ROUTE 66
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I CORINTHIANS

The drive west from Athens to Corinth is one of the most beautiful in the world. For miles your course takes you along the shores of the Aegean Sea to the narrow neck of land that separates that sea from the Ionian Sea, a land bridge that Roman Emperor Nero attempted to span with a canal (a task soon set aside but completed hundreds of years later and still semi-used by smaller ships). Corinth was one of the most strategically located cities of antiquity. The Apostle Paul ministered there during his second missions journey.

Corinth was a sort of melting pot with sea-men and merchants coming from all parts of the great Roman Empire. It was a wicked community with sexual immorality and drunkenness rampant. The city lay in the shadow of the volcano-shaped Acrocorinth, a huge rock standing 1900 feet above it. On to of the rock was the temple of Aphrodite,
which housed 1,000 priestesses, who were actually prostitutes. “Worship” to the Corinthians meant “sexual promiscuity.”

The book of I Corinthians is Paul’s answer to the Christians he established there regarding their conduct in this fortress of sexual dissipation. Paul had learned of a moral laxity among the saints and felt their conduct had to be rectified at once. Furthermore, he needed to deal with factions that were splitting the congregation.

CHAPTER ONE

Paul wrote this book (letter) while in Ephesus, Turkey. Despite its good beginning, Satan had been allowed admittance into the Corinthian congregation with resulting sinfulness. That status could not be allowed to continue. My friend Russell Spittler, wrote: Imagine a church like this one: members sue each other before civil courts; others habitually attend social banquets honoring strange gods, mere idols. One brother lives in open immorality - and the church tolerates it. Others think it would be better for Christian couples to separate so they could be more holy. Their services are shocking, anything but edifying. People come drunk to the Lord’s Supper, where they shy off into exclusive groups, each bragging about their favorite preacher. Some doubt the resurrection. And many have reneged on their financial pledges.

Paul condemned their divisions. (KJV) 1 Cor. 1:12-13 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. [13] Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Some years earlier, an eloquent preacher named Apollos had ministered in Corinth. His verbal skills and persona had produced many followers of himself. But others liked the plain preaching of Paul. Some believed they heard Peter preach somewhere and they were strong followers of him. All this favoritism had produced divisions. Paul’s response is that foolish bickering is not the answer desperately needed by the lost world; the answer is the fervent proclamation of the Cross.

1 Cor. 1:26-31 (New Living Testament)
Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes, or powerful, or wealthy when God called you. [27] Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. [28] God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, [29] so that no one can
ever boast in the presence of God. [30] God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom. [31] As the Scriptures say, "The person who wishes to boast should boast only of what the Lord has done."

CHAPTER TWO

Although Paul was one of the best-trained ministers of all time, he did not come to Corinth to impress those people with his lofty knowledge. He came to tell about Jesus in the simplest way he knew how so no one could misunderstand.

Paul spoke of spiritual wisdom: 1 Cor. 2:6-16 (NLT)

Yet when I am among mature Christians, I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world, and not the kind that appeals to the rulers of this world, who are being brought to nothing. [7] No, the wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God, which was hidden in former times, though he made it for our benefit before the world began. [8] But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would never have crucified our glorious Lord. [9] That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." [10] But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. [11] No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. [12] And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. [13] When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. [14] But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means. [15] We who have the Spirit understand these things, but others can't understand us at all. [16] How could they? For, Who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who can give him counsel? But we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

We are continually taught by the Spirit of God. We have a "seeking knowledge" as believers. And we call upon God to teach us.

CHAPTER THREE
This is the chapter of the entire Word of God that disturbs me the most. There is a huge
difference in Christians. Some have to be motivated all the time. Up and down - in and
out. Wishy-washy. But others are hardy soldiers of the Cross. They understand
Paul’s message in this chapter that all of us as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ,
will one day stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of our works.
No, we are not saved by works for salvation is the free gift of God; however, all possible
eternal rewards are totally dependent upon works. Read it for yourself:

1 Cor. 3:8-15 (KJV)

[8] Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive
his own reward according to his own labour. [9] For we are labourers together with
God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. [10] According to the grace of
God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and
another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
[11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
[12] Now if any man build upon this foundation [gold, silver, precious stones],
wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall
declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's
work of what sort it is. [14] If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon,
he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer
loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

What of our works is gold, silver, precious stones? Those things we do SOLELY because
of Jesus and our love for Him. What then is hay, wood and stubble? Those things we
do for our own self-aggrandizement. NOW NOTE: All our works will be judged by
fire. Hay, wood and stubble will go up in smoke, leaving nothing behind. Gold, silver
and precious stones will be refined by the fire, leaving us with something to lay at Jesus’
feet at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

