

1Corinthians 18-09-30a

This is Sunday, the 30th of September, 2018. We continue our study in the Book of First Corinthians, picking up this morning in Chapter 14. Chapter 14, verse 1. We have swum vigorously through Chapter 13, and we are now striding manfully into Chapter 14.

Let's take a moment as we begin our fellowship this morning to go to the Lord in prayer and ask His blessing on our study and our understanding of His Word. Shall we pray? Father, it is a great privilege to come before Your presence and to express our thankfulness for the many things that You do for us every day, every hour, every moment of our lives. We're grateful for the indwelling and the opportunity for the filling of Your Spirit.

We're thankful for the treasury of truth that is in Your Word that sustains us and feeds our souls. We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus, for His work on our behalf, for our privileged status in Him, and all of the wonderful blessings and opportunities and potentials that we enjoy in Him and through Him. We thank You for this time of gathering and looking into Your Word to improve our understanding, to equip ourselves to live in a way that pleases You.

And we pray that as we look at this portion together that Your Holy Spirit will illuminate it, make it clear, help us to see its pertinence, and how we may apply it in our circumstances both now and in days to come. We pray that each one will be built up and edified by the things that we share together. We pray that our Lord Jesus will be glorified, and we ask it in His name.

Amen. Well, in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, we had an introduction that was actually the final verse of 12, where I have suggested to you that Paul says after his arguments about the gifts that God has distributed in the church, and that not everyone has every gift, in verse 31 it is translated in your New King James, **◆Earnestly desire the best gifts.◆** And my suggestion to you is that this should have been translated, but you are desiring those gifts. It's not a cohortative or an imperative.

It is a description, and it is a bit of a negative observation. He says you're busy zealously wanting these gifts. There is this excess zeal.

Zeal can be a good thing. Zeal can be a bad thing. Pressing toward or pressing on something can be a good thing or a bad thing.

Have you ever been in a situation where you had some unwanted pressure? I've had this in airline seats. I've had it in various transportation scenarios where you can't get away from a kind of pressure that is bad. There are other times when pressure is good.

If someone is massaging out a sore muscle or a cramp or placing pressure to prevent an artery from bleeding out, then pressure is good. Pressing toward a thing, earnestly desiring a thing can be good or bad depending on the thing. Faith can be good or bad depending on the thing.

We have a well-known aphorism in our circle that says the merit of faith is in the object. Right? You can be very, very faithful to the Koran, but you've picked the wrong target. Whether faith is worth something depends on what you place your faith in.

The same thing is true of zeal. Paul says that Israel had a zeal for God, but it was uninformed. It wasn't according to knowledge.

They had a zeal for the law, but it wasn't according to knowledge. Nothing wrong with the law. The law is holy, righteous, and good.

By the law comes the purpose. It's bad. So we understand this.

So at the end of chapter 12, when he says you are earnestly desiring better gifts, the suggestion here is you're missing the point. Your earnest desire ought to be according to knowledge. It ought to be better informed.

It ought to be directed in a more wise way. So then he says, let me show you the better way. And that's the chapter that we just completed.

We know in part. We prophesy in part. But when that which is complete, telios, perfect, is come, then that which is in part will be done away.

And this is a multifaceted statement. I think it does apply to the canon of scripture. There was partial prophecy, partial revelation, partial teaching of church age truth.

But now that all of the letters that God chose to inspire and collect together and leave as an instruction manual to the church have been collected, culminating in the revelation by the Apostle John, which closes with those very inspired phrases about adding to or taking away from this book. And it is very suggestive that it refers to the entire New Testament being the last book that was composed and added to that canon. And that which is complete has come.

So that which was in part prophecy, telling a group of people something they couldn't get from the New Testament because they didn't have the New Testament yet, has ceased. It has been done away. So now abide faith, hope, love, these three.

But the greatest of these is love. Then you have the chapter division, chapter 14. This is where we pick up this morning.

