

# Closing Words of Love and Grace

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Preacher: Mike Loosa

[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we ask you one more time, God, to send your spirit from on high, to illuminate our minds and our hearts this morning.

! God, we want to give our full and undivided devotion to you, Lord, and specifically through our attention to your word. God, this word is breathed out by you for our good, for our instruction, for our godliness, our growth in Christ, for your glory.

Have your way among us, Lord, this morning. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning, Shoreline. My name is Mike. I'm one of the pastors here at this church.

And as always, it's just such a good thing to gather in worship, to stir one another up to love and good deeds as we gather together.

How you conclude something is important, right? Whether it's a meeting at work, whether it's a lecture, or a sermon, or a song, or a letter, the way that it ends, whatever it is, it often communicates what is most important, right?

[ 1 : 18 ] It attempts to capture the main emphasis and to drive it home. And so as Paul concludes his letter here to the Corinthian church in these final 12 verses, we're seeing what is most important to Paul.

What he wants above all to reverberate in the hearts and the minds of his hearers, and it's namely love and grace. Love and grace.

If you haven't already, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 16, 13 through 24. If you don't have a Bible, we have them on the back table. Feel free to take one of those and keep them.

Today concludes our eight-month journey through the book of 1 Corinthians. And Paul, this whole time, has been calling the Corinthian church to display Christ and the gospel in all things, in all areas of their individual and corporate lives.

In other words, to respond to God's grace in the gospel by living lives of Christ-like love for him and for others. And that is the emphasis in these final verses in this letter.

[ 2 : 29 ] The title of today's sermon is, Closing Words of Love and Grace. Closing Words of Love and Grace.

And the main thing that I'm arguing today, the main point that I think is here, there we go, hearts transformed by gospel grace, overflow in zealous, unwavering love for Christ and for others.

That is the main point that I think is here. That's what Paul's been driving at this entire letter. Hearts transformed by gospel grace, overflow in zealous, unwavering love for Christ and for others.

Now, Paul is moving in this passage from, we see in the beginning, a summary exhortation to follow, to a Christ-like example to uphold, to a family embrace to extend.

And all of that leads Paul towards a parting emphasis to drive home. That's where we're going today. And so the first thing that we see is a summary exhortation to follow. Paul says, look in your Bibles, verse 13, 1 Corinthians chapter 16, So here we have five exhortations.

[ 3 : 50 ] Paul is summarizing what he's trying to impress in the Corinthians. Let's look at each of these in turn. Let's look at each of these five. The first one Paul says is, Be watchful. Be watchful.

Now, this command recalls Jesus' words to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ said, Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Right? The flesh is weak. The enemy is on the prowl. Like a roaring lion, he's seeking someone to devour. And so we need saints.

We need to be watchful. Like the crew that mans the submarine's command and control center. Awake. Vigilant. On guard. Watchful.

And now this command also has in view not just the weakness of the flesh and the enemy being on the prowl, but in light of the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul has been driving also at the near return of

Christ.

[ 4 : 47 ] Light of chapter 15. Christ is coming again. Paul had said in chapter 7, It might not feel like it.

It's been 2,000 years since those words were penned, but with the Lord, 1,000 years is as a day, and a day is like 1,000 years. And Peter wrote a whole letter to remind the church, no, he is coming. He is coming. The present form of this world is passing away. So we need to remain watchful, hastening the coming of Christ by giving him our undivided devotion.

That was 735 in 1 Corinthians. Abounding in the work of the Lord, 1558. Be watchful. And then Paul says, Stand firm in the faith.

Stand firm in the faith. Now this command recalls Paul's words at the beginning of chapter 15. Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you.

[ 5 : 58 ] And then at the end of the chapter, he had said, Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, and movable. Church, the cross and the gospel of Christ is foolishness to the world.

That's what Paul said in chapter 1. But it is the saving power of God to the saints. I saw one brother say amen. That was a good spot for an amen.

The cross and the gospel of Christ is foolishness to the world. Is it not? We see that all the time on display. But saints, it is the saving power of God to the saints.

Being convinced of this, Christians are those who do not shrink back in the face of opposition to the gospel. Christians are those who boldly stand firm on the gospel, unmoved by the winds of cultural doctrine and philosophy.

