

NOTES ON PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

* * * INSTRUCTIONS FOR A SPIRITUAL NURSERY * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!
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AUTHOR: Apostle Paul, written c. A.D.56 from Ephesus (1Cor16:8,19).

CITY OF CORINTH: Corinth was a wealthy commercial port city located on the 4-mile-wide isthmus that connects northern Greece (Biblical Macedonia) with the Peloponnesus to the south (Biblical Achaia). The hauling of cargo and smaller vessels across the isthmus, and the tolls on such commerce levied by the city, was the primary source of Corinth's wealth. The walls of the city of Corinth enclosed an area over twice the size of Athens.



The Corinth of Paul's day was an official Roman colony that had been built by Julius Caesar. Augustus Caesar later made Corinth the capitol of Achaia. Nero attempted to build a ship canal across the isthmus, but failed; after repeated attempts to do so down through history, it was finally accomplished in 1893.

The city's most conspicuous landmark was the Acrocorinth, a 1,886-ft. tall mountain just south of the city and visible far out to sea. Atop its highest peak was the magnificent Temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty; the 1,000 prostitutes that served there contributed to Corinth's reputation for immorality, similar to a Las Vegas of today. The city was also active in the Greek pastime of

athletic competition, hosting the Isthmian games every two years, which were second in size and popularity only to the Olympic games. The reward for victory in these games was a crown of celery (Cp. 1Cor9:24-27), and the judging of the competitors took place at Corinth's *Bema* seat (Cp. Acts18:12-17; Rom14:10; 2Cor5:10). An outdoor theatre for gladiatorial games at Corinth could seat 20,000.

BACKGROUND: Paul's stay in Corinth is recorded in Acts18:1-17. Paul first visited Corinth during his 2nd missionary journey following an unfruitful evangelistic experience in Athens (Acts17:16-18:1); his experience in Athens apparently led him to make a conscious decision to change his approach based on the poor results there (1Cor2:1-5).

It was in Corinth that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish believers who had been expelled from Rome (edict of Claudius c. A.D. 50). Since they were tentmakers like Paul, Paul resided and worked with them until Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia to help with his support. As was always Paul's method, he began his work by reaching out to the Jews in the synagogue (Rom1:16); here, however, he was not received well, so turned the focus of his evangelism to the Gentiles. Ironically, Paul's new base became the home of a Gentile believer whose house was next door to the synagogue; eventually Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue was converted. His replacement, Sosthenes, initially led the Jewish opposition to Paul and the Christians, but may have later been converted as well (cp. 1Cor1:1).

Being assured by the Lord in a night vision that it was His will for Paul to be in Corinth, and promising there were many who would be led to faith in Christ, Paul remained teaching in Corinth for at least one-and-a-half years (longer than anywhere else except Ephesus, Acts20:31).

Eventually the Jews made a concerted attack on the ministry of Paul. They brought him before Gallio, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, charging that Paul was propagating a "new" religion (i.e., Christianity), which was against Roman law. Gallio ruled that Paul's Christianity was not a new religion, but effectively a sect of Judaism (which was allowed by Roman law). This ruling, in the providence of God, was incredibly fortunate. Being made by Gallio, the proconsul of the important province of Achaia (and also the brother of the famous Roman philosopher Seneca), this ruling would carry significant weight as a legal precedent in the Roman empire; it would allow Paul the freedom to evangelize without interference from Rome for some time.

It was during Paul's stay in Corinth that he penned the letters 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

BROAD THEOLOGICAL ISSUES: 1 Corinthians is the ultimate apologetic to the contemporary issue/debate over so-called "lordship salvation" (i.e., that there's no such thing as carnal Christians; rather, these are professing Christians that aren't really saved). Those in the church at Corinth were the most worldly, carnal, apostate church members imaginable, yet Paul repeatedly addressed them as true believers (1Cor1:2; 2:1; 3:1; 6:9; 10:1; 15:1,51-52). This is consistent with the "free grace" understanding that the NT warning passages are addressed to true believers, and that the loss threatened is of rewards, not salvation (1Cor3:12-15).

1 Corinthians is a letter of instruction written to Christians living in a pagan culture (i.e., one without a working knowledge of the Bible) that is hostile to Christianity and the Biblical claim to absolute truth. In this situation the natural tension is for the culture to be a force that attempts to conform the Christian to its ungodly standards and norms (Rom12:1), rather than for the Christian to stand separated from that ungodly culture (2Cor6:17) and in contrast be a godly,

transforming influence on the culture (Rom12:2). Increasingly, the church in America resembles the church in Corinth more and more.

Though Paul's letter contains much so-called "practical" instruction for the Christian, note that his applications and conclusions are always drawn from the well of deep doctrinal truth. Doctrine and practice cannot be divorced; doctrine is extremely practical!

FORMAT: 1 Corinthians differs in format from most of Paul's other epistles, as it was written (in part) as a reply to a letter the church had sent him asking for clarification on specific questions (1Cor7:1).

CHAPTER 1

THE BELIEVER'S STANDING IN GRACE

- [1] Paul's authority was continually being challenged; his calling to be an apostle was from God (Gall:15-19).

Sosthenes mentioned here may be the converted synagogue ruler in Corinth (Acts18:17), mentioned here by Paul as someone who would be well known to the Corinthian believers.

- [2] Both uses of the term "church" are seen here. The "church ...which is at Corinth" is the local body of believers living in Corinth, whereas "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ" is the universal, invisible "Church".

These carnal Christians are referred to as "saints", which in the Bible is merely a term for true believers. They are saints because they are "sanctified in Christ Jesus". This is positional sanctification and has nothing at all to do with personal, practical holiness. In grace, God sees the true believer exactly as He sees Christ, with no basis for condemnation due to sin (Rom8:1) and made perfectly "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph1:6). The freeness of God's grace is exemplified in his acceptance of these worldly, carnal Christians at Corinth.

- [3] Grace always precedes, and is the source of, peace (Rom5:1). The believer can only have peace when he is secure in his salvation; and he can only be secure in his salvation if it is by grace, a free gift that is not dependent on his continued "good" behavior.
- [4] Only by God's grace given to these Corinthian believers are they saved; they have no works to commend them.
- [5] As will be greatly expanded later (1Cor12-14), the believers in Corinth were greatly blessed in spiritual gifts (utterance referring to the gift of tongues, knowledge).
- [6] The gifts of the Spirit possessed by the Corinthian believers were evidence that they were true believers. Care must be exercised here, however, as counterfeit gifts can be given by other spirits (1Jn4:1). Apparent spiritual gifts, even miraculous ones, are not the standard by which to judge the status of professing Christians.
- [7] No other church in Paul's day had more spiritual gifts than Corinth, which proves that God the Holy Spirit gives gifts according to His will (1Cor12:11) and purpose, independent of the personal holiness of the recipient believer. This contradicts the common belief/teaching of many Pentecostal groups today that gifts (especially that of tongues) is a second work of grace given to

the super-spiritual believer. The Corinthians were the least spiritual of all the N.T. believers, yet they possessed these gifts.

- [8] These carnal Christians are "kept saved" by God's grace, not their good behavior after salvation (2Tim1:12; 1Pet1:5).

The expression "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (also "the day" in 1Cor3:13; "the day of the Lord Jesus" in 1Cor5:5; similar expressions in Phill:6,10; 2:16) used repeatedly by Paul in referring to the coming judgment of believer's works by Christ for the purpose of reward (*bema*). It's emphasis is different than the expression "the day of the LORD", which refers to God's coming judgment of the world for sin and rebellion. The distinction is one of emphasis, not of timing, as both begin with the Rapture.

- [9] The security of the believer does not depend of the faithfulness of the believer, but rather on the faithfulness of God to His promise (Jn3:16,10:28-29; Rom10:9,13).

INAPPROPRIATE DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH

- [10] Paul opens with the first problem to be addressed in the Corinthian church, namely divisions among the brethren. Paul calls for unity among them, "beseeching" them "in the name of... Jesus Christ". This is the motivation of grace: the desire to please Christ rather than the requirement to obey the Law.
- [11] Word of the division within the church had come from personal contact between Paul and the house of Chloe (presumably a family in the Corinthian church), rather than as an issue in the letter sent to Paul from the Corinthians.
- [12] Divisions within the church were occurring along the lines of church leadership. Paul had started the church at Corinth; his ministry emphasized grace and Christian liberty. Apollos had come to teach at the church later (Acts18:24,27); being from Alexandria, he may have had an appeal to the Greek intellectuals in the church. Cephas is the Aramaic name for Simon Peter; there is no indication that Peter was ever present at Corinth, but being the Apostle to the Circumcision he could have had an appeal to the Jewish element in the church who emphasized the Mosaic Law in opposition to Christian liberty (Gal2:7,11-14). Others apparently repudiated all human teachers ("I am ...of Christ"); while sounding more spiritual, this position denies the fact that gifted teachers are given to the Church by the Lord (Eph4:11-12) and ought to be honored (1Tim5:17).
- [13] These questions are rhetorical, all being answered NO. Division along the lines of leaders' personalities is not appropriate. It is evidence of immature believers. Similar immaturity is often manifested today in allegiances to denominations without respect to their stands on Bible doctrine. This does not mean that teachers should not be judged based on their doctrine, they should (Acts17:11); division among the brethren resulting from false teaching is elsewhere mandated (Rom16:17).
- [14] Crispus was the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth converted under Paul's ministry (Acts18:8).
- [15] Here Paul expresses thanks that he did not baptize many in the church (other elders within the church performed the baptisms); so that immature believers would not think that one's baptism was

more significant if performed by the "great Apostle Paul", Paul just didn't baptize many. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ did not baptize, but had his disciples do it (Jn4:2).

THE LIMITS OF HUMAN WISDOM

- [17] This passage (also Lk23:43) ought to refute all arguments for the necessity of water baptism for salvation. If water baptism were necessary for salvation, it is inconceivable that the Apostle Paul would say, "Christ sent me not to baptize".

Furthermore, it is emphasized here that the power of the gospel is simply in the message proclaimed (i.e., "the cross of Christ" as in 1Cor15:1-4), independent of the person of the messenger or his oratorical abilities (i.e., "wisdom of words", which were highly emphasized and respected in the Greek world).

- [18] The message of the cross (i.e., the "gospel"), from the human perspective, appears to be foolishness (see Biblical illustration in v19). Fallen human nature always believes justification before God must come from good works rather than by grace appropriated by faith alone (Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5).

Fundamentally, these Corinthian believers (as well as ALL believers), need to be "transformed by the renewing of [our] minds" (Rom12:2) to have a Biblical worldview, seeing everything from the Divine viewpoint through the lens of Scripture; attempting to live the Christian life by using unsanctified common sense will not work.

Note in this verse all of humanity is divided into two, and only two, divisions: 1) them that perish, and 2) us who are saved (Jn3:16).

- [19] This is a quote of Isa29:14. The context is the attempted Assyrian conquest of Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah (2Kgs19). Human wisdom said Judah should make an alliance with Egypt for protection, but the LORD miraculously delivered Jerusalem when they relied on Him alone. From the human perspective, this appeared to be foolishness.
- [20] Here "the wise" and "the disputer of this age" refer to Greek philosophers and orators; "the scribe" refers to Jewish scholars.
- [21] Human wisdom (i.e., reason, philosophy) has limits; it does not lead one to know God. This was the conclusion of Solomon (Eccl11:13; 12:13), the wisest man who ever lived (1Kgs3:12). Salvation comes by believing what God has said, which requires divine revelation. The brilliance of man cannot appreciate the plan of God (see v. 25; Isa55:8-9).
- [22] The natural Jewish mind desired a miraculous sign to believe (Mt12:38); the natural Greek mind desired a sophisticated philosophical argument delivered by a gifted orator to be persuaded.
- [23] But Paul preached the gospel of Christ crucified in simplicity (see 1Cor2:1-5), which appealed to neither the unregenerate Jewish or Greek mind.
- [24] But to any who will set aside their reliance on human wisdom and accept God's revelation, the gospel of Christ is the "power of God

unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom1:16).

- [25] Always maintained in the Scripture is the CREATOR-CREATURE DISTINCTION (Isa55:8-9). God is not merely a "perfect man" or even a superman (Ps50:21). God is the Creator, man is the creature; these two categories have no overlap whatsoever. Here the wisdom of man cannot even reach to the level of what to God would be foolishness.
- [26] The believers in the church at Corinth were not what the world would consider wise or noble; they weren't scholars or philosophers, they were just plain folk.
- [27] More often than not, it is plain folk that God calls to believe. From the human viewpoint, this is because plain folk don't bring their own wisdom (i.e., preconceived ideas) to the Bible. From God's viewpoint, He has ordained that it should be this way to "confound the wise" and to shut every mouth, so that He, and He alone, receives the glory (see v. 29;).
- [29] The gospel of Christ says that man can do NOTHING to merit favor from God (Rom3:20; Isa64:6); salvation is by grace through faith (Eph2:8-9). In this way, God receives ALL the glory (2Cor12:9).
- [30] Our righteousness, sanctification and redemption (i.e., glorification) all come from being "in Christ"; it is His merit credited to our account that gives us standing before God.
- [31] Reference to Jer9:23-24. The gospel of grace precludes boasting (Eph2:9).

CHAPTER 2

PAUL DID NOT RELY ON HUMAN WISDOM

- [1] Paul's presentation of the gospel was not with "excellency of speech or of wisdom", as would appeal to the natural Greek mind. The power of the gospel rests not in our natural ability to present it well, nor in the hearer's natural ability to receive it; it is a supernatural process for both parties.
- [2] Here, "I determined" indicates a conscious decision made by Paul to change his evangelistic approach. Immediately before coming to Corinth, Paul had briefly preached in Athens (Acts17:16-18:1). There, he debated the best of the Greek philosophers on their own turf and according to their rules and style of debate, but with little fruit. In Corinth, his preaching was an unembellished message of Christ crucified (*for our sins*, 1Cor15:3-4) as the only way of salvation.
- [3] Paul's fears in Corinth were so great he was comforted and reassured by the Lord in a vision (see Acts18:9-10). Paul was a man of great courage; courage is not a lack of fear, but a commitment to do God's will despite fear. From a human perspective, Paul had much to fear—everywhere he preached they tried to kill him (2Cor11:23-30).
- [4] Paul's gospel preaching was a straightforward, unembellished message. He relied upon the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to convert, rather his own human ability to persuade.

- [5] If persuaded by a man's argument, you can be persuaded differently by a subsequent argument; but if converted by the power of God, your salvation is sure and eternal (2Tim1:12).
- [6] Not that Paul's message (i.e., the gospel of Christ) wasn't intelligent, logical, consistent and wise; it was all of these and much more, being the very wisdom of God (Isa55:8-9). Christianity is NOT anti-intellectual. The problem is that man's fallen and unregenerate mind can't recognize the wisdom of God (1Cor2:14). The solution is not to change the message to appeal to the unregenerate mind, but for the Spirit to regenerate the man so he can understand the wisdom of God (1Cor2:12).

Here "perfect" (Gk., *teleios*) is used in the sense of mature, one who is full-grown, an adult. Paul consistently uses this Greek word in this way throughout the epistle, which becomes very important in the interpretation of "when that which is perfect is come" in 1 Cor. 13:10.

- [7] God's wisdom cannot be found by the reasoning of fallen man (1Cor1:21); it must come by revelation from God Himself. In God's own wisdom, He "ordained" (i.e., predestined) a plan from before the beginning of time (Eph1:4; 2Tim1:9).

In the NT the English "mystery" is a transliteration (i.e., an untranslated word) of the Greek *musterion*; it means "a truth that cannot be known except by revelation from God, which He has only just now revealed" (Rom16:25-26; Eph3:4-5). Much of what Paul taught was a "mystery" of God; it was new revelation from God not found in the OT, but specifically revealed by the Lord to Paul (Gall1:11-12).

- [8] Those who crucified the Lord were ignorant of God's plan. That the Lord (Jesus Christ) and glory are linked attests to the deity of Christ (Jn17:1).

PAUL RELIES ON THE SPIRIT'S WORK OF ILLUMINATION

- [9] This is an OT quote of Isa. 64:4. Though often referenced as speaking of the glories of heaven awaiting the believer, in context it's a reference to God's entire plan of salvation. That plan is not for everyone, but for the subset called "them that love Him" (Cp. in Isa64:4, "him who waiteth for him" referring to the Jewish remnant of the last days who long for the Lord to come in deliverance).
- [10] It is the work of God's Holy Spirit to reveal the "deep things" of God (i.e., the wisdom of God); He doesn't do this for everyone, but only "unto us" (i.e., only to the regenerate man).
- [11] Just as only your human spirit can know the secret things of your own heart, only the Spirit of God knows the secret things of God.
- [12] The Christian has been given the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence, which is unique to the Church Age (Jn14:16-17). The purpose of being given the Spirit is that the Christian might understand the things of God. This is the Spirit's ministry of "illumination", and is for the believer only.
- [13] Thus, as Paul preaches he relies on the Holy Spirit to illuminate the minds of his hearers, that they might understand the things of God.