Just bear in mind, I'm not going to belabor the point, but in the letter that Paul wrote, it didn't say chapter 14. It didn't have a new heading, prophecy in tongues. It didn't say prophecy commended to and preferred before speaking with tongues.

Twelve, both must be referred to in edification. Thirty-four, women forbidden to speak in the church. All of that is in between verse 13 of chapter 13 and verse 1 of chapter 14 in my Bible.

None of that was in the letter. It flowed smoothly from, and now abide faith, hope, love, these

three. But the greatest of these is love.

Pursue love. See my point? There is no break or suggestion of a break. There is no conjunction at all.

So all of this matter that has been helpfully inserted into our English, just be aware it wasn't in the original letter. It's not in the Greek text. The very first statement after the greatest of these is love is pursue love.

Okay? And it's helpful to look at it in that way. If the greatest of these is love, I'm showing you the more excellent way, pursue love. You have been zealous after greater gifts, malon karismata.

Let me show you a more excellent way. The greatest thing out of the three great things, faith, hope, and love that are going to abide and remain, the greatest is love. So pursue that.

The ideas connect. Now the word pursue is an interesting word. It occurs about 45 times in the New Testament.

And in 38 of those occasions, you will never guess how it is translated. Persecute. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you for my name's sake.

Dioko. D-I-O-K-O. It's this word.

Almost every time. You can get a Strong's and look it up. I'm not going to go through the list.

But out of the 45 occurrences in the New Testament, 38 times it is translated and means persecute. You will be persecuted for my name's sake. All through Acts.

The first time dioko is translated as something other than persecute isn't in any of the four Gospels. It isn't in Acts. It starts in Romans.

So here's my question. I want to know if Paul says here, pursue, which is a fair translation. I'm going to suggest to you that the translation of this word in this context is to how can we find something that you can apply both to harassing and murdering and imprisoning.

This is the word that's used of Saul persecuting the church before he becomes the Apostle Paul. So what is the translation of this same word that could fit in both a persecution context and a pursuing context? Well, you could say pursue. He pursued the saints.

Blessed are you when men revile you and pursue you. But it means to go after. Somebody stole my bicycle.

I'm going after him. Or I'm going after groceries. We need something that's neutral enough that it can be applied.

Remember what I just reviewed? The merit of faith is in the object. Well, the meaning of dioko is

in what it is that's being pursued and why it is being pursued. Are you pursuing it because you want to stamp it out and extinguish it and remove it from the face of the earth? Or are you pursuing it because you want to lay hold of it and get control of it and make it your own in a positive sense? But it's interesting that the great weight of times where this word that Paul repurposes, Paul is the first guy in the New Testament to repurpose this word.

Jesus uses it multiple times, and it always means persecute. It's used throughout Acts by Luke, and it means persecute. But here, Paul says, persecute love.

Go after love. So why would he use such a word? Well, let's think about vendetta. Let's think about going after somebody at any cost.

We've got a few recent examples in the news you can think of where somebody's got an agenda, and at any cost, they want to take something apart or a person apart, tear them down, obviate them, render them impossible to vote for. This has happened throughout politics. But think of the fervor.

Think of the level of investment. Think of the obsessive focus on that effort. That's what dioko means.

Be obsessively focused and single-minded and dedicated to waking up in the morning thinking about, going to sleep at night thinking about. This is the level. It's intensity.

It doesn't just mean... A lot of English translations say follow after or follow the way of. That's too mild. That's too ironic.

That's too pacific and pastoral. This doesn't mean tiptoe through the tulips and dandle through the daisies and just sort of wander in the general direction of a thing. This is the kind of intensity involved in persecution.

How dedicated do you think Saul was before he became the Apostle Paul in hunting down these corruptors of the law and these blaspheming violators of what he perceived to be the way of God? Well, he scoured the earth. He was on his way to Damascus to find some more and round them up and hail them into prison and bring them before the judges and wreak all kinds of... He dedicated himself to that in a very fervent way. He knows about this kind of intensity.