Courage and strength is required, isn't it? And so Paul exhorts next. He says, Act like men, be strong. Act like men, be strong.

[ 7 : 04 ] Now some of your translations say, Be courageous, be strong. Act like men is perhaps better translated as be courageous. I think there's a few things going on here.

But these two commands, if it's be courageous, be strong, when paired together, it recalls that oft-repeated command from Joshua, I mean from Moses to Joshua, and to Israel.

Many of you have memorized Joshua 1.9. Do not be frightened, and do not be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed.

For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Now Paul is not calling both male and female here to masculinity. He is calling the saints to courage and to strength.

As befits a soldier in God's army. And this courage, this strength, it's not derived from ourselves. It's derived from the power and the presence of God.

[ 8 : 00 ] As Moses' command to Joshua and Israel said. And we can see this all throughout various verses in 1 Corinthians. Consider chapter 1, verses 8 and 9. Our Lord Jesus Christ will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful. That's where our courage and strength is derived from. The faithfulness of God. The power of God. Chapter 3, verse 6. I planted, Paul says, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. Further down in that chapter, do you not know that you are God's temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you? That's where our courage and our strength is derived from.

God is here. His presence is here. He's with us. How about chapter 10? No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful. And he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

No, you can't withstand the temptation yourself. We're weak. The flesh is weak. It fails, but God is faithful. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. That's why Christ calls us to pray.

[ 9 : 10 ] Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Now, in addition to courage and strength, I think Paul might also be calling the Corinthians with this command, act like men, to maturity.

And this has been a theme all throughout the letter. He's calling them to manliness, not as opposed to femininity, as opposed to childishness. When I was a child, Paul said in chapter 13, verse 11, I spoke like a child.

I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. And what is that more mature adult way that Paul was calling the Corinthians to?

What is true spiritual maturity? It is Christ-like, self-giving love. And we don't have to wonder if Paul is implying this here because he makes it explicit in the fifth and final command.

He says, let all that you do be done in love. Let all that you do be done in love. Has this not been the main theme of the entire epistle?

[10:20] Climaxing in chapter 13, the proud, knowledgeable, gifted Corinthians, they thought they had arrived at true spiritual maturity.

And yet Paul rebukes them time and again. Let me just lead you through 1 Corinthians real fast, showing you this. In reference to their divisive factions, Paul had said, But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

Regarding their lawsuits against fellow believers in chapter 6, why not rather suffer wrong, Paul says? Why not rather be defrauded, but you yourselves wrong and defraud even your own brothers?

Regarding their eating in idol temples based on their supposed superior knowledge, Paul said, And so by your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed. The brother for whom Christ died, thus sinning against your brothers, you sin against Christ.

Regarding their abuse of the Lord's Supper in chapter 11, Paul said, When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal.

[11:25] One goes hungry and another gets drunk. What? Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? And regarding their self-promoting use of the spiritual gifts, Paul says, Brothers, Do not be children in your thinking.

Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. What is the root problem of all of these situations? Pride and selfishness.

And what is the antidote? It is humble, Christ-like, self-giving love. Love builds up. Chapter 8, verse 1.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. This is true spiritual maturity.

[12:32] This is, as we said in chapter 10, the highway of Christian freedom and all things seeking to please others for the praise of God in the pattern of Christ.

That highway is love. And so Paul says, Let all that you do be done in love. Now we're left here with a bit of a paradoxical illustration.

What comes to mind when you hear, Be watchful, stand firm, act like men, be strong? What comes to mind? Anybody? A soldier?

Somebody said that over here? A lot of military folks here? Yes, a soldier? A soldier who is fully present, who is on high alert, who is well trained, who is suited up, ready for action, bold, fearless. And then Paul says, Let all that you do be done in love. Well, that kind of spoils the illustration. A loving soldier? You know, there's a common saying among the EB and Navy community that it is a, no offense, Navy guys, that it's a kinder, gentler Navy today.

[13:46] It's never meant as a compliment. Can you imagine the next recruitment video from the Marines ending with, The few, the proud, the merciful. That this is the image that Paul gives us.