The clause "comparing spiritual *things* with spiritual" is translated differently in the various versions. In the KJV, *things* is added. In the original, the first "spiritual" (Gk., *pneumatikos*) is neuter and the second is masculine. This suggests the meaning of the clause is that the Holy Spirit works to "interpret (or make known) spiritual truths to spiritual men". This understanding is consistent with Paul's emphasis in vv9-10 that the Spirit's ministry of illumination is only in the believer.

- [14] The "natural man" (Gk., *pseuchikos*) is the unregenerate man. Since he does not have the Holy Spirit to lead and illuminate him, he must be led by his own soul. Therefore, we cannot understand the Word of God.
- [15] The "spiritual man" (Gk., *pneumatikos*) is the regenerate man being led by the Holy Spirit. He is the believer in fellowship with God. He is illuminated by the Holy Spirit to understand the Word of God. Here, "judge" is used with the sense of understanding or discernment.
- [16] Only "we" who have been born again and have the Holy Spirit illuminating our minds can understand the truths of God (Rom12:2).

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE CARNAL CHRISTIAN

- [1] The problem with the church at Corinth was that it was filled with immature, carnal Christians. Paul refers to the believers there as "babes [lit., infants] in Christ".
- [2] Infants cannot survive on their own; they demand the constant care of the parent, unable even to feed themselves. The expectation, however, is that infants will eventually grow up, becoming independent and productive. God has this same expectation for believers. We should mature with time and become spiritually independent, able to feed ourselves the "meat" of the Word.

"Milk" and "meat" here are idioms used for elementary and advanced doctrines (Heb5:12-14); careful study reveals that elementary doctrine is associated with justification (milk), whereas advanced doctrine deals with sanctification (meat). God's desire and expectation for the believer is that with time and maturity, he will not simply repeat elementary doctrines but move on to more advanced truths (Heb6:1). These Corinthian believers were not doing this, as Paul thought they should be by this time; note that Paul had formed this church at most a few years before the writing of this letter, so the audience had been Christians for only a few years.
- [3] The "carnal man" (Gk., *sarkikos*) is the regenerate man who, though he has the indwelling Holy Spirit available to him, chooses to walk according to the flesh. He is a believer out of fellowship with God. The entire "Lordship salvation" controversy of today has arisen because the 'Lordship' camp fails to recognize the existence of the carnal Christian.

To "walk as men" means to appear to be mere men (i.e., natural men, or non-Christians). Though the Corinthians are true believers, they are carnal Christians; they cannot derive spiritual truths from the Bible because as carnal Christians they

are not benefiting from the Holy Spirit's ministry of illumination.

(THE THREE MEN OF 1 COR. 2:14-3:3)

TYPE OF MAN	BELIEVER?	CONTROLLED BY
Natural Man (2:14) Gk. <i>pseuchikos</i>	NO	His unregenerate soul; cannot understand Scripture
Spiritual Man (2:15) Gk., <i>pneumatikos</i>	YES	Indwelling Holy Spirit; illumined by Spirit to understand Scripture
Carnal Man (3:1-3) Gk., <i>sarkikos</i>	YES	His flesh; understands milk of the Word, not meat

- [4] The divisions within the fellowship are evidence of the carnality of the Corinthian believers (Gal5:18-21).

OUR DEVOTION IS TO THE LORD, NOT TO THE SERVANTS THE LORD USES

- [5] Of the divisions listed in 1 Cor. 1:12, only Paul and Apollos had actually ministered in the church at Corinth. But both Paul and Apollos were simply servants (Gr., *diakonos*) of the Lord, no different than each of the Corinthian believers.
- [6] Paul planted (i.e., founded, Act18:1-11) the church at Corinth; Apollos watered (i.e., taught, Act18:24,28) it. Any differences between Paul and Apollos were differences of function, not purpose (see v. 8). God had gifted them in different ways, but for the same purpose of "...perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph4:11-16).
- [7] Those who plant and those who water (evangelists and teachers) are simply using the gifts that God gave them to use; they are tools in the hand of God. It is God, not His servants, that gives life, so it should be God alone who gets the glory, and it should be God alone who receives our devotion.

OUR SERVICE FOR THE LORD WILL BE GRACIOUSLY REWARDED

- [8] As Christians who have been saved by God in His grace (Eph2:8-9), we are called by Him to work (Eph2:10). Our service for the Lord will be judged for the purpose of reward (2Cor5:10). This is that to which the Lord referred when he exhorted the believer to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Mt6:20). The repeated use of the pronoun "own" in reference to both labor and reward emphasizes that the judgment of believers will be individual.
- [9] Two metaphors are used by Paul for the local church body at Corinth in Chapter 3. That of a cultivated field was used in vv6-8; in v10 the metaphor changes to that of a building.
- [10] In the original Greek, "masterbuilder" is the word from which we get *architect* in English; in Greek it designated one who superintended the erection of a building (so the idea is one of a construction supervisor rather than designer).

Paul and the other apostles and NT prophets were used by God to lay the foundation of the Church (Eph2:20). This foundation, once laid, could never be altered (Gall:8). Subsequent teachers do not lay a new foundation, but rather build upon that foundation laid by the apostles. The Scriptures are replete with warnings to those who would teach or minister in the church (Gall:9; Js3:1).

- [11] In the building metaphor, the foundation of the Church is Christ (Eph2:20; 1Pt2:5-7) and His work (1Cor1:18; 2:2).
- [12] The teaching and ministry of believers is likened to building upon that foundation. The foundation laid by the apostles is true and sure because God inspired their words, but that which is built upon it by future human teachers is of varied quality. In Greek, the list is distinct as two groups of three: gold, silver, precious stones vs. wood, hay, stubble. These two groups are acceptable vs. unacceptable, but there seems to be indicated varied degrees of quality even with that which is acceptable or unacceptable. The '-' that ends the English v12 indicates that the Greek sentence ends abruptly without being completed; it is as if Paul stops in mid-sentence, unable to go on as the quality of ministry drops to unthinkable levels.
- [13] The mention of "the day" alludes to the Day of Christ, as discussed in 1 Cor. 1:8. This is the Judgment Seat of Christ where the works of believers are judged (2Cor5:10) for the purpose of reward. The judgment of the work will be to determine "of what sort it is," so the emphasis is on the quality of the works more than the quantity.
- [14] Acceptable works by the believer will be rewarded by the Lord. These works are necessarily works performed after salvation, as no work by the unregenerate man is ever acceptable to God (Isa64:6). Furthermore, even these rewards given to believers are rewards given by the grace of God. It is God that regenerates the believer, graciously gifts him for service, gives him divine opportunities to use these gifts to serve Himself, then promises the saint a reward for their faithful use; thus, it is grace from start to finish. God chooses to give believers rewards, but He is never indebted to do so. On the contrary, we are indebted to serve the Lord whether He chooses to reward us or not.

The believer's rewards will be enjoyed during the age to come (i.e., the Millennium) and seem to include positions of authority in the Kingdom (Lk19:11-24).

- [15] It is conceivable for a believer to have little or no works (i.e., fruitful Christian service) to be rewarded by the Lord. Such an unfruitful Christian is nonetheless saved and will inherit eternal life because salvation is by grace apart from works (Eph2:8-9).

The motivation for faithfulness and service in the Christian life is not from fearing the loss of salvation. Rather, it is to be a response of gratitude to a God and Savior whom we love, but it is also motivated by the hope of reward. The hope of reward does not make our service less spiritual, as Paul repeatedly states that he himself labors faithfully from this motive and that it is proper for us to do so as well (1Cor9:24-27; 2Tim4:6-8).

This is not essentially different from the role that the Mosaic Law played for Israel in the OT. The Law promised earthly blessing for the believer who kept it (Lev26:3-13; Deut28:1-14), and earthly cursing for the believer who despised it (Lev26:14-39; Deut28:15-68). Salvation, however, was never said to be obtained, or obtainable, by keeping it, but was by faith in the OT just as in the NT (Gen15:6; Rom4:1-3).

- [16] Continuing the metaphor of the building, the Church (i.e., the corporate, universal body of all true believers) is said to be the Temple (Gk., *naos*, always used of inner sanctum of the Temple, the

Holy Place + Holy of Holies) of God, or the place on earth where God dwells.

During the dispensation of the Law, God was said to dwell in the Temple at Jerusalem (2Chr6:2); thus, the believer had to physically travel to the Temple at Jerusalem to worship Jehovah (Deut16:16). During the Church Age, God dwells within all believers, freeing the believer to worship in any place (Mt18:20; Jn4:20-24). This reflects the fact that in the OT Israel as the people of God was a single nation residing in a confined geographical location, whereas in the NT the Church as the people of God is composed of individuals from all nations and living throughout the world.

- [17] Anything done to harm the Church is considered to be "defiling the Temple of God." Here the context is false teaching, but the concept will be extended to include personal sin in Chapter 6.

The Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer during this Age becomes a new and powerful motive for personal sanctification (cf., 1Cor6:18-20); failure to live a holy life will bring Divine discipline into the life of the believer, up to and including physical death (e.g., 1Cor11:30).

- [18] We must put aside human wisdom when God has given us His perfect revelation. This is directed to teachers within the church; we must teach the Word of God, not the wisdom of man (i.e., philosophy, secular psychology, evolution, big-bang, etc.).
- [19] Note again, the CREATOR-CREATURE DISTINCTION (1Cor1:25). God's way by definition is the best way, whether it appears so to us or not. Quotation is from Job 5:13.
- [20] Quotation is from Ps. 94:11. The best of human wisdom is vanity if it is in conflict with God's revelation.
- [21] For this reason, to boast regarding human teachers is not appropriate. If they're teaching human wisdom, it's vanity; if they're teaching God's Word, the message of God should be the focus, not the messenger. Furthermore, God is the One Who has given teachers to edify the Church (Eph4:11-12), and we should benefit from all of them rather than limiting ourselves to one of them.
- [22] Interesting that in reviewing the things God has given, Christ is removed from the list (cp., 1Cor1:12), which is another occurrence of the CREATOR-CREATURE DISTINCTION. Christ as God does not appear on a list of human teachers given to the Church.
- [23] The things appearing in v22 have been given by God and belong to the believer. But Christ does not belong to us. Rather, we belong to Christ and God (1Cor6:19-20); we are the creature, He is the Creator.

Here, Christ belonging to God (i.e., the Father) is not a denial of the deity of Christ, but reflects the subordination of roles within the Persons of the Trinity (1Cor11:3; Jn8:28-29).

CHAPTER 4

- [1] Though a chapter break occurs, the thought that ended Chapter 3 continues. Paul says consider "us" (i.e., Paul, Apollos, Cephas) to be merely servants of Christ; therefore, focus on Him and not

us. The word "minister" (or servant in some versions) is not *diakonos* as in 3:5, but *huperetes* which is a word for servant that emphasizes the subordinate role and accountability of the minister to his superior; this is consistent with the shift to the use of "steward".

The apostles and NT prophets, and now teachers during the Church Age, are called "stewards of the mysteries of God". The word steward is the Greek *oikonomos*, from same root as dispensation (Gk., *oikonomia*). A dispensation is an ordained administration of God, and a steward is an administrator or manager. God has now given His full revelation to man for this dispensation, and He has given apostles, prophets and teachers during this Dispensation of Grace (Eph3:2), in effect during the Church Age, to dispense or manage that revelation.

In a broader sense, this charge or stewardship is given to the entire Church (Mt28:18-20).

- [2] The Lord expects His stewards to be faithful to Him and His will in their service. The charge to be faithful in service implies that their service will be evaluated at some point in the future (1Cor3:12-15; Lk12:42-48; 19:12-24; 1Tim1:11-12).
- [3] Paul says he himself is not competent to judge his own service to the Lord, so obviously other men are not competent to judge him either.
- [4] In his role as "minister of Christ" and "steward of God", Paul will be judged (i.e., his service evaluated) by the Lord to Whom his is accountable. As Christians, our every decision should be made and every act undertaken in view of our coming evaluation by the Lord, with no regard for man's evaluation of it today.
- [5] Premature human judgment, therefore, is prohibited because of the possibility of error (as in the Lord's parable of the wheat and the tares, Mt13:29). The phrase "the time" is another reference to the Day of Christ (1Cor1:8, 3:13); we are to await the Lord's own judgment of His servants at His coming.

Notice, however, the emphasis of the Lord's coming judgment of his servants; it is the "counsels (i.e., motives) of the hearts" that must be made known in order to come to a correct evaluation. We cannot exercise fair judgment when it is a matter of evaluating motives, so we are prohibited from doing so; when the Lord returns, He can and will evaluate motives. The result of the Lord's judgment will be that every man will receive the "praise of God" he deserves; this judgment, the judgment of believers at the *Bema*, is for the purpose of praise and reward, not condemnation (Rom8:1).

This verse also helps us understand the differences between NT passages that prohibit judgment (Mt7:1; 1Cor4:5) versus those that command it (7:24); we are commanded to judge public actions of believers that are sinful (e.g., 1Cor5:3-13), but not matters that relate to motives of the heart.

- [6] This all brings us back to the local Corinthian debate over the supremacy of Paul, Apollos or Cephas that has really been the topic of the past several chapters; their ministries will be judged by the Lord, and it is not appropriate for the believers at Corinth to try to evaluate or rank them.

The importance and emphasis here is on the revelation from God (i.e., their teaching, "that which is written"); this can and should be evaluated by the believer against the standard to the Word (Act17:11).

Paul finally identifies the source of the conflict over the teachers in Corinth: PRIDE. The solution to the problem will be to imitate the humility of the apostles (vv. 9ff).

- [7] Spiritual pride is causing the division within the local body. It is manifesting itself in two ways: 1) arguments over which apostle should have supremacy, and 2) strife over which spiritual gifts are better than others (1Cor12-14). But there is no room for pride in either of these disputes; it is a sovereign God who gives gifts as He wills (1Cor12:11) to both the apostles themselves and the believers in Corinth, so human evaluation of God's gifts is inappropriate and excluded.
- [8] By despising humility in their state of spiritual pride, the Corinthians had missed the pattern of the Christian life, which is humility and self-sacrifice during this age, with reward and exaltation in the age to come; this is the pattern Christ Himself modeled (Phil2:5-11). Christ will personally rebuke the Church at Laodicea for this sin (Rev3:14-22). It is Paul's hope that the reward of the Corinthians (and his own as well) in the age to come would be great, but they are presumptuously claiming it prematurely.

FOLLOW THE APOSTLE'S EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY

- [9] The solution to the divisions within the Church at Corinth was humility and self-sacrifice of the believers; this would not be a solution welcomed by the natural Greek mind that regarded these traits as weaknesses. The apostles themselves exhibited these virtues (most ultimately being martyred) as an example and a testimony to both men and angels (Eph3:8-10).
- [10] The example modeled by the apostles was viewed as foolish, weak and despicable by the evaluation of the world (and still is); in contrast, the carnal Corinthian believers desired to be seen by the world as wise, strong and honorable. The two are mutually exclusive (Jas4:4; 1Jn2:15-17).
- [11] Paul was not mad or masochistic; he did not enjoy or seek out suffering. But to live godly during this age will bring condemnation and persecution from the world (Jn15:18-20, 16:33; 2Tim3:12). For the Christian, whether in Corinth during the first century or in America today, to think that he can be true to following Christ and at the same time be honored or respected by the world is a delusion.
- [14] Paul is not using his sufferings (versus their lack of them) to show his spiritual superiority; there is no pride from Paul here. It is not Paul's purpose to shame the Corinthians, though they should be shamed. Rather, his purpose is to warn them that their attitudes are not Biblical and will result in their being judged if not changed.
- [15] As the founder of the church at Corinth and the one who personally led many of the believers there to Christ, Paul sees himself as their spiritual father. As such, Paul's heart is that of a father who sees his sons choosing a destructive path and tries to lovingly correct him.

- [16] As a son loves and desires to imitate his earthly father, Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers to look to him as a spiritual model.
- [17] Paul sent Timothy, another of his spiritual sons who is imitating Paul's spiritual example, to the church at Corinth to remind them of Paul's life. Paul's life is patterned and modeled after Christ Himself, so for him to exhort believers to imitate himself is the same as imitating Christ.
- [18] Paul expected that some of the arrogant leadership in the church might not be moved by his written appeal.
- [19] For this reason, he intends to personally visit the church again, Lord willing (Jas4:13-15). This visit will be for the purpose of personally enforcing discipline, as a father disciplines a rebellious son (Heb12:5-8).
- [20] As an apostle, Paul had access to supernatural power to discipline (Act13:9-11).
- [21] It is Paul's desire that when he arrives at the church for his visit he might find that the problems addressed in this letter have already been corrected, so that he does not have to enforce discipline; however, he will not shy away from doing so if necessary.