1 Cor. 3:16  Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God
dwelleth in you?

What of Christian liberty? Are we free? Does this mean we can just go do anything we
want? No, because our bodies are the temple of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter focuses on spiritual pride. Paul quickly sets the standard for Christian
conduct: 1 Cor. 4:1-5 KJV  Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ,
and stewards of the mysteries of God. [2] Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. [3] He that judgeth me is the Lord. [5] Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

What is a steward? It was at that time a slave who cared for the goods of his master. The premier requirement of a steward was faithfulness. He was expected to sacrifice his own interests and to act faithfully on behalf of his master.

1 Cor. 4:6-21 [The Message]

All I’m doing right now, friends, is showing how these things pertain to Apollos and me so that you will learn restraint and not rush into making judgments without knowing all the facts. It’s important to look at things from God’s point of view. I would rather not see you inflating or deflating reputations based on mere hearsay.

[7] For who do you know that really knows you, knows your heart? And even if they did, is there anything they would discover in you that you could take credit for? Isn’t everything you have and everything you are sheer gifts from God? So what’s the point of all this comparing and competing?

Apollos was one of the founders of the Corinthian church. A native of Alexandria, Egypt, he was a powerful early leader. So some in the church said, “Well, we are followers of Apollos.” Others said, “We are followers of Paul.” There are two errors that a lot of folks make when it comes to preachers: 1) They put them on a pedestal as if they were “stars;” 2) Destroy them with criticism. Both extremes are wrong and this is what Paul was addressing here.

1 Cor. 4:14-15 KJV  I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. [15] For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

I enjoy visiting our son David’s congregation in Branson. They love him and his wife Janis - extremely so. But not as much as I. Why? I’m David’s father. A father will do much more for his son or daughter than a non-family member.

CHAPTER FIVE

In this segment Paul deals with immorality in the church. It came to light that someone in the church was living in incest (sex within the family). While a church should be a sanctuary for all persons, those within the Body of Christ, members of the church, should
live to a standard that exalts Christ. Paul dealt with three primary sins:

- Sexual sin or lax morally. Sex outside of the marriage bed is always a sin in the eyes of God.
- Greediness for the world’s “stuff.”
- Idolatry - or the worship of anything other than the one true God.

CHAPTER SIX

This is a fascinating chapter as it deals with a legal matter. The Bible teaches emphatically that Christians do not take other believers to court. They do not sue other followers of Christ. 1 Cor. 6:1-3 KJV Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? [2] Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? [3] Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? Does this mean that a Christian can never appeal to the civil courts for justice? No, for the Bible teaches that the authoritative powers are given by God; but quarrels between two believers must not be brought into such surroundings.

Paul wrapped up this chapter with an appeal for purity in the church: 1 Cor. 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, [10] Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

But what testimonies the Corinthians believers could offer for Paul reminded them: 1 Cor. 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

I love the old hymn that reminds us: Calvary covers it all - my past with its sin and stain; My guilt and despair Jesus took on Him there. And Calvary covers it all."

1 Cor. 6:20 KJV For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Corinthian church needed teaching on marriage. Paul has often been taken to task in regard to his teaching on marriage and women. However, we must remember that he
was answering specific difficulties in a special situation - and we do not have all the
contextual facts. Paul will deal with these issues:
1. Marriage and the sexual relationships within it
2. Divorce
3. Marriage and Christian service
4. Marriage as it relates to Christ and His Church

1 Cor. 7:1-7  [The Message]  Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your
letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations? [2] Certainly—but
only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to
have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain
them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual
disorder. [3] The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking
to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. [4] Marriage is not a place
to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in
bed or out. [5] Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both
agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such
times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us
when we least expect it. [6] I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of
abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.

What about marriage and divorce? Bear in mind that Paul was dealing with a very
specific situation. There were Corinthians who believed that when you accepted Jesus
as Savior that you broke all former ties, including marriage. This was especially true,
they claimed, if the spouse was not a believer. "Hold on!" writes Paul. 1 Cor. 7:20
Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Verse 14 needs some explaining: 1 Cor. 7:14 KJV  For the unbelieving husband is
sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else
were your children unclean; but now are they holy. What does that mean? That an
unsaved person is automatically saved just because his or her spouse is saved? No. It
means that an unbelieving spouse will be exposed to the realm of grace that could be
provided for him or her - simply because the believing spouse exudes that kind Christian
atmosphere.

