

## **5 / 1 Cor. 16:21-24 / “Let him be accursed” / Commentary Study**

In this little passage is a rough sounding, harsh sounding, sentence. On first listen, in our language and out of context with the book it sounds really rough, and kind of contrary to the gospel sharing nature of Paul and his compassion for the lost. “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.”

So, let’s take some time to read from some commentaries what this might mean, and how to make sense of it. Commentaries are either single volume (the whole bible in one volume) or multiple volume; they spread throughout time (you can get commentaries from Luther, Calvin or very modern). Let’s see if we can draw some clarity to this phrase.

**Question:** who is the intended identity of the “anyone” in the sentence above?

Non Christians?  
Christians?  
Either?

**Secondly,** what are the qualifications for that person to receive that condemnation? Is it a condemnation? What exactly was it’s purpose?

Here are a few commentary excerpts for you to consider...

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### **Expositors Bible Commentary /**

The εἴ (ei) condition with the indicative is assumed to be true: “If in fact someone does not love the Lord.” The use here of the verb φιλέω (phileō, “show affection for”) helps this idea of the factual condition along. Real Christians would show in the Christian community and in society some outward indications of their affection for and commitment to, the Lord. If some, as seemed to be the case, did not, they were showing by that that they did not belong to the Lord. In this v. Paul did not use the word ἀγαπάω (agapaō), which is used in the NT many times more than phileō and which frequently expresses the idea “love deeply with purpose and understanding” (cf. John 3:16; 17:23, 24; Eph 5:2). The word agapaō would not have brought out so well for Paul an additional emphasis on the necessity of the outward affectionate expression of an inward love for the Lord which he could stress by using phileō. True as the above distinction between phileō and agapaō may frequently be, observe that in some cases there seems to be an overlapping of meaning between the two words (cf. John 3:35 and 5:20; but see Godet’s comment, in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, 3rd. ed., vol. 2, p. 165).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 297.

## **John Calvin /**

22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus. The close of the Epistle consists of three parts. He entreats the grace of Christ in behalf of the Corinthians: he makes a declaration of his love towards them, and, with the severest threatening, he inveighs against those that falsely took upon themselves the Lord's name, while not loving him from the heart. For he is not speaking of strangers, who avowedly hated the Christian name, but of pretenders and hypocrites, who troubled the Churches for the sake of their own belly, or from empty boasting. On such persons he denounces an anathema, and he also pronounces a curse upon them. It is not certain, however, whether he desires their destruction in the presence of God, or whether he wishes to render them odious—nay, even execrable, in the view of believers. Thus in Gal. 1:8, when pronouncing one who corrupts the Gospel to be accursed, he does not mean that he was rejected or condemned by God, but he declares that he is to be abhorred by us. I expound it in a simple way as follows: "Let them perish and be cut off, as being the pests of the Church." And truly, there is nothing that is more pernicious, than that class of persons, who prostitute a profession of piety to their own depraved affections. Now he points out the origin of this evil, when he says, that they do not love Christ, for a sincere and earnest love to Christ will not suffer us to give occasion of offence to brethren.<sup>5</sup>

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## **Ancient Christian Commentary /**

16:22 Our Lord, Come!

No Love for the Lord. Didymus the Blind: The person who does not keep the commandments has no love for the Lord. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

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## **Word Pictures in the New Testament /**

Ἀνάθεμα [Anathema]. The word seems a bit harsh to us, but the refusal to love Christ (οὐ φιλεῖ [ou philei]) on the part of a nominal Christian deserves ἀνάθεμα [anathema] (see on 12:3 for this word). Μαρὰν ἄθα [Maran atha]. This Aramaic phrase means "Our Lord (μαρὰν [maran]) cometh (ἄθα [atha])" or, used as a proleptic perfect, "has come." It seems to be a sort of watchword (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14ff.; James 5:7f.; Phil. 4:5; Rev. 1:7; 3:11; 22:20), expressing the lively hope that the Lord will come. It was a curious blunder in the King James Version that connected Μαρὰν ἄθα [Maran atha] with Ἀνάθεμα [Anathema].<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin and John Pringle, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 80.

<sup>6</sup> A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 1 Co 16:22.