CHAPTER 5

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH COMMANDED

- [1] Paul now calls attention to the commonly known and verified fact that there is an ongoing (note the present tense "have his father's wife) incestuous relationship between a member of the church and his step-mother (who is apparently not a believer/church member). This sin is listed among a multitude of other sexual perversions in Lev18:8,27 (also Deut22:30) that carried the death penalty under the Mosaic Law (Lev18:29); such a relationship was even forbidden by Roman law.
- [2] In their pride, the Corinthian church had not dealt with this public sin within the fellowship. Paul says their action should have been to put the sinning member out of the fellowship.
- [3] Even from a distant city, Paul says he has passed judgment on this sinning brother concerning his "deed". Though Paul has previously written that the unknowable motives of a brother are not to be judged (1Cor4:5), here he commands that the public deeds of a brother are to be judged. Public sins, but not private motives, of those among us who are professing Christians are to be judged.
- [4] Paul now commands the Corinthian church to corporately carry out the judgment against this sinning brother. In doing so, they have not only the authority of the Apostle Paul, but of the Lord Jesus Himself who also ordained the procedure for rebuking, and if necessary disciplining, a sinning brother (Mt18:15-17).
- [5] The commanded discipline is to put the sinning brother out of the fellowship. Once the sinning brother is out of the fellowship, the Lord appears to be set to allow Satan to kill him; he has sinned the "sin unto death" (1Jn5:16). Note, however, that this man's salvation is not lost as he will be "saved" at the judgment

seat of Christ, but presumably with considerable loss of personal reward (Cp. 1Cor3:15).

While a Christian can commit heinous sins without fearing the loss of his salvation, he cannot continue in sin without discipline from God (Heb12:6-11). God's disciplinary action can come directly from Him, but there is also a role ordained for the local church as indicated in this passage. The ultimate action of discipline a church can take is to remove a sinning brother from membership in the fellowship; such an action, however, does not preclude the brother from being restored to fellowship upon his repentance (e.g., 2Cor2:6-8; Lk17:3-4). The goal of even this extreme form of discipline is the repentance and restoration of the sinner.

- [6] The first purpose in the prescribed action was to discipline the sinning brother (v5). The second purpose, not to be overlooked and just as important as the first, is protection of the purity of the body of believers. Unchecked public sin within the fellowship will spread.
- [7] To prevent the spread of sin, its source must be removed from the fellowship. Leaven is used throughout the Scriptures as a type of sin (e.g., Mt16:12); it corrupts by "puffing up" (metaphor for pride) and its spread is difficult to check. The goal is that the church would be unleavened, or publicly pure. "Purge out... the leaven" in the imperative mood is a command, not a suggestion.
- [8] The use of the metaphor of leaven has reminded Paul of the ritual leading up to the Passover feast where all leaven was removed from the devout Jewish home. In similar fashion, Paul desires the Corinthian church to metaphorically "keep the feast" in the sense of being diligent to remove the sources of sin from within the fellowship.
- [9] Paul had written the Corinthians a previous letter that has not been preserved. Thus, that letter was not inspired; not everything an Apostle wrote was the inspired Word of God. In this previous epistle, Paul had instructed the church not to tolerate fornicators; his instruction then was directed toward fornicators within the fellowship, which he will clarify now.
- [10] In instructing the Corinthians "not to company with fornicators", he does NOT mean unbelieving fornicators. It would be impossible for us to function without interacting with unbelievers, which are steeped in all manner of sinful behavior.
- [11] He now clarifies that his previous command was directed toward sinners who are "called a brother" (i.e., a professing believer). The Corinthians are not to fellowship (under the metaphor "eat") with other believers who are involved in unconfessed sin. Rather, they are to use church discipline in an attempt to bring the brother to the point of repentance.
- [12] Here is another point of clarification regarding the objects of a Christian's "judgment". We are to judge believers within the fellowship, but not unbelievers in the world.
- [13] The judgment of the unbeliever is to be God's work in which we are not involved. However, we (i.e., the local church) does have a role to play in the temporal judgment of believers within the body. In the case of the incestuous believer at Corinth, he must be removed from the fellowship.

CHAPTER 6

PROHIBITION OF USING SECULAR COURTS TO RESOLVE DISPUTES BETWEEN BELIEVERS

- [1] Paul now raises another problem issue within the church at Corinth. Church members are going to the public, secular courts for resolution of disputes between each other. This presents two problems: 1) it presents a terrible public witness to the community, and 2) since the secular judges are not believers, they are far less qualified to judge between believers than are other believers. This is a case of believers who know and understand the righteousness of God asking for justice from unbelieving judges who do not.
- [2] In the age to come, believers will be part of the Lord's administration of His kingdom; one of our roles, as defined here, will be to serve as judges, even having the authority to sentence criminals to death (Rev2:26-27). In light of this, it ought to be a small thing for believers to settle disputes between themselves within the confines of the fellowship.
- [3] More mysterious, believers will also be put in authority over angels (Heb2:5-8; Eph1:20-21).
- [4] Paul is saying here that in resolving disputes between believers, believers within the fellowship who are led by the Holy Spirit should be used as judges rather than unbelieving secular judges who by definition have no spiritual discernment whatever (1Cor2:14).
- [5] This is a shameful situation. The church at Corinth had been gifted with all manner of spiritual gifts (1Cor1:5), including the gift of discernment (1Cor12:10). Such gifted church members ought to be used for just this situation.
- [6] Not only can believers not expect to get justice from unbelievers, it's a terrible public witness to the community.
- [7] Even if there were not those within the church capable of judging disputes between believers, taking such a dispute to a public court should never be considered. A believer should be prepared to suffer loss rather than participate in such a deplorable public testimony. It is much better to receive a wrong than to commit one; this was the example of both Paul (1Cor4:12) and the Lord Jesus (1Pet2:23).
- [8] In their prideful condition, the Corinthian believers were unwilling to suffer loss from their brethren. Paul says this was WRONG!
- [9] Paul now expands from the particular sin of the previous verses to include many more sins in which the Corinthians were involved before their conversions, and some in which they remain involved even as Christians.

A general principle is introduced: inheritance in the kingdom to come was for the righteous, not the unrighteous. Thus, even though a Christian is not under the Mosaic Law as a rule of life (Rom6:14), he is still to pursue righteousness and forsake unrighteousness (Rom6:15). Examples now listed of unrighteousness include fornication, distinct from adultery, and also distinct from homosexual behavior.

- [10] The kingdom is to be a place where all these sins are not only forbidden, but will be dealt with quickly by the Lord Himself (Ps2:9) and His body (Rev2:26-27) which will rule with Him. Righteousness in the kingdom will be enforced, though it is not today during the Age of Grace. Nevertheless, the pursuit of righteousness ought to be the desire of the Christian. For the believer to continue in these sins today doesn't make sense.
- [11] Believers in the church at Corinth had committed many (perhaps all) of the sins in the preceding list; committing such sins does not mean one cannot be saved. Now that they have been saved, however, they ought to be pursuing sanctification.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND PURITY OF THE BELIEVER

- [12] "All things are lawful unto me" was apparently a slogan being used in the Corinthian church to express their understanding of life under grace rather than law; however, this is a gross misunderstanding of Christian liberty (Rom6:14-15). Christian liberty has its limits, as will be developed more fully in 1Cor8-10. While it is true that the Church Age believer is not under the Law of Moses as a rule of life, nevertheless the Law contains many Godly principles that have application to the believer today. Furthermore, when Christian liberty results in slavery (i.e., addictive habits/desires) it must be shunned.
- [13] Another slogan related to the use of foods (the question of Christian liberty as it relates to food is the subject of 1Cor8). Since the body needs food and food brings pleasure, the Corinthian believers concluded that there was nothing wrong with indulging fully their desires (which were leading to gluttony); this attitude was further extended to sexual immorality.
- [14] Fornication is a sin of the body, and our bodies are eternal (in the sense that these bodies will be resurrected to live forever).
- [15] To further emphasize the need for purity in the believer, Paul reminds them that our bodies are members of the Lord's Body (Eph1:22-23). The Lord identifies Himself intimately with His Body (Cp. Acts9:5), so for us to sin with our bodies is akin to involving the Lord Jesus Himself in our sin; such a notion is unthinkable!
- [16] The sexual act puts two bodies in union with each other (Gen2:24); thus, fornication for the believer is the same as placing Christ in union with a harlot.
- [17] In contrast to fornication which places two bodies in union, when we believe on Christ our spirits are placed in union with His Spirit. Therefore, those in union with Christ should never allow any other form of union that would be in conflict with our spiritual wedlock with the Lord.
- [18] This imperative, "flee fornication", is clearly given here because there are those within the church at Corinth that are involved in it. The nearby Temple to Aphrodite with its 1,000 temple prostitutes made fornication rampant and accepted in Corinth.

Whereas many sins a believer commits have no direct physical impact on the body, sexual immorality certainly does. This is especially true for homosexual behavior (Rom1:26-27).

- [19] The Christian believer is today the Temple of the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit indwells every believer. This is analogous to God indwelling the physical Temple in the O.T. (1Kgs6:13; 2Chr6:6, 7:1). The Temple is the place where God meets with the believer. For this reason, the O.T. saint was required to come to the Temple at Jerusalem (Dt16:16), but the Church saint has no such requirement (Mt18:20).

Since the Spirit of God dwells in the body of every believer, how can one think of using that body for vile purposes.

- [20] God has two claims on our lives: He created us originally, and He redeemed us when we sold ourselves into the bondage of sin (at the price of His own Son's life). Thus, on two accounts God owns us. This gives Him the right to make the rules that, out of gratitude, should be our privilege to obey. Not our spirits alone, but also our bodies should be used in ways that bring glory to our Creator and Redeemer.

CHAPTER 7

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS REGARDING THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- [1] This is the first use of "now concerning" by Paul, but he will introduce new topics with this phrase repeatedly in the remainder of the letter. It indicates that the Apostle is now responding to specific questions asked of him by the Corinthians in the letter they had sent.

The church at Corinth was obviously filled with a diversity of problems, strife, and resulting division within the fellowship. Whereas many in the church were using Christian liberty as a license to sin (e.g., Ch. 6), there was also a strong ascetic element standing in opposition. This ascetic element was apparently speaking against marriage for the Christian in general (Cp., 1Tim4:1-3), as well as against the conjugal relationship within an existing marriage. In this section Paul will dispel the idea that a Christian is required to live a life of asceticism.

"It is good" should be understood as "it is acceptable", or "it is permissible" for a believer not to marry; marriage is not a requirement, nor is it dishonorable to remain unmarried.

- [2] However, for the Christian to remain unmarried requires total abstinence from sexual relations. If one cannot exercise self-control in this area, then Paul counsels marriage where this desire can be appropriately fulfilled.
- [3] Within the bond of marriage, sexual relations between husband and wife are not only permitted, but expected. There is nothing sinful, inappropriate or even unspiritual about sexual intimacy between husband and wife (Heb13:4).
- [4] In marriage, the husband and wife become "one flesh" (Gen2:24). A sexual relationship is expected, independent of the issue of procreation.
- [5] Paul gives married believers the imperative, "Deprive ye not one another". It is not permissible for a husband or a wife to withhold sexual intimacy from the other. The exception to this is for the special purpose of "fasting and prayer". Even for this exception, however, it must be by mutual agreement, and it cannot be a permanent condition.

- [6] Paul's instructions of verse 5 are given as a permission, not a commandment. Seasons of abstinence for the purpose of "fasting and prayer" are permissible for a married couple, but are not a requirement. There is nothing inherently more spiritual about abstinence for the married couple as compared to the normal sexual relationship.
- [7] Here Paul expresses his personal desire that all Christians might remain as he is (i.e., unmarried). He will elaborate on this later in this chapter (vv31-35), but by this he means that one can devote oneself to the work of the Lord more fully without the obligations marriage brings. Nevertheless, Paul acknowledges that to remain unmarried and resist the temptations to fornication requires a special gift from God, which all do not have.
- [8] Paul reiterates his teaching that it is perfectly acceptable to remain unmarried.
- [9] However, if one does not have the ability to resist the temptation to fornication in an unmarried condition, Paul counsels marriage. Marriage is preferable to remaining unmarried and giving in to sexual passions.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS REGARDING BELIEVERS ALREADY MARRIED

- [10] Paul now shifts from teaching for the unmarried to teaching for the married. His teaching here does not allow for any latitude for different opinions or practices in that he abandons his normal gracious appeal, "I beseech you", for the unequivocal "I command".

Paul's commandment to the believing wife is not to leave her husband. What is meant is a prohibition on divorce. It is given here in more generic terms since divorce was not always a legal option for the wife; Roman law permitted a wife to divorce her husband, but Jewish law did not.

In giving this command, Paul says it is "not I, but the Lord". This clause has led to great abuse at the hands of liberals, who use it to claim that much of Paul's teaching should be regarded as uninspired advice which is not authoritative. Such is not the case. The written teaching of the apostles is the Word of God (1Thess2:13; 1Pet1:21); Paul later in this epistle says that all he has written in his letter to the Corinthians is "the commandments of the Lord" (1Cor14:37). The distinction Paul is making in this verse is not between uninspired (thus not authoritative) and inspired (authoritative) teaching, but rather between teaching that had previously been given by the Lord during His earthly ministry and teaching by Paul that was a new subject that had not been addressed by the Lord. Here, Paul is saying that his teaching prohibiting divorce and remarriage had been given by the Lord Jesus Himself (Mt5:32,19:9; Mk10:11-12; Lk16:18); thus, Paul's teaching here is nothing more than a reiteration of that given by the Lord.

- [11] Continuing the subject of a wife not leaving her husband, Paul recognizes that there may be cases where either the wife must leave, or has already left. In that case, Paul's command is that she remain unmarried. The reason for this is that the goal is always a restoration of the marriage, which a remarriage would preclude.

Paul's command continues by addressing the other perspective. A husband is not to "put away" (i.e., divorce) his wife; no exceptions to this general rule are given. Divorce between believers is never acceptable.

- [12] Now Paul begins teaching saying, "speak I, not the Lord", indicating that the following instructions are new apostolic and authoritative teaching from Paul on a subject that was never addressed by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry; the Lord Jesus in His teaching never addressed the specific issue of a mixed marriage (i.e., marriage of a believer and an unbeliever).

A believing husband is not to "put away" his unbelieving wife. This particular clarification is likely needed since one reading the OT would see that a Jewish man was commanded to put away his unbelieving heathen wife, as well as any children that had resulted from that marriage (Ezra10:2-3; Neh13:23-27). However, this is not to be the practice for the Christian during the Church Age.

- [13] Similarly, a believing wife is not to leave her unbelieving husband. However, it is recognized in both circumstances that the unbelieving spouse may force a divorce; such cannot be prevented. However, in the case where the unbelieving spouse is content to remain in the marriage, the believer must not seek a divorce.

- [14] This verse is clearly not teaching that an unbelieving spouse or unbeliever are saved by virtue of having a believing spouse (or parent). Nevertheless, there is great privilege and benefit to a home that has at least one believer present; the gospel can be shared, the believer's life will be a silent testimony to the unsaved in the home, and the unsaved will benefit by God's blessing on the home for the sake of the believer. These are all valid reasons why a believing spouse should not break up the home, even if he or she is the only believer in that home.

- [15] Again, it is recognized that even where it is the believer's desire to maintain the marriage and the home, an unbelieving spouse may force a divorce. Obviously, this cannot be prevented, and it is unreasonable to think God's righteous rule can be forced on an unregenerate man or woman. A Christian is not "under bondage" in this case, meaning he or she does not have to go to extreme measures in attempting to prevent the divorce; in such a case, however, the command would be for the divorced Christian to "remain unmarried" (v11), since reconciliation of the husband and wife and restoration of the marriage is the goal.

- [16] The conclusion is that a mixed marriage should continue, since for a believing spouse to remain in a marriage is the best witness to an unbelieving husband or wife (1Pet3:1). It is recognized that this is a difficult burden to bear, but one of many that the believer is called to bear with support and encouragement from other believers (Gal6:2-5).

- [17] At the time of his calling, a believer is thus commanded to remain in his (or her) current marital status. There is nothing inherently sinful about marriage, whether to a believer or an unbeliever, though a command will subsequently be given that a believer is not to marry an unbeliever (1Cor7:39; 2Cor6:14); rather, it is the breaking up of a marriage that is forbidden.

- [18] This principle of remaining in the place of one's calling applied in v17 to marriage also has other applications. A Jew does not

have to adopt Gentile practices when he becomes a believer, and likewise a Gentile does not have to adopt Jewish practices.

- [19] Here, "the keeping of the commandments of God" concerns the instructions given up to this point in this chapter and is not a reference to the keeping of the Mosaic Law.
- [20] A Christian is not necessarily called to change his vocation; this assumes his vocation is not inherently sinful (e.g., Lk19:8). The Lord purposes to have Christians in all vocations to be Godly witnesses to all men (1Cor10:31; Col3:17).
- [21] Be content with the vocation you are in as a Christian (Phil4:11-12)), even if that is as a slave. There's nothing to worry about if you are a slave, but if you can gain your freedom that's better, in the sense that you'll have more freedom to serve the Lord.
- [22] Whether vocationally slave or free, Christians have all been set free from the bondage to sin by Christ and now are bondslaves (Gk., *doulos*) of His.
- [23] Having been redeemed by Christ, our purpose is to serve Him rather than men. Here, "*servant of men*" is again the Greek *doulos*, which carries the idea of being a "*willing slave to men*" and is not referring to forced bondage.
- [24] We can serve the Lord in any vocation. In fact, we are to work diligently in our vocations, whatever they may be, as if we were serving the Lord Himself (Eph6:5-8).