And he says, what I've just said about agape, about love, you need to invest yourself in getting a hold of it. Go after it. Don't just kind of lean in that direction or glance in its general vicinity.

Go after it the way you would persecute something you don't like. So pursue love. Now, here's my question.

This is a very strong word and I think, well, so is there anything else we're supposed to deoko? We're supposed to really go after in a big way. Does Paul or anybody else use this word in the imperative the way Paul does here about anything else in the Christian life? You can think about

some of your memory verses or other parts of scripture you're familiar with where you have the word pursue. You'd say, well, I wonder if that's deoco? Because this level of intensity is probably not just generally used for a lot of things.

And come to find out, it is basically only used for three other things. Deoco. First one of these, and you might remember this verse, flip back a few pages to Romans chapter 14.

The reason we're looking at this is if Paul says pursue love, well, if I know other things I'm supposed to pursue and I know how to pursue those things, it might illuminate how to pursue love. How do you go after love in an earnest and vigorous and dedicated and committed all day long way? How do you do this? Well, let's see what else we're supposed to do and maybe it'll shed some light on it. So Romans chapter 14.

And we're aiming for verse 19, but let's get a little bit of context. He's talking about the law of love that begins in 14. 14.

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there's nothing unclean of itself. Not only is Paul convinced of this, Peter is convinced of this. You remember the vision of the thing let down, the sheet that was let down? Arise, Peter, kill and eat.

I think it's tough to be a Christian and a vegan at the same time unless you're doing it for purely health reasons because God tells Peter, he doesn't say arise, Peter, chop and toss. It's not a thing full of plants. Arise, Peter, kill and eat.

What God has declared to be clean, let no man call common. What God feeds to his priests, let no man say ought not to be eaten. Jesus is frying fish on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

I personally, and this is just me, everybody go be warm, be fed, whatever your dietary choices are. I'm just saying that spiritually speaking, biblical speaking, morality speaking, to claim that to eat a fish is immoral, take that up with the Lord who not only fried fish himself on the shore of the Sea of Galilee after his resurrection, but gave his disciples 153 fish to haul ashore and told them to bring them up and let's cook them and eat them. So I don't know how you get from that to we should only eat plants if you understand and believe your Bible.

If killing animals is some sort of moral problem, the whole sacrificial system that makes up the righteousness of the law is in big trouble because there are troughs of blood all through the Old Testament for animal sacrifice. So I'm just saying. Look at 14.14. I know from the Lord Jesus nothing is unclean of itself, but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

All things are lawful, but not all things are edifying. If I know that something I'm doing is not edifying, if I know in my heart of hearts that this is harmful or disruptive or tearing down to another believer and I do it anyway, it has become unclean. It has become a problem.

Also, if you mistakenly believe based on the Word of God that something is wrong and then you

do it anyway, if you violate your conscience, whatever your conscience may say, as a believer before the Lord. Now the fact that somebody says, I think it's wrong to swat a fly and they swat a fly, that's out of the realm of interest because we're talking about believers who are seeking to be pleasing in God's sight. Clean and unclean wasn't an issue for Gentiles.

It was an issue for God's people inside the camp. Miriam, if her father had spit in her face, she would have been unclean. She's in the camp.

Leper, unclean, outside the camp. Clean and unclean, touch something dead. For the people of God, in and outside the camp, this is the picture, clean and unclean.

Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. If your brother is grieved, you are no longer walking in love. It's not unclean of itself, but it becomes unclean to you if you disregard your brother and it grieves him, what you're doing, how you're doing it.

You're no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Get some perspective.

Notice, the one for whom Christ died, Christ died for the sins of the whole world, but the only ones for whom that makes a difference are the ones who accept Him by faith, who place their trust for salvation in Him, who come to the Father through Him. So do not cause to stumble the one for whom Christ died. Talking about a brother.

Do not let your good be spoken of as evil, and this doesn't mean just any old good be spoken of as any old evil. This is, don't let what you know put you in a position of causing problems for other believers, even though technically what you're doing is not wrong. It becomes wrong at the point that it becomes a problem for your fellow believers.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Pay attention particularly to this comment.

