

We Must Live With This

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"Let anyone who has no love for the Lord be accursed." (1 Cor 16:22, NET)

These are such striking words!
Can they really be true?

The verse seems to dangle there with no immediately apparent connection to what precedes it or follows. Paul placed this thought in the very last handful of sentences in the first letter to the Corinthians. He's given the readers some final punctuated reminders to end up his long epistle. It has a strength there, even if all alone.

But maybe it's not totally alone after all. It's followed by the exclamation "*Maranatha!*" This is usually translated "Come, Lord Jesus!" This Aramaic term can be divided differently however. It could read, "*Maran atha*" rather than "*Marana tha*" and therefore assert, "The Lord has come!"

Could the Apostle Paul be saying, "The Lord has come! He's to be contended with. Anyone who doesn't love him is to be accursed!" Or, could he intend, "The Lord is coming, therefore let anyone who has no love for the Lord be accursed [when he comes]." We may not know for certain.

Regardless, there is power in the sentence. Earlier he wrote the Galatian churches pronouncing "anathema" on those who were distorting the gospel of grace by adding the requirement of circumcision and the Mosaic Law. But in *this* statement is the anticipation of a curse on people who have simply failed to have something. Let him be accursed who "has no love for the Lord."

Why?

"No love for the Lord." How it could be so, that any person could be in such a state that he or she has no love for such a glorious and gracious being?



Some have no love for reason of having never given any attention to him at all. No comfort can be found there though. Just as we are guilty of a crime whether we know of the statute or not, so neglectful people are guilty of not loving Christ whether they ever thought much about him or not.

Some do not have any love for Christ because they love everything else. They pursue and lust for other things which preoccupy them. They have no time or interest because other things, such as pornography, or acclaim, or dress, or wealth, has all their attention.

But I have found a much deeper repulsion of Christ on the part of some. I talked to a man recently, for instance, who wanted nothing to do with Christ no matter what I might say about him. He was not interested and wanted me to know that no talk about him will change that. It was a great offense to him that anything was mentioned about Christ at all, though I had known him a long time and was very gentle and thoughtful to discuss Christ in a careful way. Such people find Christ distasteful in every way. These people reveal a development in their unregenerate heart that has left them calcified and seemingly unmovable.

Just a Fact

Whatever the status of the malignancy of the heart, there is no hope for those who don't love the Lord until and unless they have a change of heart. They must love what they do not love now. That transformation, the best I can understand it, is where the Lord comes in. He is able to do the impossible, to change the unregenerate heart that has no love for Christ. He uses our words and many other things when he does this, but ultimately, it is his work.

But Paul isn't talking here about what *could* be. He's only stating the fact that a person who has no love for the Lord will be accursed . . . now, and forever. It's stark, painful, sad and difficult to think about. Yet, it is true. And we have to live with that awful reality.