APOSTOLIC ADVICE TO THE UNMARRIED

- [25] Here Paul begins his response to another specific question from the Corinthians (1Cor7:1) regarding the advisability of getting married. Paul starts his response by saying that in this case, he will be giving his personal (albeit inspired) advice, as the Lord gave no specific teaching on this issue during His earthly ministry.
- There is no command that prohibits marriage, nor requires it. However, in the current situation of Corinth in particular, and 1st century Christianity in general, Paul advises against marriage for specific reasons he notes in the verses that follow. Also, Paul acknowledges that the advice to follow comes from one who has received the gift from God to remain unmarried, and he has already acknowledged that not all have been given this gift (1Cor7:7).
- [26] Paul's advice is to remain unmarried. However, note that this advice is qualified for "for the present distress". Though not so much for the church at Corinth, Paul was personally familiar with the persecution coming on Christian churches. For this reason, he advised against marriage. The inference is that in a time of peace and calm, marriage is the expected norm (Gen2:18; Heb13:4); elsewhere, Paul speaks of those who forbid marriage as a sign of latter day apostasy (1Tim4:1-3).
- [27] The advice is to the unmarried; those already married are to remain married.
- [28] Again Paul reiterates that these instructions are only his advice, given with qualifications. There is nothing sinful or inappropriate about marriage; it is certainly not forbidden.

Nevertheless, in certain situations (i.e., times of persecution) marriage brings added obligations that can be unnecessarily limiting.

- [29] Paul's second reason for advising against marriage for the Corinthians was his belief that the time remaining until the return of the Lord was short. Paul believed he was living in the generation that would experience the Rapture (1Cor15:51-52; 1Thess4:15,17). This belief is consistent with the Biblical doctrine of imminency, which is the recognition that Christ's return (i.e., the Rapture) can take place at any moment. Paul took the "present distress" as a possible sign that the Tribulation was nearing, and thus the time remaining until the Rapture could be very short. In light of this, Paul says all believers must be focused on fully serving the Lord in the time remaining, and marriage brings limitations in this regard.
- [30] In light of the Lord's imminent return, attachment to worldly things (even marriage) must be set aside.
- [31] There is no reason to develop any attachment to this world (Gk., *kosmos*, which Paul uses to mean "world-system", as in Rom12:2). This world will pass away (2Pet3:10-12).
- [32] The unmarried have one less thing to distract them from their fully serving the Lord, namely marriage.
- [33] Marriage brings responsibilities and obligations which, while not inappropriate or wrong, nevertheless limit how fully a man can serve the Lord.
- [34] The comments up to this point have been directed toward the man, but the same advice applies to woman. In what follows, "virgin" refers to an unmarried woman. Marriage brings obligations for the woman and limits how fully she can serve the Lord, no different than for the man.
- [35] Paul reiterates that his advice to remain unmarried is for their good, and obviously ought not to be followed if a believer does not have the gift to remain single and not sin (1Cor7:7,9). His desire is only to see the Corinthian believers serve the Lord as fervently and fully as they can.
- [36] Difficulty in interpreting whether the "man" here is a bridegroom considering marriage or a father considering giving his daughter in marriage. The point is, however, that it is not a sin for a woman to marry; it just brings obvious obligations.
- [37] But for those who have the gift (vv7,9), there are benefits to remaining unmarried.
- [38] Here Christian liberty in the area of marriage is expressed. It may under certain circumstances benefit the believer to remain unmarried, but there is not requirement to do so.
- [39] Now Paul's advice addresses widows. The wife is required by the law (i.e., the "law" of marriage, Gen2:24 and Mt19:4-6) to remain with her husband as long as he lives; there are no exceptions given. But for a widow, she is free to remarry if she wishes. However, any remarriage must be "in the Lord". A believer is forbidden to marry an unbeliever (2Cor6:14-15).
- [40] While Paul concedes that his instructions are advice and not commandments from the Lord, his "advice" as recorded in Scripture

is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It should be regarded as advice from God in an area where liberty exists. Even in areas where a Christian has opportunity to choose between multiple good and perfectly acceptable options, some choices are better than others.

CHAPTER 8

LIMITATIONS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY: THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS

- [1] Paul's response to another specific question in the letter from the Corinthians (1Cor7:1) begins, namely, a Christian's response to things offered to idols. Clearly, there was disagreement among the believers at Corinth regarding the acceptability of eating meat that had been sacrificed to a pagan idol. This would be a real issue in Corinth, with its multitude of pagan temples which sold meat left over after their temple rituals to the public.

At the outset of Paul's response he begins by stating a general principle to be expanded in the remainder of this chapter; that is, knowledge puffs up, but love (for others) builds up. Here "knowledge" refers to an understanding of Christian liberty; it is often taken out of context and used to denigrate Bible knowledge and Bible study in general, which is an error. The KJV "charity" is used to translate the Greek *agape*, which in the noun form is unique to the NT; *agape* is the highest, purest form of love for another, one that seeks the other's good above one's own.

Paul is saying that in this issue, it is not "knowledge" (i.e., of Christian liberty) alone that must be considered, but also the good of others.

- [2] In their pride, some thought they had perfect knowledge in this matter. However, our knowledge is at best partial (1Cor13:12).
- [3] These who are puffed up in the knowledge of their liberty would claim to love (Gk., *agapeo*) God, but to love God requires that they love their brother (1Jn4:20-21).
- [4] Speaking of knowledge alone, it is true that idols are nothing more than inanimate, dumb objects carved from wood, metal or stone (Ps115:4-8), and in a certain sense offering animals to such objects is meaningless. It is interesting, however, that Paul qualifies this assertion with the phrase "in the [seen] world"; in the unseen world, there often are demon spirits acting behind the pagan idols (1Cor10:20), which is why involvement in the actual rituals must be avoided.

The pagan gods are not "gods" at all; there is only one God, Jehovah (Isa43:10-11; 44:6,8; 45:21-22; 46:9-10; 48:3,5).

- [5] Though it is an objective fact that there are no other gods (but Jehovah alone), Paul is not denying that there are many who claim to be gods, both "in heaven" (i.e., demons) and "in earth" (i.e., men).
- [6] Here, "there is one God" is an allusion to the ancient Jewish confession of monotheism, the Shema (Dt6:4). However, Biblical monotheism does not contradict the triune nature of God (i.e., the Trinity). The Hebrew word translated "one" in Deut. 6:4 is *echad*, which carries the idea of "a unity of several becoming one", as when God said husband and wife became "one" flesh (Gen2:24). Here, the "one God" is revealed in "God, the Father" who is the

Creator, as well as the "Lord Jesus Christ" who is the agent of creation (Jn1:3; Col1:16).

- [7] However, many of the Corinthian believers were young (in the faith). They had not yet come to be comfortable with the understanding that eating meat sacrifice to an idol is not an offense against the Lord. Since they regard it as an offense against the Lord, for them to eat would be a sin (Rom14:23).
- [8] It is not the act itself that is judged (i.e., eating the meat), but the believer's motive behind the act (choosing to eat the meat even when I believe that to do so is an offense to the Lord).
- [9] Paul acknowledges the freedom of the mature Christians to eat the meat; for them, eating the meat is not a sin.
- [10] However, a different sin arises for those with liberty if, by their eating the meat, they tempt their weaker brothers (who still believe eating the meat is a sin) to eat also.
- [11] If Christ loved these weak brothers enough to die for them, is it too much to ask the mature Christians in the church to abstain from eating the meat for their sake? Love (*agape*) would say NO! "Perish" here should not be taken to mean loss of salvation, but probably refers to physical death as a result of divine discipline (as in 1Cor5:5; 10:9-10; 11:30)
- [12] While the eating of meat by the Christians with understanding of liberty in this area was not a sin, per se, it became a sin for them if by their exercise of this freedom they tempted the weaker brethren to sin against their consciences.
- [13] Paul summarizes by concluding that love for a believing brother takes priority over and limits Christian liberty. No particular liberty should be exercised by the mature Christian if it causes weaker believers to sin.

This is consistent with the ruling by the apostles in Jerusalem when they laid down certain guidelines for the behavior of Gentile believers, one of which was to "abstain from things [polluted by] idols" (Act15:20); the reason given for this prohibition was not that the eating of the meat was wrong, but that it would offend the Jews and Jewish Christians (Act15:21). This is precisely Paul's reasoning here as well. Though not stated, the fact that the Corinthian church contained both converted Jews and Gentiles (Act18:8) may have been the source of the conflict over this matter.

CHAPTER 9

LIMITATIONS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY: PAUL'S EXAMPLE

- [1] Paul now uses himself as an illustration of the principle of limiting the exercise of Christian liberty for the sake of others, consistent with his previous exhortation that they should follow his example (1Cor4:16). Paul holds up his credentials: an apostle who had both seen (Act9:17) and been personally taught by the Lord Jesus (Gall1:12), and the one used by the Lord to bring the gospel to the Corinthians.
- [2] Paul's apostleship was often challenged, and we see here the germ of a challenge beginning in Corinth; it will burst forth in full bloom later and lead to the need for an extended defense (2Cor10-

13). As an abbreviated defense here, Paul simply points to that fact that they are saved as a result of his ministry.

- [3] In response to those who challenged his apostleship, Paul had refrained from the legitimate exercise of his Christian liberty in several areas (examples of which make up the remainder of this chapter) so that it could not be used as a charge against him.
- [4] Paul refrained from eating the meat and drinking the wine offered in pagan temples, though he had the liberty to do so.
- [5] Paul refrained from marrying (note, a Christian "sister"), though he had the liberty to do so. He notes, however, that other apostles had married (e.g., the Lord's half-brothers James and Jude, as well as Peter).
- [6] Paul (and his ministry companion Barnabas) refrained from asking certain churches in which he ministered to support him financially (Cp., 2Thess3:8-9), though it was reasonable to expect them to do so. Paul expands on this issue of the support of ministers of the Gospel in vv7-18.
- [7] It is reasonable to expect that those who spend full-time in the ministry of the Gospel should be supported by that ministry. Examples of the soldier, farmer and shepherd are given; each derives financial support from their labors.
- [8] This is not a new concept being introduced by the Apostle Paul, but a principle that comes from the Law of Moses.
- [9] The Law required that an ox used to labor in treading out the grain should be allowed to eat of the grain (Dt25:4). God gave this command because He cares for oxen and has made provision for their support.
- [10] Both the farmer who plows and the ox that threshes expect to have their physical needs supplied as a result of the labors.
- [11] Similarly, those who spend full-time laboring "in the word and [teaching]" ought to have their physical needs supplied by those who benefit from their ministries (1Tim5:17-18).
- [12] Paul says that other teachers have exercised this right to be supported, perhaps alluding to the pastor-teacher(s) in the church at Corinth. He, however, despite remaining in the church at Corinth for at least a year-and-a-half for the purpose of teaching the new believers the Word of God (Act18:11), had received no support from the Corinthians. Furthermore, Paul says he had not asked to be supported by them, though he had the right, for the good of the ministry.

Paul was frequently charged with ministering and preaching out of deceitful motives, including that of making money (1Thess2:1-6). This was a false and empty charge, as in fact he rarely was supported by the local churches in which he ministered. To be seen as decidedly innocent of such a charge in Corinth, Paul had refused to exercise his liberty to receive their support.
- [13] Paul mentions OT Levites and priests who ministered full-time in the Temple in Jerusalem; they received their physical support from those who benefited from their service (i.e., though tithes).

- [14] Paul says "even so", which means "in exactly the same manner", God has commanded that those in the NT church who spend full-time preaching the gospel should be supported by Christians.
- [15] But Paul refrained from receiving support from the Corinthians because he believed it would harm the cause of Christ. He refused to exercise this liberty for the purpose of obedience to a greater good; in fact, Paul says it would be better for him to die, than to receive support from the Corinthians which would later be used by others as a charge that would damage the ministry of the gospel.
- [16] Paul is preaching the gospel because he has been called by the Lord to do so. His particular calling was unusual (Act9:15-16), being much more of a divine compulsion that he did not have the freedom to resist (as in the case of the prophet Jonah). Thus, he is compelled to continue to labor in that calling, whether he receives physical support from churches or not.
- [17] God will judge Paul according to his faithfulness in obeying his calling. This judgment of Paul is a very grave matter, as he has been given by God an individual dispensation (i.e., stewardship, responsibility) given to none other, that being to reveal fully the Gospel of Christ and the mystery of His Church (Eph3:1-12).

As a corollary to God's judgment of Paul for his faithfulness, it is the Corinthian church, and all churches, that will be judged for their faithfulness in supporting the Lord's ministers. Of all the churches to which Paul ministered, it was only the church at Philippi that regularly supported the apostle and his work (Phil4:15).

- [18] Paul concludes by affirming that he will willingly set aside his Christian liberty in this area (i.e., receiving support from the churches in which he ministered) for the greater good of being immune to the accusation that he labored in the work of the gospel out of a motivation for money, which could harm the work.
- [19] Paul presents himself as an example to the Corinthians in the general area of foregoing the exercise of his Christian liberties, whenever and wherever doing so makes his witness for Christ more effective.
- [20] When working among the Jews, Paul behaved as a Jew, even "keeping" the Law (e.g., Act21:17-26); though Paul was free from the Law, he was willing to forgo this freedom and put himself back under it if by doing so he could win Jews to Christ.
- [21] When working among the Gentiles, Paul behaved as a Gentile (at least with regard to morally neutral tenets of the Law) in order to more effectively reach the Gentiles for Christ. Paul was free to do this, since as a Christian he was no longer under the Mosaic Law, which had severely constrained interactions between Jew and Gentile.

Note that Paul, while being free from the requirements of the Law of Moses, says he is not without law. He, and we, are under the "Law of Christ". Thus, although we live in the Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph3:2), during which grace as a rule of life is magnified, nevertheless the Lord Jesus Christ has given believers a new set of commandments that are expected to be obeyed. The frequent charge that evangelical Christianity is antinomian has no merit.

[22] Here Paul's mention of "the weak" refers back to those in Corinth who were offended by the eating of meat sacrificed to idols (1Cor8:11); he has already noted that, for their sake, he will refrain from eating all meat. Paul was willing to adopt whatever cultural norms and customs were appropriate to get a hearing for the gospel, even if it meant refraining from the exercise of legitimate freedoms he had in Christ.

Many inappropriately cite this verse to justify increasing the use of their liberties in Christ for the sake of effective evangelism, whereas in context the very opposite is being taught.

[23] The motive of Paul's heart in willingly limiting the exercise of his freedom in Christ is for the purpose of gaining a wider hearing of the gospel. Paul will give up his rights to see souls saved.

[24] To the Corinthians who were knowledgeable and avid fans of athletic competition, Paul gives an analogy between seriously living the Christian life and a competitive race. In an athletic competition, the goal is to win the race and receive a prize. The Christian life has a goal as well, that being to be found faithful and receive a reward (e.g., Mt25:21). The Christian should live his life with the goal of receiving a reward.

[25] Now, serious athletes, for the purpose of disciplining their bodies to become better athletes, willingly give up all sorts of freedoms others (non-athletes) are free to enjoy; they do this in hope of receiving a laurel wreath at the city's *Bema* seat. How much more should a Christian, for the purpose of being a more effective witness for Christ, be willing to give up some of his freedoms, especially when the reward we hope to gain has eternal consequences?

[26] Paul concludes that he runs the Christian life like an athlete determined to win the race.

[27] To that end he willingly disciplines his body and refrains from exercising legitimate freedoms he has whenever doing so makes him a more effective Christian. His motive is to increase the reward he hopes to receive from the Lord when evaluated at the *Bema* Seat of Christ.

Here, "castaway" does not express Paul's fear of losing his salvation, as that cannot be obtained by works or lost by lack of works (Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5), but of being put out of the race (e.g., as the man disciplined in 1Cor5:5) or losing potential rewards. Consistent with the illustration, castaway (Gk., *adokimos*) is an athletic term meaning "disapproved", or disqualified for some reason and thus not eligible to receive a prize (2Tim2:5). In fact, Paul was faithful to the end; he finished his race and expected to be well rewarded (2Tim4:7-8).

CHAPTER 10

THE PERIL OF ABUSING SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES

[1] By addressing the Corinthians as "brethren", Paul calls attention to the fact that they are true believers. However, they are carnal believers (1Cor3:3), and carnality in the life of a believer comes with grave consequences. As an example of God's displeasure with carnal believers, Paul calls attention to Israel in the wilderness. Israel in the wilderness enjoyed tremendous

spiritual privileges from Jehovah, but most abused these privileges by their carnality and invited the Lord's most severe discipline. In contrast, the Christian today enjoys the greatest of all spiritual blessings and privileges (Eph1:3); for him to abuse his spiritual privileges will invite even harsher discipline from the Lord.