The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Righteousness, peace and joy. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

He who serves Christ. What's the nature of service? Somebody is undertaking effort on somebody else's behalf. Isn't that the essence of service? The Lord Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. Right? He who serves Christ. Typically in service, you are giving something up.

You're giving up your time. You're giving up your opportunity to do something that you might pick if there weren't a need in another area. It is service.

He who serves Christ in these things. Notice by being sensitive to, careful of, and supportive of your fellow believer, you are serving Christ. Is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Therefore, verse 19, target verse, Therefore let us deoco the things which make for peace and the things by which one may build up another. Deoco. Go after them earnestly.

Go after them with the fervor of somebody who wants to persecute what they don't like. That's how hard you should press. That's how diligently you should go after the things that make for peace and the things that build up one another.

Now, would the term casual apply to this? Are you casually glancing about to be sure nobody is grieved? There is nothing casual about deoco. There's nothing casual about persecution. There's nothing indifferent about it.

So, here's another thing, but it looks an awful lot like what we see in 1 Corinthians 14, doesn't it? Go after love. Go after peace and the things that build up. Now, peace, what does Paul have to say about peace? Lord Jesus, when there was not peace between Jews and Gentiles, there wasn't fellowship, there wasn't cooperation and unity, he broke down the middle wall of division, didn't he? Making peace.

He made peace between God and man. He made peace between believers. So, go after that which unifies.

Peace is unity. No conflict. No hostility.

No division. What's the problem in Corinth? Divisions. I hear there are wars and divisions among you.

It shouldn't be so. If you are deoco after peace and if you are deoco after love, if you are manically going after that in a dedicated way, this isn't going to happen. You are going to find a way to smooth that out and knit things together and let there be no breach, no tear, no rent, no damage, no grief.

This is diligent effort in a particular direction. It is targeting this thing with fervor. So, that's Romans 14, 19.

Deoco, pursue, go after diligently, intensively, things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Let's go the other direction from Corinthians to Philippians. Philippians chapter 3. I think once we get there, you will recognize this particular passage.

We're looking at Philippians 3.12. Paul has just said in verse 8, Philippians 3.8, I indeed count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. What kind of an effort is this? Is he casual? Is he sort of leaning in that direction or is he putting everything he's got into it? Verse 9. I want to gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own

righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, having conformed to his death. This is what they call in poker, all in.

You take everything you've got and shove it to the middle of the table and you put it on the line. You're all in. If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Now he's not talking about I want to do this to be sure I get resurrected. He's talking about what is reflected, the power of God, the interest of God, the agenda of God, the totality of what God is doing in raising Christ and eventually raising the rest of us. Christ the first fruits and then they that are Christ's at his coming.

The power of his resurrection. Paul says, I want to know that power. I want to get right in the center of God's entire program.

I want to be with it. I want to be a part of it. I want to be intrinsic to it.

And I think God honored that desire because look at the place of the apostle Paul in our, in our new Testament and in our Christian faith. If by any means I may attain to that place, that power, that resurrection, that new life that comes from God. Not that I have already attained verse 12 or that I am already perfected, but I press on.

I press on Philippians 3.12. I deoko that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Do not count myself to have apprehended, forgetting those things which are behind, reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus.

Right in the middle of this is our word deoko. So, how interested should we be in this love that Paul has described in chapter 13? How much time should we spend thinking about it? Well, how much time do persecutors spend thinking about their targets? That's pretty much it. It's like prosecute instead of persecute.

You know, you can prosecute good things, deoko. Turn a few pages over to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. There's only a couple of these. There are not that many things in Scripture that are suggested to us as a target for this kind of fervor.

But here's another one, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Look at verse 14. Actually, look at verse 12. We urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and who admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always deoko what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Push for, go after with vigor, with commitment, with intensity. Go after what is good both for yourselves and for all, both for your church group, your fellowship, and for everyone around you. Go after what is good.