CHAPTER EIGHT

There are some actions in life that everyone knows are wrong - lying, cheating, stealing,
adultery, etc. The believer would abstain from those things, of course. But what about
other activities - keeping Sabbath, going to movies, etc. In the Corinthians church, for
example, there were some who believed that no one should eat meat that had been offered
to idols. Other believers there had no such convictions – “Where’s the beef?” So does
the latter person have the OK to keep eating that meat even if it causes the first person to
lose out with God? Paul’s response here is that the matter cannot be settled by a simple
“that’s right” or “that’s wrong.”

1 Cor. 8:12-13 KJV  But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak
conscience, ye sin against Christ. [13] Wherefore, if meat make my brother to
offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

William Barclay observed: No man has any right to indulge in a pleasure or to demand
a liberty which may be the ruination of someone else. He may have the strength of
mind and will to keep that pleasure in its proper place; that course of action may be safe
enough for him; but he has not only himself to think about. He must think of the other
brother. An indulgence which may be the ruin of someone else is not a pleasure but a
sin.

We just celebrated our national freedom over the 4th of July. As an American citizen I
am a free man. I can enjoy and appreciate that liberty. But I cannot drive in any manner
I choose. Cannot walk into someone’s home and make myself at home, nor can I violate
another person’s rights. FREEDOM NECESSITATES RESPONSIBILITIES.

CHAPTER NINE

A particular verse in this chapter gives us an insight to Paul’s character and motivation:
1 Cor. 9:12 “We (I) suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.”

Paul could take personal affronts, deprivation, threats and other acts, but he would not do
anything that could be construed as a hindrance to Christ’s Gospel. “For me to live is
Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

Paul wrote of “striving for a crown,” using terms that the Greeks would well know
because of their association with the ancient Olympics. 1 Cor. 9:24-27 Know ye not
that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye
may obtain. [25] And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all
things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. [26] I
therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: [27]
But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means,
when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.
CHAPTER TEN

Personal indulgence can destroy your own soul. As an example of this, Paul used the history of Israel. Despite the brilliant leadership of Moses and others, they still fell into sin. 1 Cor. 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Paul listed some of the indulgences that destroy our faith and witness:

- Idolatry
- Fornication (sexual sin)
- Tempting Christ (provoking our spiritual liberty)
- Complaining - bitterness

Idolatry involves an inordinate love of the world. There is nothing wrong with "things;" it's when those "things" become our god that we are in danger.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Do women have to keep their heads covered in church? A situation had risen in Corinth when some of the women mistakenly decided that once they were saved their relationship with their husband changed. They could not be totally independent - and that included doing away with social customs that were the norm there. To them, the veil was a symbol of submission and dependence. They considered this shedding of veils as a rebellion against the system. Paul reminded them: 1 Cor. 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Lest we men jump for joy and make our wives hostages to our own whims, I remind you of something else God told us through Paul: Ephes. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; The Bible makes it plain that there should be a head of a household, which under normal circumstances is the husband; BUT THAT HUSBAND ONLY EARN演绎 THAT PRIVILEGE BY GIVING HIS LIFE FOR HIS WIFE JUST AS CHRIST GAVE HIS FOR THE CHURCH.

The remainder of this chapter deals with conduct at communion.

CHAPTER 12

Here Paul enlightens the church regarding gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. Not every manifestation people give is of God. Satan is a crafty counterfeiter. The Holy
Spirit always magnifies Jesus Christ! That is the first rule of scripture regarding spiritual gifts.

The second is that those manifestation will be sane and edifying. Sometimes on TV we are witness to craziness in the Name of God.

Third is the fact that not all believers have the same gifts. Fourth, the spiritual gifts are given to build up the church which is the Body of Christ.

1 Cor. 12:4-11  Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. [5] And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. [6] And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. [7] But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. [8] For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; [9] To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; [10] To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: [11] But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Please take note that these are ONLY nine of many spiritual gifts listed in Scripture.

From verses 12 to 26 we learn of the unity and yet diversity in one body. 1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. Consider your own body: You only have one, yet you have hands, legs, eyes, inner organs, blood cells, skin, etc. You need all those “parts,” yet the parts make up one body. So it is in the body of Christ. We all have different “parts” we play and all are needed. No one should “lord it over” someone else.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

This is the famed “love chapter.” God’s definition of love is given.