The key word in vv. 1-4 is "all", used five times. All the Israelites that came out of Egypt enjoyed the same spiritual privileges. All the Israelites enjoyed the guidance and protection the pillar of cloud provided, even as today all Christians enjoy the presence and protection of the Lord (Matt28:20; Heb13:5). All the Israelites were delivered through the Red Sea to escape the bondage of Egypt, even as today all Christians have been delivered from the bondage of sin and reconciled to God (Rom5:1-11).

- [2] By "baptism" is meant identification. All the Israelites were identified with Moses, even as today all Christians baptized into the Body of Christ and are identified with Him (Rom6:3-10; 1Cor12:13).
- [3] All the Israelites were supernaturally nourished in the wilderness by bread from heaven (i.e., manna), even as today all Christians are spiritually nourished by Christ (Jn6:27), Who is the "bread of life" (Jn6:35).
- [4] All the Israelites were supernaturally supplied water in the wilderness, even as today all Christians have their spiritual thirst quenched by the Holy Spirit of God (Jn4:10-14; 7:37-39).
- [5] However, though all the Israelites of the Exodus had been saved by their faith (as evidenced by their putting the Passover lamb's blood on their doorposts), and all enjoyed the same supernatural provision and spiritual privileges in the wilderness, most of them abused these privileges by their carnality. The discipline God brought upon them was His refusal to let them go into the Promised Land, rather condemning them to die in the wilderness (Num14:29-34). Only Caleb and Joshua, who alone had been faithful (Num14:24,30,38), were spared this discipline and entered the Land forty years later.

This is an example of the Divine discipline of believers, not God's judgment of unbelievers. The Israelites were "disqualified" from the race by their carnality (1Cor9:27), though they remained saved by grace through their faith (Eph2:8-9). Note that even Aaron and Moses were condemned to die in the wilderness for their disobedience (Num20:12).

- [6] Paul says that we Christians should learn from these examples out of the O.T. (Rom15:4). If we commit the same abuses of our spiritual privileges that Israel did, we should also expect Divine discipline. In vv. 7-11, four specific sins of Israel in the wilderness are cited.
- [7] After being delivered from bondage by the only true and living God, Jehovah, Who put the so-called Egyptian gods to shame (Ex12:12), the Israelites were guilty of committing idolatry by making and worshipping a golden calf (Ex32:1-6). Note that the Israelites claimed to be worshipping the God Who had delivered them, Jehovah, but they were doing so by means of an image (Ex20:4). Thus, idolatry is not limited to the worship of other gods, but also the worship of the Lord by inappropriate means.

The N.T. classifies "covetousness" as idolatry (Eph5:5; Col3:5). Idolatry is putting anything in the rightful place of the Lord.

- [8] The Israelite men were tempted to commit fornication with the women of Moab (Num25:1-9). This was a ploy devised by the heathen prophet Balaam, who reasoned that if the Israelite men were taken in by the Moabite women, these pagan women would turn the hearts of the Jewish men toward pagan gods; Jehovah would curse them as a result, which was Balaam's goal.
- [9] The Israelites tempted the Lord in the wilderness when they complained about manna (Num21:4-9); in doing so, they despised the Lord's supernatural provision.
- [10] The Israelite's greatest sin in the wilderness was that of refusing to enter the Promised Land (Num14:1-4). God considered their refusal to be the sins of both rebellion and unbelief (Num14:9,11); the Lord had promised to give them the Land and victory over the peoples in the Land, but they refused to believe the promise of God.
- [11] Under the sovereignty and providence of God, these things "happened" to Israel and were recorded in Scripture to provide important lessons.
- [12] As Christians we enjoy spiritual privileges and blessings in Christ far surpassing anything an O.T. saint could imagine (Eph1:1-14). With greater privilege comes greater responsibility. If God severely disciplined Israel for her carnality, how much more will God discipline the carnal Christian (Rom11:20-22)?
- [13] The believers at Corinth were not facing uniquely difficult or challenging trials; their trials and temptations were those common to all Christians (Jn15:18-23; 16:33; 2Tim3:12).

Here is a precious promise from God to the Christian. Whatever our trial or temptation, it is not unique; countless saints have been where we are. And whatever our trial, it is under the control of a sovereign God Who puts definite limits on what we suffer. The promise is that in every trial, God provides the spiritual resources we need to be able to endure it (i.e., "the way of escape" = "able to bear it").

What is the purpose of trials in the life of a believer? They aren't random or purposeless; rather, the Lord purposefully engineers them to: 1) demonstrate our faith (1Pet1:6-7); 2) grow our faith (Jsl:3); and 3) bring glory to Himself by the patient suffering of His people (Act5:41; Rom8:17-18; Phil3:10; 1Pet4:16).

DESPITE CHRISTIAN LIBERTY, SEPARATION FROM PAGANISM IS REQUIRED

- [14] Though God promises to provide the spiritual resources the believer needs to endure temptation, we are responsible to do our part as well. Idolatry is a sin of the flesh, which is to be avoided (not resisted).
- [15] Paul believed his counsel to "flee from idolatry" ought to be obvious to all the believers in Corinth.
- [16] As an instance of "idolatry" in Corinth, apparently believers were not only eating meat sacrificed to idols, but also participating in the pagan ritual where the sacrifice occurred. In the next few verses Paul explains why this is unacceptable.

In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (i.e., communion), the believer fellowships with Christ.

NOTE. The "cup of blessing" is the 3rd of four cups used in the Passover feast. Christ took this cup from the Passover meal and instituted the Lord's Supper, an ordinance to be observed during this age only (1Cor11:26). Note that the "last supper" was an uncompleted Passover meal (Mt26:29; Mk14:25; Lk22:18); the 4th cup, the "cup of praise", will be taken by the Lord Jesus when He returns to set up His Kingdom.

- [17] As will be greatly expanded upon in Ch. 12, Christians are in union with the Lord Jesus in the mystical Body of Christ (Rom6:3-11; 1Cor12:13; Eph5:23; Col1:18). That union is visibly illustrated when the believer eats the bread in the Lord's Supper.
- [18] In an analogous way the O.T. saint identified with his sacrifice and ate a portion of it (e.g., Lev4:4; 7:6)
- [19] Animals were offered in pagan temple rituals as well. Here, however, there is no significance to the animal sacrificed, and the physical idol is nothing (1Cor8:4).
- [20] Nevertheless, participation in a religious ritual is to fellowship with the "god" being worshipped. This is true of the Christian communion service, in which one fellowships with Christ, and it is true also that in pagan rituals one fellowships with demons. Thus, while it might be permissible for the Christian to eat meat sacrificed to idols after the fact, it is not permissible to participate in the pagan temple rituals where that sacrifice occurred.
- [21] Thus, syncretism is condemned. The Christian cannot have fellowship with Christ and with demons.
- [22] Spiritual unfaithfulness on the part of a Christian is akin to a bride being unfaithful to her husband (Eph5:23-32). Such unfaithfulness evokes the Lord's jealousy, and He will bring strong discipline upon the unfaithful, carnal Christian. In Corinth, believers were being disciplined with both sickness and physical death because of this problem (1Cor11:30).

CONCLUSION TO THE ISSUE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

- [23] In the verses that end this chapter, Paul concludes his teaching on the issue of Christian liberty which has been the subject of three chapters (1Cor8-10). The Christian is not under the Law of Moses as a rule of life; many things that were previously prohibited for the O.T. saint are now permissible for the Christian in the Church Age. Though they may be permissible, however, does not mean that they ought to be done.
- [24] Other considerations must be taken into account by the Christian exercising his freedom; the most important consideration is the affect of his actions on others.
- [25] It is permissible to buy and eat meat from the market; there is no need to be concerned about whether or not the meat was previously involved in a pagan ritual.
- [26] Quotation from Psalm 24:1.

[27] It is permissible to eat with an unbeliever. While it is natural to assume that the meat he serves came from the pagan market, and perhaps he even participated in the pagan ritual, nevertheless the strong believer can eat with a clear conscience.

[28] However, if by doing so another's conscience is offended, for his sake refrain from eating. The offended party could be either a weak Christian or an unbeliever (for the unbeliever's sake, we would not want to do anything to damage our witness). Psalm 24:1 is again quoted.

[29] In this example, it is not the conscience of the strong Christian that is being safeguarded, for he is free to eat without concern; rather, the conscience of the weak Christian or unbeliever must be honored.

[30] The question, "why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?" that ended v. 29, taken with this verse, can appear to be a defense of the strong Christian's right to eat regardless of the offense it might cause to others; however, such an interpretation would be in contradiction with the entire teaching of the last three chapters.

Rather, the logic presented is better understood as saying, "Why would I exercise my freedom to eat when I know it will be condemned by my weaker brother or the unbeliever to whom I'm witnessing? Although I understand I'm doing nothing wrong, nevertheless, since I know it will be condemned, I ought to refrain from doing it" (Rom14:16).

[31] Verses 31 and 32 summarize the teaching on Christian liberty. The believer is free to do whatever he wants, if by so doing he can bring glory to God.

[32] However, the believer ought to willingly limit his Christian liberty, when the exercise of that liberty offends others.

Here we see the entire world of humanity subdivided into its 3 categories: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church. For approximately the first 2,000 years of world history, all were Gentiles (some were believers, some were unbelievers). From Genesis 12 through Acts 2, there were both Jews and Gentiles (with believers and unbelievers in both categories). From Acts 2 until the Rapture (i.e., the Church Age), there are Jews, Gentiles and the Church; believers during this age, whether Jew or Gentile, become part of the Church (Eph2:11-3:10).

[33] This is the definition of "agape" love: to put the profit (i.e., good) of others ahead of one's own. Love for others controls and moderates the exercise of our Christian liberty.

CHAPTER 11

CHRISTIAN ORDER: BEHAVIOR OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

- [1] This verse really concludes the summary of Christian liberty (1Cor10:23-33). In Ch. 9 Paul used himself as an example, which he reiterates here; Paul practiced what he preached, so he was an admirable role-model for the Corinthians in this area.
- [2] The issue of limitations put on Christian liberty is now applied in the next four chapters (1Cor11-14) by way of the Apostle rebuking several specific abuses within the Corinthian fellowship.

Paul is pleased to have heard that the Corinthians continue to observe the ordinances as he instructed them (i.e., baptism and the Lord's supper). However, there are some abuses on-going by the Corinthians involving both; the abuses concerning baptism were addressed in Ch. 1, and the abuses surrounding the Lord's Supper will be addressed in 1Cor11:17-34.

- [3] First, however, Paul begins by rebuking a lapse in Christian order, namely the behavior and role of women in meetings of the church (Paul begins and ends 1Cor11-14 with this issue; 1Cor11:3-16 and 1Cor14:34-35).

God has ordained different roles for men and women. If we do not function within these divinely-designed roles, we are not walking in the Spirit and in the will of God. The man is "head of the woman" in both marriage (Eph5:23-24) and the church (1Tim2:11-12). The role of leadership is ordained by God for the man; the role of submission to the man's leadership is ordained by God for the woman.

Note that this doctrine of the subordination of the woman to the man is not set within a cultural context that can be dismissed today. The woman is to be subordinate to the man, as Christ (God the Son) is subordinate to God (the Father). Though denied by modern feminists, subordination of role does not imply inferiority of essence. Within the Godhead, the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to both the Father and the Son, but there is no "inferiority of essence" within the Trinity (cf., Jn10:30; 8:28-29; 14:26; 15:26).

- [4] When a man prays or exercises the gift of prophecy in a church meeting (i.e., public worship), he should do so with his head uncovered; to do otherwise would dishonor his head, that is Christ (1Cor11:3).
- [5] But, to make a distinction between the man and the woman, a woman must pray or prophesy with her head covered; to do otherwise would dishonor her head, that is the man (1Cor11:3).

The covering of a woman's head in public seems to have been a cultural norm in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds of the first century. Thus, for a woman to cover her head in public was a way of showing her submission to the man in that culture.

- [6] The slogan being used in the Corinthian church, "All things are lawful unto me" (1Cor6:12), was apparently being taken by the women in the church as endorsing their freedom to not cover their heads in meetings of the church. However, since the public covering of a woman's head was the way of expressing submission to the man in that culture, and since the woman is commanded to submit to the man within the church, it was a shameful act for a

Corinthian woman to worship with her head uncovered; she might as well shave her head, which was an act of shame in that culture (e.g., 2Sam10:4; Isa7:20; Jer41:5).

- [7] The reason given for a man to worship with his head uncovered is that the man is the image and glory of God; this is an allusion to God's decree in creating the man (Gen1:26-27; 5:1).
- [8] In vv. 8-9, two reasons are given for why man is ordained as the head of the woman. The first has to do with the order of creation. Man was created first, a direct act of creation by God, with woman being derived from the man when she was taken from his side (Gen2:21-22; 1Tim2:13).
- [9] The second has to do with the purpose in man's (and woman's) creation. God's stated purpose in creating the woman was so that she could be a "help" to the man in fulfilling his calling (Gen2:15-18).

Note, Paul's teaching on the headship of the man over the woman is not cultural, but doctrinal; thus, it cannot be dismissed by us today as inapplicable. Both the order of the original creation and God's stated purpose at the time of creation point to man as the head; this doctrine is derived from the Lord's word before the fall, so the headship of man is God's original design and not a consequence of the fall (Gen3:16).

Thus, as a Biblical doctrine the woman is to be in submission to the headship of the man, and to show that submission in whatever way is culturally appropriate.

- [10] An additional reason is given for a woman to show public submission to the man, and that is that angels are spectators of the affairs of the church (1Cor4:9; Eph3:10; 1Tim5:21). A properly functioning marriage, family and church, with all members fulfilling their God-ordained roles, is a lesson in the wisdom of God for the angels (both elect and fallen).
- [11] Divinely ordained roles for men and women during this age have nothing whatsoever to do with their importance or value, or their promised inheritance in an age to come (Gal3:26-29). To fulfill God's purpose, we must work together. Although Adam was made the head of Eve, remember that Eve was created because Adam could not fulfill his calling from God without her (Gen2:18). Thus, man and woman are mutually dependent upon each other.
- [12] This inter-dependence is seen in that the woman (i.e., Eve) originally came from the man (i.e., Eve was taken from Adam's side), but now all men are born of woman. This inter-dependence is intentional, according to the perfect design of God.
- [13] Whereas Paul's arguments up to this point have been doctrinal, coming directly from the Bible (i.e., special revelation), he now adds one from nature (i.e., general revelation, Rom1:20). Mankind instinctively distinguishes between the sexes in all sorts of varied ways (and a woman wearing a head covering in public worship, in the Corinthian culture, ought to be one of them!).
- [14] One of these instinctive distinctions between the sexes is hair length; the man's hair ought to be short.
- [15] In contrast, the woman's hair ought to be longer than the man's; it is not the absolute length of hair that is the issue, but the

distinction made by hair length between the sexes. Even without a direct command from God, all recognize this as the natural order.

Here, long hair on a woman is referred to as a head covering nature provides, which is yet another indication of the woman's submission to the headship of the man, but is separate from the additional head covering (i.e., an actual garment) under discussion in this passage.

- [16] The real issue here seems to be the self-indulgence of the Corinthian believers (in this case the women). They want to be free to throw off this cultural expression of female subordination. Paul indicates that all the other churches adhere to the custom of women wearing a head covering in public worship, and if for no other reason than not to offend them the Corinthians ought to do likewise (1Cor10:32-33).

What does this mean for the church in America today? Must women wear a head covering in church? The heart of the issue is the subordination of the woman to the headship of the man, and how that is culturally expressed in public (i.e., corporate meetings of the church). That expression comes in many forms, but today it doesn't primarily come from women wearing a head covering (or a hat) in meetings of the church.

CHRISTIAN ORDER: BEHAVIOR AT THE LORD'S TABLE

- [17] While Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping the ordinances as he had instructed them (v. 2), their behavior at the Lord's Supper must be rebuked.

When the Lord Himself instituted His Supper, the bread and the cup He used were just a part of a much larger meal, the Passover Feast (Mt26:17-18, 26-29; see notes on 1Cor10:16). For this reason, in the early Church the Lord's Supper continued to be celebrated as a part of a full meal that came to be called the Agape or "Love Feast" (2Pet2:13; Jude12). However, in the Corinthian church, this Love Feast of which the Lord's Supper was a part had become an occasion for carnal, self-centered indulgence (i.e., the very opposite of an *agape* feast).

- [18] Paul has already rebuked the divisions (i.e., factions or cliques) that exist in the church (1Cor1:10ff), and these divisions were also being manifested at the Love Feast. Paul has not witnessed this misbehavior personally, but he has received word of it and (knowing the carnality of the Corinthian believers) he has no problem in believing it to be true.

- [19] Here, "heresies" comes from the Greek word meaning *factions* or *sects* (cliques within the fellowship is meant), and is not alluding to doctrinal error. Thus, division marked a celebration mean to express the unity of the body (1Cor10:17).