And church, we should not be surprised at this, should we? Because this is the image of Christ, the conquering king who commands the armies of heaven, who rules over the nations with a rod of iron, and yet the way that he conquered was the way of the cross.

The way of humble, self-giving love lavished upon the saints. And we, brothers and sisters, were called to follow in his footsteps.

So how do we embody this kind of courageous love, this militant mercy? There's lots of ways. As we engage with a culture that is increasingly hostile towards Christianity, it means we don't allow our beliefs to be compromised.

We remain zealous for the cause of Christ. Yet in our unwavering commitment to the gospel, we maintain a posture like Christ of love and of mercy.

[15:05] Like Jesus, we seek to be gentle and lowly of heart, refusing to assimilate the charged rhetoric that has become so commonplace. What does this look like within the culture of our church?

It means we pursue holiness. We seek to root out sin from within our midst. We hold one another accountable, confronting one another as necessary. And when we do, we do so in the spirit of gentleness, Galatians 6.1.

Speaking the truth in love, Ephesians 4.15. Using words that build up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4.29.

Eric Redmond writes in his commentary on these verses, he says, their watchfulness, firm standing, courage, and strong stances should be characterized by actions that, with capitals, love personified would do if present among them.

So may that be so of us. And we need examples to follow, don't we? And examples to look to. And so, Paul then, after providing this summary exhortation to follow, he provides next a Christ-like example to uphold.

[16:23] That's point number two here. A Christ-like example to uphold. Look in your Bibles. Verse 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.

Be subject to such as these and to every fellow worker and laborer. And we learned back in chapter one that Stephanas and his household, they were among a small group of people that Paul personally baptized.

Now, when you see Achaia, Achaia is simply the region in Greece with Corinth at its center. And Paul says here, the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia.

Literally, the word is first fruits. They were the first fruits in Achaia. Now, several years between that, when Paul first came to Corinth and preached the gospel and saw those first fruits, several years have passed now.

And Paul is able to point to Stephanas and his household and say, they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. They are living out, verses 13 and 14, in action.

[17:35] They're embodying that courageous love to which Paul has been calling the Corinthian church throughout this letter. And to those, and to people like them, fellow laborers, fellow workers who have devoted themselves to building up the body, Paul calls the Corinthians to be subject.

Be subject. Now, we don't know exactly what Paul means, whether he has a formal office of the church in mind or not, but we can reasonably infer here that he at least means to follow their leadership and example, whether that's in a formal way, an informal way.

So the first thing Paul is calling the Corinthians to is to follow their example of service. And the second thing we see here is he's calling them to follow their example of refreshment.

refreshment. I'm not talking about the snacks and the drinks in the back. Refreshment, spiritual refreshment. Paul continues, look at verse 17, I rejoice at the coming of Stephanus and Fortunatus and Achaicus because they have made up for your absence for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours.

Give recognition to such people. Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus as one commentator writes, were like a little bit of Corinth come to Paul.

[18:55] And so they might have carried the letter from the Corinthians to Paul, we don't know, but either way they traveled to Ephesus where Paul was to see him and they refreshed his spirit. And I remember my first year at Cedarville in college and I enjoyed being there.

I loved being at Cedarville but I also missed home. And one weekend a few friends from my home came to visit and they were to me a refreshing spirit reminding me of all of those that I loved from back in Chicago.

But these men, they're not just refreshing to Paul who misses Corinth, you see they're also refreshing to the Corinthians. And so it would seem that they are characteristically those who bring refreshment to, who raise the spirits of the saints.

And so Paul upholds their example to Corinth as one to imitate and to follow. And not only follow because he also says here give recognition to such people. He's calling the Corinthians, this is the third thing here, to show them honor and respect for their Christ-like example.

You know, in light of the Corinthians valuing of lofty speech and of knowledge and of flashy spiritual gifts, this presents a striking contrast.

[20:09] The Christians that Paul upholds to the church as the ones to follow and to honor are the ones who are pouring themselves out in service. The ones who are bringing needed refreshment to the saints around them.

Once again, we see in this a reflection of Christ. The one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10, 45. The one who builds all those who are thirsty, all those who are weary to come, to drink without price from the water of life and to find rest for your souls.