1. Love is patient.
2. Love is kind.
3. Love is not envious of others.
4. Love does not brag or boast.
5. Love does not set itself up above and beyond others.
6. Love is graceful.
7. Love does not demand its own way.
8. Love is not easily provoked.
9. Love does not keep a ledger of the many times it has been wronged.
10. Love does not rejoice in evil doing (when someone else has it tough)
12. Love can take anything on behalf of the one loved.
13. Love is trusting.
14. Love always hopes.
15. Love is victorious.
Take that list of 15 characteristics of love and place them in your own life situation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Paul gives us Pentecostal worshipers the rules of coming together to exalt Christ. Your spiritual gift is not to exalt you. It is to honor Christ and build up the rest of the people in their faith.

1 Cor. 14:33
For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1 Cor. 15:1-9 [The Message]
Friends, let me go over the Message with you one final time—this Message that I proclaimed and that you made your own; this Message on which you took your stand [2] and by which your life has been saved. (I'm assuming, now, that your belief was the real thing and not a passing fancy, that you're in this for good and holding fast.)

[3] The first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me: that the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; [4] that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as Scripture says; [5] that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, [6] and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, most of them still around (although a few have since died); [7] that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him; [8] and that he finally presented himself alive to me. [9] It was fitting that I bring up the rear. I don't deserve to be included in that inner circle, as you well know, having spent all those early years trying my best to stamp God's church right out of existence.
Our salvation, our eternal destiny, our being forgiven of sins, all depend completely upon
the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrected Lord was seen by Peter and the entire
company of apostles. He appeared to 500 followers at one time in Galilee where He
commissioned them to make disciples in all nations. He appeared to James, then all the
apostles again, and even unto Paul himself enroute to Damascus. There is not question
among thinking people that Jesus was raised from the dead after three days in the tomb.

Now Paul teaches that Jesus was the "first-fruit" - prototype, if you will - of all of us
whose bodies will one day be raised: 1 Cor. 15:20-25 [The Message]

But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those
who are going to leave the cemeteries.

[21] There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and
resurrection from death came by a man. [22] Everybody dies in Adam; everybody
comes alive in Christ. [23] But we have to wait our turn: Christ is first, then those
with him at his Coming, [24] the grand consummation when, after crushing the
opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father. [25] He won't let up until
the last enemy is down— [26] and the very last enemy is death! [27] As the psalmist
said, "He laid them low, one and all; he walked all over them."

Then the Holy Spirit revealed through Paul how that resurrection would happen and what
our eternal bodies would be like: 1 Cor. 15:35-49 [The Message]

Some skeptic is sure to ask, "Show me how resurrection works. Give me a
diagram; draw me a picture. What does this 'resurrection body' look like?" [36] If
you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams
for this kind of thing. [37] We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant
a "dead" seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between
seed and plant. [38] You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking
at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look
anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body
that comes from it will be dramatically different.

[39] You will notice that the variety of bodies is stunning. Just as there are
different kinds of seeds, there are different kinds of bodies—humans, animals, birds,
fish—each unprecedented in its form. [40] You get a hint at the diversity of
resurrection glory by looking at the diversity of bodies not only on earth but in the
skies— [41] sun, moon, stars—all these varieties of beauty and brightness. And
we're only looking at pre-resurrection "seeds"—who can imagine what the
resurrection "plants" will be like!

[42] This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at
best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection
body—but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for good,
alive forever! [43] The corpse that’s planted is no beauty, but when it's raised, it's glorious. Put in the ground weak, it comes up powerful. [44] The seed sown is natural; the seed grown is supernatural—same seed, same body, but what a difference when it goes down in physical mortality to when it is raised up in spiritual immortality!

[45] We follow this sequence in Scripture: The First Adam received life, the Last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. [46] Physical life comes first, then spiritual— [47] a firm base shaped from the earth, a final completion coming out of heaven. [48] The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthly; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly. [49] In the same way that we’ve worked from our earthly origins, let’s embrace our heavenly ends.

The most glorious hope of the church is the moment when Christ takes us home. 1 Thes. 4:16-17  [The Message] The Master himself will give the command. Archangel thunder! God’s trumpet blast! He'll come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise—they'll go first. [17] Then the rest of us who are still alive at the time will be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Master. Oh, we'll be walking on air! And then there will be one huge family reunion with the Master.

And he concluded: 1 Cor. 15:58 KJV Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Paul concluded this Holy Spirit-inspired masterpiece by issuing five commands: 1 Cor. 16:13-21 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. [14] Let all your things be done with charity. [15] I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) [16] That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboreth. [17] I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. [18] For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.


Be alert! Stand fast in the faith! Be mature in the faith! Be strong! Love!

Next week: II Corinthians