- [20] The Love Feast as celebrated by the Corinthians was the very opposite of the Lord's Supper, which ought to have been a remembrance of Christ's ultimate act of selflessness.

- [21] The Love Feast was celebrated much like our church pot-lucks today; each brought something which was intended to be shared with all. However, one of the divisions within the Corinthian church was along economic lines. Some believers brought generous portions, while others were able to bring little or nothing.

Rather than sharing their generous portions with the poorer brothers and sisters, the rich church members were over-indulging.

Gluttony and drunkenness were rampant at the Love Feast, even while the poor believers went hungry. And in this setting, the Corinthians were celebrating the Lord's Supper!

[22] Because of Paul's instructions here, observance of the Lord's Supper was separated from being a part of a full meal early in the development of the Church.

[23] To highlight how inappropriate the behavior of the Corinthians at their Love Feast is, Paul reviews the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

Though Paul was not present with the disciples the night before the crucifixion when the Lord's Supper was instituted, it was the Lord Himself Who had personally instructed Paul in this matter (Gal1:12).

[24] The bread represents the broken body of the Lord. When we partake of the bread, we are to remember the supremely selfless act of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil2:3-8), giving His life as a propitiation for our sins (1Jn2:2).

Note that the emphasis here is on *remembrance* (vv. 24-25). The Lord's Supper is a memorial. When the Lord Jesus said of the bread, "this is my body", He was speaking metaphorically, just as when He said, "I am the bread of life", "I am the door," and "I am the true vine". The bread of communion is not the literal body of Christ, but merely represents it, just as the Passover lamb eaten in the Passover Feast (out of which the Lord's Supper was instituted) represented the "Lamb of God" Who was to come (Jn1:29), but was not literally that Lamb. The Roman Catholic teaching that the bread becomes the literal body of Christ which is repeatedly re-offered in their communion service (i.e., the Sacrifice of the Mass) is blasphemy because it denies that Christ's work of redemption is finished (Jn19:30; Heb9:23-28; 10:10).

[25] Similarly, the cup represents the blood (i.e., His life, Lev17:11) of Christ poured out for us (Mt26:27-28).

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, which the bread and the cup represent, ratified the New Covenant (Mt26:28; Heb10:8-9). While the New Covenant was made with Israel (Jer31:31), and the Church is not a party to this covenant per se, we participate in the New Covenant by being in Christ (Eph2:11-13), Who as the Jewish Messiah is a party to the covenant. It is the New Covenant, not the Mosaic Covenant, that promises the forgiveness of sins (Jer31:34; Ezek36:25).

[26] By saying, "as often as", no frequency is specified for observance of the Lord's Supper. When we observe the Lord's Supper, it is a testimony of the Lord's work of redemption. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance to be observed during this age only (until Christ's return). It is unique to the Church Age that no sacrifices are offered, but the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb10:10) is memorialized. During the Kingdom Age to come, observance of the Lord's Supper will cease, and animal sacrifices will be resumed (e.g., Jer33:18; Ezek44:15; Zech14:16-21).

[27] Those in the church at Corinth "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" were those who were unconcerned with the needs of the

poorer brothers and sisters in the fellowship (i.e., those who went hungry during the Love Feast, vv. 21-22). The Lord identifies intimately with believers who suffer, who are His Body (Acts9:4).

[28] To participate in the Lord's Supper is to show unity, both with Christ and with the other members of the body (1Cor10:16). To participate when not in unity with members of that body is hypocrisy. For this reason, one ought to reconcile with a brother before eating the bread and drinking the cup (cp. Mt5:23-24).

[29] Celebrating the Lord's Supper in a hypocritical manner is a serious sin which invites the Lord's discipline (not "damnation" as in KJV, nor even "condemnation" as Greek word is different than in Rom8:1).

[30] Here is an example of carnal Christians disciplined by the Lord with sickness and even physical death (e.g., 1Cor5:5). That the disciplined members were indeed Christians is evidenced by the use of "sleep", which is a euphemism for death used in the NT only of believers (cp. Jn11:11-14; 1Thess4:13-14).

For those who have been disciplined with sickness, they have not yet committed the "sin unto death" (1Jn5:16). Opportunity still exists for these to confess their sin (1Jn1:9) and be healed (Jas5:12-16).

[31] The Christian's self-judgment, by confession and repentance of sin, avoids or removes the Lord's discipline.

[32] The Greek words used in this verse are critical to correct understanding. The phrase "when we are *judged*" uses the Greek word for discipline. The phrase "we are *chastened*" uses the Greek word for the instruction or training of children. However, "*condemned*" is the Greek word for damnation (different Greek word than that translated as damnation by KJV in v. 29).

The thought here is that carnal Christians are disciplined by the Lord for the purpose of correction, up to and including physical death; however, the carnal Christian's salvation is eternally secure, and damnation (i.e., the loss of salvation) is not being threatened (Rom8:1).

[33] In conclusion, the Corinthian's behavior at the Love Feasts (which include observance of the Lord's Supper) must be reformed. They should wait until all had arrived to begin (with the sharing of the meal implied).

[34] If one's hunger was too great to wait until all had arrived, he should eat something at home before coming to the Love Feast.

Paul warns that if these abuses are not corrected, the Lord's discipline within the fellowship will continue. There were other abuses, presumably of a less severe nature, that the Apostle promises to deal with in person.

CHAPTER 12

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

[1] Here begins Paul's response to another specific question from the Corinthians (i.e., "now concerning"), this regarding spiritual

gifts and their exercise within the assembly. Paul considers this an important topic that Christians should understand.

This issue continues the application of Paul's teaching on Christian liberty and its appropriate and necessary limitations; the carnal, self-indulgent and self-centered Corinthians were abusing even their use of spiritual gifts, and correction from the Apostle was needed.

- [2] Note that the Corinthians "were" Gentiles (past tense). Now that they are believers, they have been moved from the category of Gentiles into that of the Church (1Cor10:32).

As Gentiles (i.e., unbelievers), the Corinthians had been subject to deception by their involvement in paganism, idolatry and the occult.

- [3] Now, apparently, the Corinthians are subject to deception by false teachers within the fellowship (e.g., 1Cor3:11-18). These false teachers are speaking blasphemy (lit., *anathema*) against Jesus and denying His Lordship; no one who is truly born again and being led by the Holy Spirit can possibly do this.

- [4] Paul begins by asserting that there are many different spiritual gifts, but their source is always the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for "gifts" is *charisma*, which is derived from the Greek word for "grace" (*charis*). Gifts are bestowed graciously by the Spirit as He sovereignly wills (v11), not as rewards for spirituality.

- [5] There are many different spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit, because believers are called to many different ministries (KJV, "administrations"); however, all believers serve the same Lord (i.e., Jesus Christ) in these various ministries.

- [6] Finally, these various individual ministries fit into an overall plan devised by God (the Father).

Note in vv4-6 the unity of the Godhead is emphasized. God (the Father) has a complex, overarching purpose and plan (v6), the Lord Jesus Christ directs believers into various ministries to advance different parts of the plan, and the Holy Spirit supernaturally gifts those believers to perform the ministry into which they have been called.

- [7] Since every believer is called to serve the Lord in some way, every believer is given a spiritual gift (at least one, perhaps several, v11); the Lord does not call a believer into a ministry for which He does not equip him. The gift is given to the individual believer for profit, not his own, but the body's (1Cor14:12; Eph4:11-16; 1Pet4:10).

- [8] In vv8-10, a list of spiritual gifts is given. It is repeatedly emphasized that these gifts are all given by the same Holy Spirit. This lays the ground for the conclusion that since God the Holy Spirit would never purpose to cause division within the body of believers (v25), if the gifts He imparts are indeed causing division they must be being misused or abused by the Corinthians.

Since the gifts listed here differ somewhat from those given in other places (e.g., Rom12:6-8; Eph4:11), we should understand all such lists to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. Note that supernatural gifts from God given to some for ministry are not

unique to the NT (e.g., Ex35:30-35; 1Sam10:6-7 1Kgs7:13-14); what appears to be unique to this age is that every believer is gifted, and that the gifts are permanent (Cp. 1Sam16:14; Ps51:11; Mt28:20; Heb13:5).

The spiritual gift of wisdom refers to supernatural insight into doctrinal truth (e.g., 1Cor2:14). Knowledge appears to refer to the ability to apply doctrinal truth to daily life (note Paul's repeated refrain, "know ye not" in 1Cor3:16; 5:6; 6:3,9,15; 9:24 and others, always referring to a failure of the Corinthians to correctly apply Biblical truth to daily living).

- [9] The gift of faith should not be understood as mere saving faith (i.e., belief), which all believers possess, but rather an unusual degree of trust and confidence in, and public commitment to, the Lord, given to some called to endure great trials, suffering or persecution; such faith is exemplified in, for example, the 3 Hebrew children (Dan3:16-18), Elijah (1Kgs18:20-36), the Philippian (Phil1:28-29) and Antipas (Rev2:13). The gift of healing is obvious (e.g., Acts3:6-7; 20:9-12).
- [10] The gift of working of miracles is obvious (e.g., Acts 5:12; 6:8; 8:6; 19:11). The gift of prophecy refers to the receiving of direct revelation from God apart from His Word (i.e., a prophet); it is distinct as a gift from that of teaching the Word (Eph4:11). The gift of discerning of spirits (discernment) refers to the exceptional ability to identify false teachers and challenge false doctrine (1Jn4:1; Jud1:3-4). Tongues is the supernatural ability to speak a human language one has not learned (e.g., Acts2:4,8,11; 1Cor14:10-11); similarly, the interpretation of tongues is the ability to understand a language one has not learned (1Cor14:27-28).

Almost all of the gifts listed in vv8-10 are what are called miraculous or "sign" gifts (with the possible exceptions of faith and discernment), which many assert were unique to the apostles and prophets of the early church, necessary in the beginning to confirm the NT revelation being given and recorded as Scripture, but that with the maturity of the Church and the completion of the canon have ceased (1Cor13:8-10; 2Cor12:12; Heb2:3-4). Notice that the nature of the gifts catalogued in the other sizable list (Rom12:6-8), written later than the list here in 1st Corinthians, are distinctly different.

- [11] The Spirit of God distributes to believers the gifts for ministry as He sovereignly wills (v18); the believer has no part in selecting what gift he receives.

EVERY BELIEVER IS AN IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY MEMBER
OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

- [12] Here begins an extended analogy between the human body and the Body of Christ. Note the three characteristics of the human body emphasized in the analogy: 1) it is a unit (v13), 2) it is made up of many different parts (vv14-20), and 3) the different parts are mutually inter-dependent and must all function, each fulfilling the particular role for which it was designed, in order for the body as a whole to function properly (vv21-26).

These three characteristics are true of the Body of Christ, which is the Church (Eph1:22-23; Col1:18). The truth applies to both the universal Church as well as the local church; it is actually the local church that is the context of this passage. It is the

sovereign gifting by the Spirit that determines the role a believer is designed to play in the Body of Christ.

- [13] It is by Spirit baptism (which is unrelated to water baptism) that every *believer* during this age is placed into the Body of Christ (here, "Greeks" is used as a synecdoche for all non-Jews); all believers participate in this spiritual blessing and privilege (cp. 1Cor10:1-4).

Note that in Spirit baptism, it is the Lord Jesus Christ that performs the baptism by means of the Holy Spirit (cp. Mt3:11). Spirit baptism occurs at the moment of salvation, simultaneous with the permanent indwelling of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom8:9-11).

- [14] The Body of Christ must necessarily have many members functioning in a diversity of roles in order to be healthy.
- [15] Regardless of a believer's role or spiritual gift, he is an important and necessary member of the Body of Christ.
- [16] A believer ought to be content with his gift, not thinking of himself or his gift as inferior and so desiring another member's gift.
- [17] All members are necessary, operating in their divinely-ordained role, to have a healthy, properly functioning body.
- [18] Gifts are not haphazardly distributed among believers, but God sovereignly gives them according to His design and purpose (v11).
- [19] Just as a human body would not function properly if all its members were identical (i.e., all eyes, or all ears, or all hands), so the Body of Christ must have members with a diversity of gifts, serving in a diversity of roles and ministries.
- [20] Nevertheless, there is unity in this diversity. Taken together, the many different believers, each with their divinely-ordained gifts and ministries, form the Body of Christ (both locally and universally).
- [21] The members of the human body are interdependent. To be healthy and whole, all must function properly.
- [22] There is not (or should not be) a ranking of importance among the members of the human body; all its members, regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant, are important for the body to be fully functional. Taken another way, no individual member can function properly, or even survive, if separated from the whole.
- [23] In this verse, Paul may be thinking back to the "weak brethren" in the fellowship (i.e., 1Cor8); even they have an important role to play in God's design of the Body.
- [24] It is part of God's plan that the members of the Body be mutually interdependent. Even those with the most visible (and in the eyes of the Corinthians, the most coveted) of gifts are dependent upon the other members and their God-given gifts.
- [25] The recognition of the mutual interdependence of all the members of the Body ought to encourage unity in the fellowship, not division. The need for, and value of, all the gifts within a fellowship ought to be recognized; obviously, this was not true at

Corinth due to the immaturity and carnality of the believers (1Cor3:3).

- [26] It is not God's design that a believer minister alone; rather, the Body of Christ succeeds or fails as a unit.
- [27] Here the analogy between the human body and the Body of Christ is explicitly made. All believers during this age are members of the Body of Christ (v13). Christ is the Head of the Body (Eph5:23; Coll:18), and individual believers as members each have their own role to play as gifted by the Spirit of God (v18).
- [28] Here appears another listing of gifts; note that it is not identical to even the list given earlier in this chapter (vv8-10), supporting the notion that all such lists of gifts are representative, not exhaustive.

In this list, Paul orders the gifts cataloged. Since Paul has just concluded an extended passage teaching that all gifts are necessary and important, his ordering here should probably not be taken as his or God's ranking of the relative importance of the gifts. Likely, Paul has put an order to his listing of gifts that stands in opposition to the Corinthian's valuation of them in order to call attention to their error. Namely, the Corinthians were exalting the gift of tongues (1Cor14), which Paul places last on this list; furthermore, they frequently challenged his authority and apostleship, so he places that gift first (1Cor9:1-2; much of 2 Corinthians is an extended defense of Paul's apostleship).

- [29] In vv29-30, the Apostle Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions, with the answer to all of them understood to be an obvious NO. There is no particular gift that is given by God to all believers.
- [30] Individual believers are gifted as God sovereignly determines (vv11,18), with the diversity of gifts distributed as needed among members to make the Body as a whole healthy and complete. Possession of any particular gift (i.e., tongues) cannot be made to be a sign that one has been born again, or that one has reached a high level of spirituality/holiness, as some Pentecostal groups assert.
- [31] There are some translational issues associated with "covet earnestly" ("earnestly desire" in some versions). This usual translation makes it sound as if the "best gifts" can somehow be obtained by the volition of the believer, which Paul has made clear is not the case (vv11,18), or that it is appropriate that one be dissatisfied with the gift(s) he has been given, preferring another, which has also been refuted by the Apostle (vv19-25).

Mal Couch gives as a possible alternative translation, "But you are zealously striving for [what you consider to be] the better gifts", with the implication that the Corinthians should not be doing this! Such inappropriate dissatisfaction with God's sovereign distribution of gifts within the body has led to division at Corinth (v25). This translation fits the context of the chapter much more naturally.

Rather than division over the distribution of spiritual gifts within the Body, the emphasis ought to be on the use of one's God-given gift(s) in "love" (i.e., *agape*, for the edification of others rather than self; see 1 Pet4:10-11); this emphasis will be the subject of chapter 13.

CHAPTER 13

SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO BE EXERCISED IN LOVE, FOR THE EDIFICATION OF OTHERS

[1] Chapter 13 is a parenthesis in Ch12-14, reiterating the proper motivation in the use of spiritual gifts; namely, *agape* love, or a love that puts the needs and profit of others ahead of one's own. Thus, spiritual gifts are given to be used for the edification of the Body (Rom12:3-8; Eph4:12-16; 1Pet4:10-11), not for edification of self.

In chapter 12, "tongues" always occurs last in listings of gifts, emphasizing its being the least of the spiritual gifts (at least as it was being used by the Corinthians). The list opening this chapter (vv1-3) begins with tongues, which implies that it is the gift being most abused at Corinth (i.e., it was being used for personal edification, not the edification of the Body); this is consistent with the fact that most of the rules given to regulate the use of gifts within the assembly coming in chapter 14 have to do with the gift of tongues.

Both the normative gift ("to speak with the tongues of men"), as well as its hyperbolic extreme ("*tongues* of angels"), are said to be of little use if not exercised in *agape* love (i.e., for the edification of others, not self). Though some have asserted that speaking in the "tongues of angels" is an actual gift (allegedly explaining why so-called tongues-speaking today does not involve actual human languages), it is better viewed as a hyperbolic extreme, as will be demonstrated in v2.

[2] Again, to have both normative gifts ("prophecy" and "faith"), as well as their hyperbolic extremes ("understand all mysteries, and all knowledge" and "remove mountains") are said to be nothing if not exercised in *agape* love (i.e., for the edification of others, not self).