Yes, he, Jesus Christ, is the ultimate servant to voting himself to the point of death on the cross in self-giving, loving, sacrificial service to the saints.

He's the ultimate servant and he is the ultimate refresher of souls emptying himself of the glories of heaven that we might be filled up in him.

[ 21 : 13 ] Oh, I pray if you're here and you have not found refreshment, life in Jesus that you would today by faith in his name.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person. Romans 5, 7, and 8. Though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die but God shows us his love in this while we were sinners Christ died for us.

So the Spirit and the bride say come and let the one who hears come and let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life which is Christ without price.

Shoreline, since we have received such love and grace from Christ we then are motivated we are empowered by the Spirit to extend that love and that grace towards others.

And to do so as Paul shows us here through service and through refreshment of the saints. This is how we live out the courageous love exhorted by Paul in verses 13 and 14.

[ 22 : 23 ] So I want you to reflect this morning and consider are you here to serve? Are you here to build up to edify those around you?

Are you dedicated to that work? Are you seeking ways to refresh the hearts the spirits of the saints? I want you to get in your mind if you need to close your eyes do that get in your mind for a second a scene in which you were served and refreshed in spirit by another brother or sister in Christ.

Think about that. Somebody maybe here in this church who served you who refreshed your spirit what did that look like? Maybe it was being welcomed into their home and treated like family even though they hardly even knew you.

Maybe it was a conversation right here after church where somebody listened like really listened intently to what you were saying and then prayed earnestly specifically for you.

Maybe it was having somebody show up at your house with a meal or with a truckload of wood or geared to help load or unload the moving truck. Maybe it was the music on a Sunday morning through which you were led into deeper trust of Christ and deeper worship.

[ 23 : 53 ] Maybe it was a thoughtful text that you received unexpectedly with encouragement and prayer. Maybe even a phone call or rarer still a handwritten letter or a note.

When a heart is transformed by gospel grace it cannot help but serve and refresh others by extending that same love and grace in a myriad of ways.

And I praise God that all the ways that I just mentioned are going on right here in this body. So let's press in church all the more to Christ-like service and refreshment to others.

And then as Paul says here let's look to those who are leading by example in these ways and seek to imitate and to honor them for the display and glory of Christ. Paul gives us a summary exhortation to follow a Christ-like example to uphold and then a family embrace to extend.

A family embrace to extend. We saw in the opening of Paul's letter that he follows the conventional letter-writing forms of the day but he imbues them with distinctly Christian content.

[ 25 : 07 ] So if we go back to chapter 1 verse 3 Paul combines a typical Greek greeting grace that was something the Greeks would say to one another with the Jewish greeting peace shalom and Paul says grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now similarly here at the end Paul he's offering some concluding salutations that would be common in a Greek or Roman letter but he imbues them with the warmth and affection of Christian family.

Paul writes we look at these verses Paul's writing from Ephesus the capital city of the Roman province of Asia which is now modern day Turkey and so he passes on greetings from the churches in Asia apparently Aquila and Prisca or Priscilla whom Paul had met when he arrived at Corinth they're apparently now in Ephesus hosting a church in their home and they send their hearty greetings in the Lord to the church in Corinth they would have spent a significant amount of time with the Corinthians when they were in Corinth and Paul then not wanting to leave anybody out says all the brothers send you greetings and he adds his own personal greetings in verse 21 and so

