor the issues Paul had addressed,** as well as be mindful of some of the spiritual dangers and false teachers that could cause problems in their midst. ***This calling to follow Jesus would require their attentiveness and focus.***

**“stand firm in the faith...”** – **The word means to “stand solidly, with steadfastness”.** **The opposite would be to stumble, fall, or be wishy-washy.** You can appreciate this as one of the “closing words” of this letter. There was always a very real danger of unsteadiness, or faltering-faith, especially in an environment like Corinth. **Paul had found it necessary to call them to account for their wishy-washy thinking (5:1-7). Now, he calls them to stand firm.**

**“act like adults...”** – The Greek actually says “be men”. It is not clear exactly what is meant by this term. Some translators render it as “be brave like men” or “act like men” or “be men of courage”. I think it might be helpful to ask **what would be the contrast he is trying to correct?** Are they in danger of being “like women”? That doesn’t fit the context at all. ***It seems to be about being mature, versus being immature.*** What would that entail? It would fit right in with the surrounding word pictures of firmness and strength. **Someone who acts like an adult will deal with things in a straightforward manner. They would be responsible, and address things quickly and firmly.**

**“be strong...”** – This word can refer to “power, might, strength, or the ability to resist”. In the other three occurrences of the word in the NT, it always refers to a process of growth (Lk. 1:80; 2:40; Eph. 3:16). **The form of the word here describes an ongoing process, “be becoming strong”.**

Actually, all four of these verbs have been in a form that implies ongoing, continuous action: “Be-being-alert, be-standing-firm, be-being-adults, and be-becoming-strong”. This is important to see, because this sets the stage for the next phrase: **“Let all that you do be done in love.”** The Greek actually would be **“All things of y’all let-it-come-to-be in love.”** ***Clearly, the language is describing a process of development.***

That is not the only significant observation to make about this verse, however.

**First of all, it is written to the entire group,** ...as are all the verbs in the previous verse. **It is not a command to you to do everything in love!**

**Second,** in spite of the common translations, **there is no “do” or “done” in the verse at all!** The HCSB version reads, “Your every *action* must be done with love.” The King James, “Let all your things be done with

charity.” The NASB has, “Let all that you do be done in love.” And the NIV renders the verse, “Do everything in love.” The only verb in the sentence is the verb *ginomai* (γίνομαι), which means “come to be” or “become”.

**Third, we are not even the subject of the verb!** This is a weird verb, if you have not been exposed to some of the concepts I am going to mention here. Simply stated, the subject of the verb is “it”. It could be a “he” or a “she”, but that doesn’t fit the context. There is no actual pronoun here. The verb is in a form that requires a “he, she or it” subject. Most of the time, we are not even aware of this, because the context makes clear what is happening. In fact, this verb, in another form, is frequently translated as “it came to be” or “it came to pass”, and there is no pronoun in those sentences, either.

**Fourth, the form of the Greek verb is difficult to translate into English.** The verb is an imperative, ...a command. BUT, in English, we direct commands to a specific person or group. When we do this, our language implies a “you”. For example, when we say, “Go, pick up the trash”, it is like we are saying, “You, go, ...you pick up the trash.” We use “you”, a second-person pronoun, when we give a command. Greek has another option, which sounds indirect and often passive to us. It uses a third person pronoun, ...”he, she, it, or them”. The only way we can translate it is to use the word, “let”. Let him, ...let her, ...let it, ...let them. And the verbs we use with these pronouns are indirect and usually passive in form. So, **here, the verb would best be translated as “let it be, let it come to pass, let it become”.** Again, however, the form is implying ongoing action or a process, “let-it-be-being, or let-it-come-to-be”.

**Fifth, the “all things” is in the form of the subject.** Sometimes this particular verb will be singular in form, but have a plural subject. So, it would seem that the simple sentence is “let all things come to be”.

**Sixth, the “all things” is further defined by the “of y’all”.** In other words, it is “let all things of y’all come to be...”. Come to be *what*?

**Seventh, the final piece is the prepositional phrase “in *agapē*-love”.**

**So, the full sentence should be “Let all things of y’all come to be in *agapē*-love.”**

**Again, this is not just a wish. This is an indirect command.** But, because it is *indirect*, it is more of a goal or objective to attain. But because it *is a command*, it is *not* optional. And, again, there is a process at work here. This is something that will take time to develop, ...but it *should*, ...it *must* develop. **The goal described is that *everything about us* would be characterized by *agapē*-love.**

When we began our study of *agapē*-love, we looked at 1 Timothy 1:5, “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” **The goal, or end point, that Paul was trying to bring about through his teaching was *agapē*-love.** Paul penned those words near the end of his life. It is interesting to note that this same focus and passion were characteristic of his ministry, some ten years earlier, in this letter to the Corinthians. **He wanted their community, their interactions with one another, their interactions with outsiders, everything about them to be filled to overflowing with *agapē*-love.**

The *agapē*-love is a capacity that entered into us when the Holy Spirit came into our lives (Rom. 5:5). It is the result of His inworking activity within our lives. As we learn to walk more and more in the Spirit, we should see *agapē*-love as a characteristic aspect of His fruit in our behavior (Gal. 5:22). The “clean heart, good conscience and unhypocritical faith” Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:5 help to keep us open and sensitive to the leading of that Spirit. Jesus had spoken of *agapē* as the unusual mark that would identify those who were His genuine followers (Jn. 13:34,35). This is because, as the apostle John mentioned in 1 John 4:7, “everyone who *agapē*-loves is born of God, and experientially-knows God”. In other words, those who are *not* born of God, are *not able to love in this way*. Therefore, the kind of self-giving, ...the choosing to put the interests and needs of others before your own..., that is characteristic of *agapē*-love is a rare thing, and stands out in this world. Paul had described it earlier in 1 Corinthians, calling it “the more excellent (extraordinary) way” than even the interactive body life of the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31). In chapter 13, he emphasized that without *agapē*-love, spiritual gifts, miraculous powers, and sacrificial service meant nothing. He described its characteristics in vss. 4-7, and emphasized that *agapē*-love, unlike human love, never fails. He summed up that section with the admonition to “pursue *agapē*-love” (1 Cor. 14:1). **Now we finish our study on this subject with Paul’s own challenge, ...his indirect command: “let all things of y’all come to be in *agapē*-love”.** It is *my* prayer that God will continue to lead *US* into the *agapē*-love of God and the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thess. 3:5). **May *WE* be “God-taught to *agapē*-love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9), so that the reality of God’s presence at work in our lives will make Him known in tangible ways that bring Him praise.**