Here, in the case of the gift of prophecy, it is easily seen how hyperbolic extremes are being used in this passage for emphasis. To have the gift of prophecy to the extent that one could "understand all mysteries, and all knowledge" will be precluded by v9, where it is explicitly stated that "we know in part, and we prophesy in part".

[3] Again, to have both the normative gift of giving, as well as the hyperbolic extreme "I give my body to be burned", it is of no profit if not exercised for the benefit of others in *agape* love.

THE NORMATIVE GIFTS CONTRASTED WITH HYPERBOLIC EXTREMES IN VV. 1-3

Normative Gift	Hyperbolic Extreme
"speak with the tongues <u>of men</u> " (v1)	"and of angels" (v1)
"have the gift of prophecy" (v2)	"understand all mysteries, and all knowledge" (v2)
"have all faith" (v2)	"so that I could remove mountains" (v2)
"bestow all my goods to feed the poor" (vv3)	"I give my body to be burned" (v3)

[4] In this chapter, "love" (or "charity" in KJV) is the Greek word *agape*. *Agape*, as a noun, was a new word coined by the writers of the NT; its characteristics are given here in vv4-8. Note that these characteristics are all perfectly displayed in the Person of

the Lord Jesus Christ. A life motivated by *agape* love is the "more excellent way" of 1Cor12:31.

To be long-suffering ("patient", as used in many of the modern versions, fails to capture the force of this characteristic) is the capacity to be wronged and yet not retaliation. This characterizes our loving God (2Pet3:9), but certainly not the Corinthian believers (e.g., 1Cor6:7). Kindness is active goodness.

Agape love does not envy others (in fact, seeks the profit of others ahead of oneself); does not exalt self (in fact, puts others ahead of oneself, Mt23:12, Phil2:5-11); does not think highly of oneself (Phil2:3). The exercise of these characteristics of the virtue of love would have ended the division over spiritual gifts.

- [5] To not behave unseemly (rude), and to seek not one's own, are characteristics of the virtue of love that would have corrected the abuses at the Lord's Table. *Agape* love is not easily provoked, analogous to meekness (which is not weakness, but rather power under control). *Agape* love does not look for the bad in people.
- [6] *Agape* love does not rejoice in iniquity; this was a serious problem in the Corinthian church (e.g., 1Cor5:1-2). Rather, *agape* love rejoices in truth, which is Christ (Jn14:6) and His Word (Jn17:17).
- [7] *Agape* love "beareth all things"; here the verb 'bear' can also be rendered 'cover' as in 1Pet4:8. *Agape* love seeks to believe the best about people. *Agape* love endures all things, in the sense of not giving up under adversity, trials, tribulations.
- [8] And the greatest characteristic is that *agape* "love never faileth", in the sense that it will never come to an end; this is set in contrast to the spiritual gifts being discussed in this chapter, which will not endure forever.

Here is a straight-forward, definitive statement from Scripture that the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge WILL CEASE (many see these three gifts being used as a synecdoche, and thus represent the entire list in 1Cor12:8-10). The issue is not whether they will cease (they certainly will), but rather when will they cease?

- [9] Here, "know" and "prophecy" refer to the gifts of knowledge and prophecy (1Cor12:9-10). The Apostle Paul is saying that, at the time of the writing of this letter to the Corinthians, "knowledge" and "prophecy" are not complete; only a fraction of the NT has been written, so there is much revelation from God for the Christian that is yet to come. Thus, the gifts of knowledge and prophecy are in operation at the time of Paul's writing and will continue into the future.
- [10] However, these gifts will be "done away" with when their purpose has been fulfilled; this will be true when "that which is perfect is come".

A major hermeneutical issue here is to what "that which is perfect" refers. Many see this as a reference to the return of the Lord; however, the Greek adjective translated "perfect" is in the neuter gender, so it cannot refer to Christ. The Greek word is to *teleion*, which Paul consistently uses in all his epistles to

refer to either maturity or completion, not perfection (cp. 1Cor2:6; 14:20; Eph4:13; Col4:12; 1Tim3:17; Heb5:14; Jsl:4); note especially Paul's use of "perfect" in Eph4:13, where he is specifically discussing the purpose of spiritual gifts, which is to equip the Body by growing believers up from spiritual children to mature men.

The understanding of 'perfect' as "mature", or "complete", forms the natural apodosis for v9, where knowledge and prophecy are said to be "in part", or incomplete.

This understanding agrees well with Heb2:3-4 (written later than 1 Corinthians) where "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" are said to have been used as a "witness", "at the first" as a way that "confirmed" (past-tense) the preached message. Furthermore, the other N.T. lists of spiritual gifts (Rom12:3-8; Eph4:11) were written later than 1 Corinthians, and none of the so-called "sign-gifts" are included in these later lists.

- [11] Notice the analogy between childhood and manhood; the idea being stressed is not that of perfection, but maturity. Paul also uses this same analogy in reference to the use of spiritual gifts in Eph4:11-16.
- [12] "Now", with knowledge and prophecy incomplete, we see "darkly" and "in part" (in the sense of understanding incompletely); this was true at the time of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. However, at time would come in the future ("then") when understanding would be complete.

What is the conclusion? The spiritual gifts in operation at Corinth (1Cor12:8-10) had a necessary purpose during the days of the apostolic Church. The Church was brand new, rapidly expanding, spiritually immature, and without God's completed NT revelation, which was still in the process of being given. These gifts were "signs" (1Cor14:22) used to authenticate the NT revelation being given (Mk16:17-20; 2Cor12:12), with their purpose and operation coming to an end with the completion of God's NT revelation and its recording as Scripture (Heb2:3-4).

- [13] By saying "now", Paul here is probably referring to the Church Age in its entirety, in which faith, hope and love are all in force. Love (*agape*) is the greatest of the three, however, because it alone will endure into the age to come (i.e., the Kingdom); in the Kingdom, there will be no faith (in the sense that 'faith' is set in contrast to 'sight', since the Lord will be "seen") or hope (all the promises of God will be fulfilled).

CHAPTER 14

THE USE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS CONSISTENT WITH THEIR PURPOSE

- [1] Chapter 14 brings to a conclusion the teaching on spiritual gifts of Chs 12-13.

The genuine spiritual gifts with which the body at Corinth were blessed were to be used consistent with the *agape* love principle. Thus, the Corinthians should desire that those gifts which most edify the entire body be exercised; in this sense, prophecy (i.e., direct revelation of truth from God in a language understood by all) was most beneficial to the Corinthians in their corporate meetings.

- [2] Many Charismatics concede that the gift of tongues in Acts 2, 10, 19 and 1 Cor 12, 13 are indeed human languages, but assert that the gift discussed in 1 Cor 14 is different (i.e., a so-called ecstatic utterance or spiritual prayer language). There is no linguistic or contextual reason to substantiate such an assertion. In fact, the understanding of the phenomenon in these other passages ought to be used to bring insight to the gift as discussed in this Chapter; namely, that the gift is to supernaturally speak in an actual human language that the speaker has never learned.

The word "tongue" used here is the same as in the other passages on tongues (Greek, *glossa*); the word "unknown" (KJV) is not in the original, being supplied in the English. To exercise the gift of tongues in a corporate meeting of the church by speaking in a language that no one present understands does not edify the body; thus, such a use of the gift is not consistent with its purpose.

The reference to speaking in this language "unto God" simply refers to the fact that in such a case as this, only God can understand what is being said; the meaning is not that the purpose of the gift is for speaking to God (i.e., so-called spiritual prayer language).

- [3] On the other hand, to prophesy in a corporate meeting edifies the entire church. Thus, in the setting of the corporate meeting of the church, prophecy is a "better" gift (i.e., more beneficial), and in this sense is to be "desired" above the gift of tongues.
- [4] For one to speak in a language no one present understands edifies only himself (and even then the speaker likely does not understand what he is saying); but for one to prophesy edifies all present.
- [5] There is nothing wrong with the genuine gift of tongues; it is a valid spiritual gift useful for ministry in the appropriate setting. However, the corporate meeting of the church is not the appropriate setting for tongues; in this setting it is the spiritual gift of prophecy that is the appropriate ministry gift.
- [6] The Apostle Paul had the genuine gift of tongues (v18). Yet, when he was present with the Corinthian believers he ministered to them by various ministries of teaching. For him to have spoken to them in tongues (Paul naturally spoke Greek, the native language of the Corinthians), which they would not have understood, would have served no purpose.
- [7] This idea of communication by speaking in a language understood by the hearers extends to musical instruments. Even instruments can be played in ways that edify, or in ways that do not.
- [8] As a practical illustration of this, consider the trumpet used in battle to sound commands; it must follow the "language" the army understands, else, there is no communication (rather, confusion), and there would be no purpose or benefit in its use.
- [9] Likewise, there is no purpose for one to speak to the church in a language no one present understands.
- [10] This verse, by alluding to the "many kinds of voices in the world", reinforces the idea that "tongues" refers to known human languages. Paul further adds that none of these languages are without "signification" (i.e., they all may be used for meaningful communication, with the right audience); thus "tongues" are human

languages that have inherent meaning, and not so-called ecstatic utterances.

- [11] Here, the English "barbarian" is a transliteration of a Greek word designating someone who could not speak Greek. In the Greek language, it is an onomatopoeia, as those speaking other human languages were said by the Greeks to be babbling (i.e., sounded as if they were saying bar-bar-bar...).

The continuing idea being pressed is that no one (not even the Apostle Paul) is edified by listening to a language he does not understand.

- [12] The Corinthian believers were zealous for the miraculous spiritual gifts present within the body. However, they should refocus their zeal toward the appropriate use of the gifts. Again, in the setting of a corporate meeting of the church, the appropriate ministry gift that can edify and benefit those present is not tongues.

- [13] For the exercise of the gift of tongues in a meeting of the church to be beneficial, someone present must be able to interpret what is said; else, there can be no communication, and thus no purpose.

- [14] This verse is a source of much incorrect teaching. Some assert here that a spiritual prayer language, not meant to be understood by any but God (not even the one praying), is indicated. Such is not being taught by this verse.

Again, the use of "tongue" here, the Greek *glossa*, is no different than the previous uses; it refers to a real language never learned by the speaker. The point made by Paul here is that not only is there no purpose in speaking in tongues to the church when no one understands what is being said, there is not even a purpose for one to privately pray in tongues, since not even the one praying can understand! Paul says such a thing is "unfruitful".

Thus, this verse is not indicating that so-called "praying in tongues" is a normative gift. Rather, it is a hypothetical situation used to illustrate a point. The point being, even if one prayed in tongues, it would serve no purpose; even the one praying could not be edified, since he would not understand what was being prayed. At most only God could be edified; however, the purpose of spiritual gifts is explicitly stated to be for the edification of the church (1Cor12:7; 1Pet14:10-11), not God.

- [15] Thus, when ministering, whether praying or singing, it must be done in a language understood by those present, else it serves no beneficial purpose.
- [16] If one does not understand what is being said or prayed, he cannot even say "Amen" (i.e., give affirmation of agreement with what has been said).
- [17] Thus, there is no issue with praying in tongues (which no one, even the one praying, understands), per se, but no one is edified by doing so.
- [18] Paul had the genuine gift of tongues, for which he was thankful. And yet, he said that he did not exercise it with the Corinthians (v6); there would have been no purpose, since Paul and the Corinthians all spoke the common language of Greek. However, in Paul's many travels to foreign lands to preach the gospel and

plant churches, he undoubtedly had many opportunities to utilize the gift of tongues.

[19] Here is driven home the point that the spiritual gifts ought to be used for the purpose of meaningful and edifying ministry. In the setting of a corporate meeting of the church, meaningful communication for the purpose of instructing and teaching the body is needful. Speaking in a language no one present understands serves no purpose.

[20] Grow up! The use/abuse of the spiritual gift of tongues by the Corinthian church testified to their spiritual immaturity (1Cor3:1-3). In opposition to those who assert that the so-called gift of tongues as exercised today is an indication of a higher degree of spirituality, the Apostle Paul says it is childish.

Note that the English word "man", used in this verse to indicate maturity, is the same Greek word translated as "perfect" in 1Cor13:10.

[21] Here Paul quotes Isa28:11-12, indicating that speaking in tongues was prophesied in the OT. The interesting element is that in Isa28, the people to be spoken to in these foreign tongues is unbelieving Israel.

[22] Thus, an important purpose for speaking in tongues was to be a sign for unbelieving Israel (Matt12:38; 1Cor1:22). Consistent with this purpose, tongues are primarily mentioned in the Book of Acts, which records the re-offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel (Matt22:4; Act3:19-21). With the second rejection of the kingdom offer by national Israel, and the Church Age program turning definitely to the Gentiles (Act28:25-28), speaking in tongues is never again mentioned in the NT (note that 1 Corinthians was written during the historical period covered by Acts, with Paul's epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1&2 Timothy and Titus, as well as all of John's epistles coming after Acts 28; one reference is made to sign gifts in Hebrews in the past tense).

In contrast, prophesying is the appropriate ministry gift to exercise among believers in the church.

REGULATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

[23] Paul points out the obvious. If a visitor came into a church meeting and saw the whole congregation simultaneously speaking in tongues, which is apparently what was happening routinely at Corinth, he would think the behavior was ridiculous (much like in Acts 2:12-13 the mixed multitude thought the apostles at Pentecost were drunk).

[24] On the other hand, a visitor, unbelieving or otherwise, could benefit from the gift of prophesy being used in a church meeting. By hearing the Word of God in a language he understands he will be convicted of sin (Jn16:8).

[25] By hearing the Word of God proclaimed plainly, and being convicted of his personal sin, the visitor will realize that "God is in you of a truth", with the implication that he would not do by witnessing a chaotic scene of tongues-speaking.

[26] Apparently the scene at a church meeting in Corinth was chaotic indeed, with the believers each trying to sing, pray, speak in a

tongue or prophesy simultaneously. This resulted from the spirit of pride and self-exaltation rife among the believers at Corinth (1Cor5:2, 8:2, 14:4). This situation edified no one. Thus, Paul will now set down some specific guidelines to regulate the meetings at Corinth.

- [27] If (not a requirement) there is speaking in tongues, it should be by two or three, no more. Furthermore, the speakers should take turns, not speak simultaneously. Each speaker is to be interpreted, so that the entire congregation is edified by the message.
- [28] If there is no one present who can interpret the tongue (either by knowing the language or having a supernatural gift to do so), then the tongues-speaker should remain silent; if there is not interpretation, there should be no tongues!
- [29] Similarly, those prophesying should exercise their gift in turn, perhaps two or three (although no limit will be placed on the number who can prophesy).

Furthermore, when prophecy was given in the church, it was to be judged by the other believers; this would be an evaluation to ensure that what was being given was consistent with God's previous revelation in His Word (Acts17:11). Why was this necessary? Because there would come those into the churches who were false prophets (2Pet2:1; 1Jn4:1); in fact, they were already present in the church at Corinth (e.g., 1Cor15:12).

- [30] Allowance was made, however, for a brother who received a direct revelation from God during the meeting; in such a case, the normal order of the meeting could be interrupted to immediately hear the Word from the Lord.
- [31] Even in the case where everyone present received a revelation from God, each should speak in turn. No limit is placed on the number who could prophesy, in contrast to the hard limitation on the number who speak in tongues (v27). This is because the appropriate setting for the ministry of the gift of prophecy, unlike tongues, is within the church! All present can be instructed and edified by the use of this gift, which is the very purpose of the spiritual gifts (1Cor12:7; 1Pet4:10-11).
- [32] Those who are gifted by the Spirit, whether to prophesy or to speak in tongues, remain in control of themselves and their gifts.
- [33] The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be blamed for confusion or chaos in a church meeting.
- [34] An additional regulation is that women in the meeting "keep silent", for they are "not permitted... to speak". While some have interpreted this as a general requirement, prohibiting women in a church meeting from speaking at all, the context suggests that speaking in tongues is the primary subject of the prohibition set down for the women.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that Paul has already alluded to the fact that it is permissible for women to pray in the church meeting, albeit only with their heads covered (1Cor11:5). The issue in Corinth seems to be that the women were not "under obedience" relative to their role of being subject to the headship of the men (1Cor11:3), and thus required some definite rules be laid down for them by the Apostle.