It's 1 Thessalonians 5.15. Paul says something similar to Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 11. You, O man of God, flee these things, the love of money, those who desire to be rich, all of this ungodliness that he talks about in the first 10 verses. You, O man of God, flee these things, and deoko righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Fight the good fight of faith. That's deoko. So what is it that he exhorts Timothy? And remember, when Paul is talking to Timothy as a young pastor, what's the value of that for us if we're not a young pastor? We might be an old pastor.

We might not be a pastor at all. Do we have to pay attention to what Paul tells Timothy? Why is he telling Timothy these things? Who is Timothy going to pass them on to? His church. So what Paul tells Timothy, Timothy is going to turn around and tell us.

You, O man of God, flee the things that are detrimental. Flee the things that tear down. Flee the things that are self-interested like riches, the love of money, straying from the faith, in greed, piercing yourself through with many sorrows.

You, O man of God, flee these things and go after, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. So if we were going to make ourselves a little reminder to put on the mirror, something to stick on the fridge, something to put on the table, something to dangle next to the air freshener on our rear view mirror, what would be a good verse? What would be a good reminder? What should we be doing all day long? What are we committed to going after and laying hold of these things? There's another verse that Paul gives Timothy where he uses Jehokah, but we're going to look at that one shortly. Flip over to Hebrews.

It's my belief that Paul wrote Hebrews. I'm more and more convinced of it as time goes on. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 9, we've had human fathers that corrected us.

We paid them respect. Should we not much more be in subjection to the father of spirits and live? Verse 12, strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. Make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated but rather be healed.

Pursue peace with all and holiness. Same thing he told Timothy. Pursue peace.

Same thing he told the folks in Rome. Pursue peace. Pursue the things that make for peace.

He told Timothy, pursue holiness, pursue godliness. I don't have time, but it's interesting to ask yourself, what's the difference? Paul says to Timothy, pursue godliness and pursue holiness. What's the difference? There is a difference.

Otherwise, he could have just used one term. I don't have time to talk about it now, but think

about its direction. So, pursue peace with all and holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Looking carefully, deokoing, it's not deoko in verse 15, but it's the idea. Pursuing peace, pursuing holiness, looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and by this many become defiled. Root of bitterness, many are defiled.

Therefore, pursue peace and pursue holiness. Godliness, this is pursuing healthy relationship with God. Holiness, pursuing that which is beneficial and reflects God's character among our fellow believers and everyone else.

Holiness is on the earth. Godliness reaches up into the presence of God. Pursue holiness, pursue peace, deoko, go after it in a big way.

Finally, 1 Peter 3, verse 11. This is the only one of these that doesn't come from Paul. At the beginning, you'd think Paul was the only one that repurposed this word.

1 Peter chapter 3, and in reality, Peter here is quoting from the Old Testament. He's quoting from the Psalms. But he says in verse 8, finally all of you be of one mind, compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this.

Paul says, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ. Knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing for he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good.

Let him seek peace and deoko it. Seek peace and pursue it. Here's our final thought before we go to the break.

Turn back. We'll see this eventually in 2 Corinthians. Go to 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 8. This is not a use of deoko.

This is a description of the love that we are to deoko. What kind of love is this? 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 8. Even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification, for building up and not for your destruction, Paul's gift is apostle and it comes with tremendous apostolic authority. But Paul says, you know why I have this, my function among you? It is to build you up, not to destroy.

Turn the page to chapter 13, verse 10. Paul says in verse 9, we're glad when we're weak and you're strong. In this we pray that you may be made complete, telios, perfect.

Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

For building up, not for destroying. What was in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians? Love builds up.

It does not tear down. It does not grieve fellow believers. How actively are we to pursue this kind of love, to check ourselves? Vigorously.

Deoko-wise. Makes, I think, a little bit more clear these first two words of chapter 14. Pursue love.

Let's pause here and take our break and when we come back we'll see if we can get to the rest of this verse.