we see again this week that in Christ in the gospel there is solidarity among God's family why should the believers in Asia care about those in Greece why because they're one in Christ from last week's text why should the believers in Greece and Asia care about the poor saints in Jerusalem why because through the cross of Christ they are eternally united together with and in Christ their brothers and sisters forever there's solidarity among God's family and this family unity this love it leads Paul to exhort the Corinthians greet one another with a holy kiss greet one another with a holy kiss now he says the same thing in his letter to the Romans and again in 2nd Corinthians and at the end of his letter to the church in Thessalonica and Peter would write the same word slightly differently greet one another with a kiss of love five times this command is repeated in the New Testament an early church father writes the holy kiss is the sign of peace doing away with discord another commentator calls it a sign of mutuality reconciliation love respect and equality so how are we in our time and place to practice this command today and I like how a third author still captures this this author says what is a holy kiss it's a culturally appropriate morally chaste physical expression of love for other believers it's a hand on a shoulder a warm smile with a hand clasp or a friendly hug a touch that publicly acknowledges our bond with other members of Christ's body it's not just a kiss it's a holy kiss a kiss reclaimed from a fallen world and repurposed for the glory of God yes in our fallen world physical touch is so often used to mistreat others to abuse others so often used to gratify sinful desires but here among the saints we're exhorted to greet one another with warmth and affection befitting those who have been united together as siblings in Christ and so love one another with a pure and holy love like Christ's now I'm not suggesting that after the benediction you all start kissing one another on the cheeks left and right but I am suggesting that we consider how we might demonstrate familial love towards one another in culturally appropriate morally chaste personally sensitive ways and so live out this five times repeated new testament command and again it's for the display and for the glory of Christ and of God hearts transformed by gospel grace overflow in zealous unwavering love for

[ 29 : 20 ] Christ and for others so a summary exhortation to follow a Christ-like example to uphold family embrace to extend and finally in this fourth section a parting emphasis to drive home a parting emphasis to drive home here's how Paul concludes 16 chapters 437 verses for you math crazy people like me if anyone look in your Bibles at verse 22 if anyone has no love for the Lord let him be accursed our Lord come the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you my love be with you all in Christ Jesus amen gospel grace and love is Paul's parting emphasis and that's Ben the driving emphasis of this entire letter now a bit unexpectedly this love appears negatively here at the end as Paul invokes a curse he says if anyone has no love for the

Lord let him be accursed let him be anathema that is condemned and eternally cut off from the covenant community these are strong words now this statement here recalls the covenant blessings and the covenant curses within God's covenant to Israel back in Deuteronomy but that obedience God was calling Israel to obedience and that's where blessing would be found that obedience was always to be an outworking of love for God and so Jesus when questioned by the authorities who were trying to trap him in his words they asked him what teacher is the greatest commandment and what did he say and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your soul and with all your strength this is the first and greatest commandment love for God which works itself out in obedience to his commands is paramount but even as I say that

I want to remind us of what the apostle John says in 1 John 4 10 in this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation!

for our sins friends we could never love God on our own because of our sin but God in Christ has loved us first by dying for us on the cross you know I was just reading I'm reading through the Bible right now I'm in Leviticus and I was just reading this morning all of the laws in the Old Testament about lepers and how the priest would distinguish the clean from the unclean and you know the lepers when they were declared unclean they were taken outside the camp they were cut off from the covenant community of Israel and only after they were made clean could they be brought back in and I was just reminded this morning Jesus Christ was taken outside the camp on the cross cut off from the covenant community of Israel there's the!

there's the presence of God he's right there all of his goodness but they're outside the camp and that's where Jesus went so that we could be made clean God in Christ has loved us lepers first by dying for us on the cross and that extravagant love that calls forth the response of love from us it's

like Mary anointing the feet of Jesus with costly perfume and Paul concludes the book of Ephesians with the positive corollary to his words here he says in Ephesians 6:24 grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible love incorruptible Paul follows his curse with a prayer he says it's maranatha if you've heard that word our Lord come our Lord come love for Christ yearns longs desires his return it longs to be in his unveiled presence we've tasted of the goodness of the

[ 33 : 39 ] Lord in part we'll taste and see that the Lord is good we've tasted we've seen in part we want the fullness we want to know fully what we now know only in part Paul said in chapter 13 we want to see face to face what we now see as in a mirror dimly love for Christ desires above all to be with him in his glory and so the prayer of Christians for the last 2000 years has been this cry of Paul right here our Lord come and so the book of Revelation it ends he who testifies to these things says surely I am coming soon amen come Lord Jesus amen come Lord Jesus the next line in Revelation 22 is what Paul says next how he!

the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you grace of the Lord Jesus be with you now we might consider love to be the overcurrent of the letter it's Paul's clear on the surface emphasis but grace grace has been the driving undercurrent this entire time apart from gospel grace we have no love for Christ we have no love for others apart from gospel grace we remain dead in our sins condemned cut off objects of wrath we owe all to the grace of God by the grace of God Paul revealed I am what I am by the grace of God I am what I am you a few a few passages better capture God's grace than what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9 through 11 or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of

