

## **“The Salutation Of Me Paul ...”**

“... with mine own hand. If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:21f).

The statement “The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand” is common, but not universal in Paul’s letters. The first occurrence of such an expression is from 2 Thessalonians 3:17 when Paul adds these words: “which is the token in every epistle; so I write.” It was Paul’s practice to dictate his letters to a stenographer, then taking a pen, when he had finished to add a few words from his own hand and thereby assert the genuineness of the letter. In handwritten letters the difference in the writing would be apparent (He noted this in Galatians 6:11 by saying, “See with how large letters I write unto you with mine own hand”). Five letters from Paul call attention to the obvious different penmanship which includes (besides the two instances already cited) the letters to the Galatians, Colossians, and his short personal letter to Philemon. Of the latter letter, it is not certain that Paul used a stenographer (as in 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians) or whether he personally wrote all of that short composition.

Following his statement as sent in his own hand, the apostle then said, “If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema.” Aside from the fact that Jesus said “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15) which would indicate that those in Corinth who did not love God were disobedient ones, there are other reasons why Paul would write such words. In view of the fact that the love of the Lord is reflected in that He laid down His life for us, well can we understand that any person who did not so love the Lord and appreciate His sacrifice, deserved to be anathema. What sort of person would one be who did not love Him who died to save that undeserving one from the guilt and consequences of his sins! How callous would be that heart that did not swell up with gratitude for the suffering and anguish God’s Son endured that man might be set free from the bondage of sin!

Concluding the sentence is a word not translated “maranatha”. The word is possible of two translations: “our Lord comes,” which if this be his intended thought, would be a warning to those who did not love the Lord that the Lord was coming and would render appropriate punishment to disobedient and unloving persons. Certainly that warning is true and should cause all to ponder and reflect, “Do I truly love the Lord?”

There is a second possible translation for “maranatha” — “O, Lord, come.” If this is the accurate thought, it would be the expression of a tired, weary

man who had for 24 or 25 years been on the front line in carrying the gospel to the world, oftentimes to those who not only did not accept nor appreciate the message, but persecuted the bearer of the message in different degrees: his rejection from their synagogue, his sustaining a beating with rods from them in other instances. Or, it could even be that they stoned him with stones, leaving him for dead. It could be the expression of a man weary with life who longed for the promised return of the Lord who said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye be also" (Jn. 14:3).

Whichever of the two possible translations was the apostle's intended one, we cannot say. There would be strong support for either. And, either translation would be correct for the apostle so tested and tried by the trials of life!

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