God and such were some of you but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God by the grace of God we are what we are amen by the grace of God and this gospel grace it leads to love love for Christ above all love for others which is the demonstration of our love for Christ and so Paul adds in good and for their flourishing in

Christ Paul loves these brothers and sisters in spite of their sin in spite of their foolishness in spite of the hurt that they have personally caused to him the grief that they have caused him and why why because hearts transformed by gospel grace overflow in zealous unwavering love for Christ and for others and I pray saints that we are moved this morning to Christ and him alone rightly belongs the first place in our hearts first place in our lives and so Paul had written in chapter 7 I say this to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord Christ is the treasure he is the pearl of greatest price he has given all for us everything that he is and so we respond by giving our all to him to in view of

God's mercy present your bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship Romans 12:1 saints are you ordering your lives are you ordering your schedules are you using your resources are you using your finances in a way that communicates Jesus Christ as your first love and highest treasure what does your life communicate about where your treasure is what changes need to be made this week and who in this room can help you make those changes and hold you accountable in that may our prayer be that of the old hymn this is my earnest plea more love oh Christ to thee more love to thee more love to thee gospel grace begets love for Christ and love for

[ 38 : 47 ] Christ begets zealous unwavering love for others Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to love God and the second he said is like it you shall love your neighbor as yourself this would in fact be the defining mark of the new community of Christians that Jesus was creating the team jersey love one another just as I have loved you you also are to love one another by this all people will know!

you! my disciples if you have love for one another surely may our zealous unwavering love for one another demonstrated in a million different acts of self-giving service may that be a resounding proclamation that Christ is risen and he's reigning and he's reigning right here in this church a love for one another it proves Christ's existence it proves that he was risen!

and it proves us to a watching world that the world is watching they want to see how we act in this body are we going to be like them or are we going to love with sacrificial self-giving love and manifest Jesus right here that's missions okay it is missional for the church to love one another

hearts transformed by gospel grace overflow and zealous unwavering love for Christ and I want to close just by sharing with you four little vignettes four real stories where this love for Christ and others has been on display right here in this body I'm not going to use any names but these are all things that have happened right here on January 24th 2017 when I found out that my dad had unexpectedly died we were in the middle of having friends over for a game a sister right here in our midst refused to compromise in the workplace on what the Bible has to say about marriage being between one man and one woman and so with courage she stood firm in her faith and it cost her her job but she loved Christ far more many brothers and sisters in this congregation sacrificially served our brother Frank before the Lord took him home helping him across the street from that direction to here giving him rides to appointments bringing him groceries doing his dishes meeting with him for discipleship in these ways and many more many here loved Christ by loving Frank extending gospel grace to him and making him feel like family She was always quick to just rejoice in there are those in this body who every single conversation find a way to talk about something the Lord has been teaching them from his word the way they've experienced the grace and goodness of God they abound in love for Christ bringing refreshment spiritually to the hearts of the saints here everyone they interact with hearts transformed by gospel grace overflow and zealous unwavering love for Christ and for others may this saints may this characterize us more and more let's pray heavenly father what lavish grace you have given to us as you have saved us by your blood that you might show to us the immeasurable riches of your grace and kindness toward us in Christ that is baffling that we are scratching the surface hardly of your grace and kindness toward us in this life and we are going to experience it in fullness for eternity God may that grace change us may it change us to love you above all things to love you you are our highest treasure you are our only good and our highest good you are the savior of our lives the lord of our lives to you belongs all of our devotion and all of our worship forevermore God may that be reflected in our daily lives and God may that come out as well in lavish love towards others right here and in our homes and in our neighborhoods and in our workplaces extending gospel grace which we did not deserve to those who may not deserve it extending the love of Christ sacrificial self-giving love this is the defining mark of the Christian community that you have created by your death and resurrection oh God make us more like you for your glory in this world we pray in Jesus name amen let's stand and sing a ending a ending!

[ 44 : 04 ] ending a ending a ending a ending a