- [35] This verse, however, seems to support the position that women are to remain totally silent in the church meeting. If that is correct, it may be a command directed specifically to the rebellious women of Corinth without general application to all women in all churches. Again, the teaching in 1Cor11:2-16 which allows women to participate in public worship, within constraints, seems to be the general rule, with the hard prohibition of v34 directed to the local situation in Corinth; notice in v34 it is "your women" (i.e., the Corinthian women) that are the subjects of the prohibition.
- [36] This verse is consistent with the interpretation of the local feminist problem at Corinth. To these feminists who believe they have a right to lead in worship, Paul points out by the use of two rhetorical questions that in no case did God ever use a woman to record His revelation in Scripture.
- [37] Paul's teaching in this epistle is inspired of the Lord, and therefore authoritative. Since this is a fact, anyone claiming to be a prophet and led by the Lord must acknowledge this to be true (cp. 2Pet3:16).
- [38] This verse seems to be akin to Rev22:11, indicating that for those who have been instructed in the truth and refuse to submit to it, there remains nothing else to do but await the Lord's judgment at His return (1Cor4:5).
- [39] Paul concludes this chapter by encouraging the believers at Corinth to desire that prophecy be the primary gift exercised at their meetings, which can edify all present, but does not prohibit speaking in tongues if done within the guidelines set forth.
- [40] The whole context of this chapter has been disorder within the church meetings at Corinth. The commands from Paul come with the intention of restoring order to the meetings, so that all may be edified.

CHAPTER 15

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST A FACT OF HISTORY

- [1] Chapter 15 is the great NT passage on the resurrection, both historically that of Christ as well as that of the believer in the future. Paul has learned that some in the church at Corinth, while professing to be believers, are denying the doctrine of resurrection (v12), much like the Sadducees (Mt22:23; Mk 12:18; Act23:8). Paul writes the longest chapter in all of the NT epistles to correct this damnable heresy.

Paul had established the church at Corinth by the preaching of the gospel, which had not changed (Gal1:6-9). Paul will now reiterate that previous message, which the Corinthians had before received.

- [2] Belief in "the gospel" is what saves. Since salvation depends on what we believe, it's crucial to clearly define the content of the gospel.

It is possible for one to have "believed in vain"; in such a case, one is not saved. The issue is not the sincerity of our faith, but the object of our faith and its power to save. There is no benefit to believing something that is not true (v14).

- [3] The gospel Paul preached was not of his own invention, nor had it been taught to him by others, but had been received by him directly from the Lord (Gall:11-12); thus, its authority is not in question. The heart of the gospel contains two non-negotiable truths.

First, Christ died for our sins. As the perfect and sinless Man (2Cor5:21; Heb4:15), Christ did not have to personally die, nor could any man take His life (Jn10:18). Christ's death (His voluntary laying down of His life) had a purpose, which was to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world (Rom3:25; 1Jn2:2).

- [4] Second, Christ rose again on the third day. The resurrection proves that God accepted Christ's payment for sin (Rom4:25). That Christ was buried is evidence for the fact of His death; that He was seen by many witnesses (vv5-8) is evidence for the fact of His resurrection.

Finally, these truths of the gospel (i.e., Messiah's death and resurrection) were prophesied long before in the Old Testament Scriptures; major passages include Genesis 22, Psalm 16:10, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53. These Scriptures were used by Paul to argue in the synagogues that Jesus had to be the promised Messiah (e.g., Act17:2-3).

- [5] The Bible records true, literal history, and Christianity is based upon these historical facts. The resurrection of Christ is a fact of history, for which there were MANY eye-witnesses. The resurrected Christ was seen by Peter (Lk24:34) and the other apostles (Mk16:14; Lk24:36-43; Jn20:19-29).

- [6] He was seen by more than 500 disciples at the same time; this may have been the occasion of His giving of the great commission (Mt28:19-20). The emphasis on the fact that most of these eye-witnesses were still alive at the time of the writing of this epistle is an encouragement to doubters to personally verify the truth of Paul's claims.

- [7] He was also seen by His half-brother James, whose conversion came after the Lord's resurrection (and, as for Paul, was likely the reason for it).

- [8] The last appearance (as of the writing of this epistle) of the resurrected Christ was to Paul (Act9:4-7), which resulted in his conversion. Paul refers to himself as "one born out of due time", or born prematurely. By this Paul is referring to the fact that he, a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil3:5), had accepted Jesus as Israel's Messiah, though Israel's national conversion was yet to come (Rom11:25-26).

- [9] Paul's name means "little", and here he refers to himself as the "least of the apostles" because he had "persecuted the church" (1Tim1:13-15).

- [10] However, Paul's previous life as a blasphemer of Christ and persecutor of the church was the perfect canvas on which to paint a picture of the grace of God. God's grace, shed upon the most vile and undeserving of sinners, resulted in Paul's glorious conversion and subsequent life spent in utter devotion to the cause of Christ (2Tim4:6-8).

Based on his post-salvation labor for the Lord, our estimation of Paul would have to be that he was the greatest of the apostles.

- [11] Paul's message, consistent with that of all the other eye-witnesses (e.g., Act2:24, 3:3:15), was the fact of the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ is a non-negotiable element of "the gospel".

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST A NON-NEGOTIABLE PART OF THE GOSPEL

- [12] Whereas many of the problems in the Corinthian church were errors of Christian practice and moral standards, there was at least one major doctrinal issue: some were denying the resurrection of the body in general, and Christ's bodily resurrection in particular. The denial was not of an afterlife, but that there would be physical bodies in the afterlife. This concern was derived from centuries of ingrained teaching from the pagan Greek philosophers, which viewed the body as unspiritual, and they therefore had a problem with the concept of a bodily resurrection. The Greek church (as well as western Church scholars who entertained affection for the Greek philosophers) would have a problem with this heresy for centuries to come.

In Greek, "resurrection of the body" is *anastasis nekron*, or literally "the standing up again of a corpse". In Scripture, resurrection ALWAYS refers to the body. In contrast, the Greek *zoopoieo* (quicken, or make alive) is used when referring to the spirit.

- [13] To deny the doctrine of resurrection is to deny the resurrection of Christ.

Note that the Jewish sect of the Sadducees had long denied the doctrine of resurrection (Mt22:23; Mk12:18; Lk20:27; Act23:8), which the Lord Jesus Himself defended using the very Scriptures the Sadducees accepted as from God (Mt22:29-33; Mk12:24-27; Lk20:34-38).

- [14] But the resurrection of Christ is a non-negotiable element of "the gospel". If resurrection is not true, the content of the gospel is not true. Thus, the gospel preached by Paul and believed by the Corinthians would be "vain" (i.e., empty, void of any power to save).
- [15] Furthermore, if resurrection is not true, Paul and all the other apostles are false witnesses, since their messages were founded upon the preaching of the resurrected Christ (e.g., Act2:24; 3:15; 17:31; 26:23).
- [16] There is no difference between our hope of future resurrection and the fact of Christ's past resurrection; to deny either is to deny both.
- [17] The resurrection of Christ is presented in the NT as the proof of God's acceptance of His payment for our sins (Rom4:25), to be personally appropriated by our faith. Thus, to deny the resurrection of Christ is to remove the only testimony to God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. The conclusion would be that the sinner is "yet in [his] sins" with no hope of salvation.
- [18] If the resurrection of Christ is not true, Christians who have died not only have no hope of resurrection, but must "perish" in hell as payment for their own sins.

- [19] If it is "in this life only" that the Christian has hope, he is "of all men most miserable". In "this life", the promise for the Christian is one of tribulation, persecution, and suffering (Jn15:18-20; 16:1-2, 33; Php1:29; 2Tim3:12). The promise of blessing and glory for the Christian is in the age to come (Jn14:1-3; Php3:20-21; 1Jn3:2-3; note that all the promises held out to the overcomers in the churches of Rev2-3 are future).

If the resurrection of Christ is not true, there is no hope of resurrection for the believer. In such a case, death should be greatly feared by the Christian, yet Paul taught the very opposite (Php1:21-23).

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTIONS

- [20] Paul now moves from his consideration of the consequences of Christ's resurrection not being true, to an affirmation of its truth and an evaluation of its theological ramifications.

The destiny of believers is linked to that of Christ; His resurrection, here called a "firstfruits", is a promise of the future resurrection of all believers (note, "sleep" is a euphemism used in the NT for the death of believers).

What Christians today call Easter Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection, is the Biblical Feast of Firstfruits (Lev23:10-11). The Feast of Firstfruits was the day after the Sabbath following Passover (i.e., the first Sunday following Passover). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus fulfilled the Feast of Firstfruits on the very day of its observation.

- [21] The first man, Adam, is the federal head of the human race. When Adam sinned, he brought the penalty for sin (i.e., death; Gen2:17) upon all mankind. All men die because of the sin of Adam (Rom5:12).

- [22] However, by spiritual rebirth (i.e., being "born again") the believer is removed from being under the headship of Adam and put under the Headship of the Last Adam (v45), the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the destiny of the believer is no longer death "in Adam", but resurrection "in Christ" (Rom5:15-19).

- [23] There is not a single resurrection event of all men to come in the future. Rather, the resurrections of men have an order. Using the agricultural metaphor: 1) Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits, 2) the resurrection of Church Age believers to come at the rapture (1Thess4:16-17) could be considered the general harvest, and 3) the resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation saints to come at the end of the Tribulation (Dan12:1-3; Rev20:4) could be considered the post-harvest gleaning. These three separate and distinct events resurrection events each involve believers only, and together are referred to as the "first resurrection" (Rev20:4) or the "resurrection of life" (Jn5:29).

The second resurrection, or the "resurrection of damnation" (Jn5:29), is the resurrection of all the unbelieving, wicked dead from all ages; this resurrection is a single event that will occur after the Millennial Kingdom is completed (Rev20:11-15).

- [24] Here, "the end" refers to the end of the Millennial Kingdom. The 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth has to do, in part, with subjecting all of creation to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; those

who refuse to obey Christ in the Kingdom will be forcibly put down (Ps2:8-9; 66:3-4; Rev20:7-10).

After all creation has been brought into subjection to God in Christ, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (Mt13:41-43) Who will join the Son in ruling over a new heavens and a new earth (Rev22:3) that is forever free of death, pain or sin (Rev21:4-8).

- [25] Christ's work on earth when He returns will not be complete until He has conquered every enemy of God (Php2:10-11).
- [26] Death, a consequence of the sin of Adam when he yielded to the temptation of the Serpent, is the last enemy to be destroyed. Here "death" is a personification of Christ's ultimate enemy, Satan (Heb2:14). Not until the completion of the Millennial Kingdom will Satan be defeated (Rev20:10) and there be "no more death" (Rev21:4).
- [27] At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will have brought all created things into subjection to Himself, God the Father being obviously excepted. The work to "put all things under his [Christ's] feet" is here also ascribed to God the Father (Ps110:1).
- [28] Once Christ, Who is God the Son, has brought all of creation into subjection to Himself during His Kingdom rule on earth, He will deliver that righteous Kingdom over to God the Father. Thus, all of creation will at that time be in subjection to God in the Persons of both the Son and the Father (Rev22:1-4).

THE VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION

- [29] Returning to address those in Corinth who are denying the doctrine of resurrection, Paul asks what the purpose of being "baptized for the dead" would be if there is no resurrection.

Just how "baptism for the dead" is to be understood has long been a controversy. Certainly, the elaborate Mormon practice of baptizing in proxy living believers for dead unbelievers (with some presumed spiritual efficacy) cannot be supported by this casual reference!

By being "baptized for the dead" we should understand Paul simply to be referring to believers who come forward to publicly proclaim Christ (i.e., by being baptized), and to by doing so in effect take the place of Christians who are being martyred. This is the only interpretation that is consistent with the context that follows (vv30-32).

- [30] The context of the reference to those "baptized for the dead" is the persecution of Christians, that is, believers being in peril of death because of their faith.
- [31] By "I die daily" Paul meant that as a Christian he was daily in danger of death (2Cor11:23-27), and in fact may have actually suffered death one or more times (e.g., Act14:19; 2Cor11:23).
- [32] Paul in effect asks the question, "Why am I suffering so much, and putting myself constantly in danger of death, if there is no resurrection?" If there is no resurrection, and this life is all there is to enjoy, risking death for one's faith would be foolish.

Using the same logic, being baptized (the initial public act of a believer) would only set oneself up for persecution and possible death; this makes no sense if there is no resurrection promised for the Christian.

- [33] Here Paul's, "Evil company corrupts good character" is thought to be a quotation of a proverb from the Greek philosopher Menander, which would be well-known to the Corinthians.
- [34] Paul is scolding the Corinthians for giving these false teachers, who are denying the doctrine of resurrection, a voice in the fellowship; they "have not the knowledge of God" (i.e., they are not believers) and should be treated as such.

THE RESURRECTION BODY

- [35] Now Paul addresses the long-held Greek view of the body that has motivated the denial of bodily resurrection by some. The Greeks viewed the body as unspiritual, and a source of weakness and wickedness, and could not conceive of an afterlife that was purported to be spiritually perfect, but included bodies.
- [36] While the bodies with which we have common experience certainly fit the Greek characterization, the problem is not inherent to the body per se, but with fallen human bodies. But it is foolish to assume that our resurrection bodies will be like (i.e., of the same nature as) the weak, corrupt, cursed, and fallen bodies we have in this life.
- [37] Consider a crop, say wheat, corn, or an oak tree, which is obviously linked to the buried seed from which it came; nevertheless, its form and nature after "rebirth" are utterly different than that of the seed which was buried.
- [38] By analogy, Paul asserts that our resurrection bodies will have a nature utterly different than that of our bodies in this life.
- [39] God's work of creation is widely varied. He has made bodies with disparate degrees of glory. This is seen in the differences between the bodies of men and those in the animal kingdom.
- [40] God's varied work of creation extends to the inanimate realm as well. Consider how different terrestrial bodies are (i.e., earth, moon) from celestial bodies (i.e., sun, stars).
- [41] The glory (i.e., nature) of the sun, moon and stars are obviously different; even one star differs dramatically from another (a curious fact well-known today, but of which the ancient world would have been ignorant; not God, of course!).
- [42] In the same way, there is a difference in glory (i.e., nature) between our bodies in this life and the bodies we will have in the resurrection.
- [43] Paul agrees with the Greek mind which correctly views our bodies in this life as corrupt, without honor, weak and unspiritual.
- [44] However, he asserts that our resurrection bodies will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual. The "natural body" (i.e., today's fallen human body of this life) and the "spiritual body" (i.e., the resurrection bodies of the life to come) cannot be equated, as their very natures are utterly different.

- [45] Paul now returns to his previous discussion of the contrast between Adam and Christ (v22). Here Christ is called the "last Adam", in the sense that these are the only two men that stand as federal heads over the human race. Just as Adam passes his fallen and corrupt nature on to all of us who have been born from him, so Christ will pass His resurrected, perfected and exalted human nature on to all who are "born again" in Him (Rom5:19; 2Cor5:17).
- [46] Clearly, from the human point of view of history, it was Adam that come first; then, in God's perfect timing, Christ came (Gal4:4-5).
- [47] This verse emphasizes the source of the two kinds of human bodies. Adam's body came from the earth (Gen2:7), whereas Christ's resurrection body is heavenly in origin and nature (Jn3:13).
- [48] The implication is that that which is derived from the earth is suited for dwelling on earth, and that which is derived from heaven is suited for dwelling in heaven (see v50).

It is clear from our experience that all of us are like Adam, fallen and corrupt. However, the promise of God is that the resurrected Christ is the firstfruits of all who will be raised (v20).

- [49] Nature shows that the harvest is "like" the firstfruits; if the firstfruits is the resurrected Christ, we will be like Him in our resurrection, a conclusion the Apostle John explicitly asserts (1Jn3:2).
- [50] The conclusion is that the bodies of "flesh and blood" we have inherited from Adam are not appropriate for life in the righteous kingdom of God, which is called by Matthew the kingdom of heaven; this is why the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn3:3).

Our resurrection bodies, being true bodies but of heavenly origin, will be perfectly suited to inherit the kingdom of God.

THE MYSTERY OF THE RESURRECTION

- [51] Now Paul reveals a "mystery", which is revelation from God never before given to man and which cannot be deduced or inferred (Rom16:25-26; Eph3:4-5; Col1:26), associated with the resurrection. It is not the fact of a coming bodily resurrection that is the mystery, as that was clearly taught in the OT (e.g., Job19:25-26; Ps16:9-10; Isa26:19; Dan12:2-3; note also Christ's "proof" of resurrection to the Sadducees using Ex3:15 in Mt22:23-33).

An obvious question, coming out of Paul's extended discussion of how our natural bodies are not suited for a heavenly existence (vv48-50), is "what about believers who are alive when Christ returns?" That the dead will be raised was already known, and Paul's teaching here has centered on the new nature of the resurrection body which will be suited for a heavenly existence.

Paul's new revelation, however, is that not all will die; the generation of believers who are alive at Christ's return will never experience death (i.e., under the euphemism here of "sleep"), but their bodies will nevertheless be changed.

- [52] This transformation of the bodies of "flesh and blood" of living believers into incorruptible, glorified bodies is linked to the time of resurrection, which occurs at the return of Christ to "rapture" His Church (1Thess4:16-17). The transformation of our bodies will be instantaneous.

Note that in speaking here of the time of the rapture, Paul places himself in the context of those believers who would be alive to experience it (just as in 1Thess4:17); this is consistent with the NT teaching that the rapture is an imminent event that could take place at any time, and could have even taken place during the life of the Apostle Paul.

Much controversy has arisen in recent years concerning the "last trump" here associated with the rapture. It should certainly be identified with the "trump of God" in the other extended rapture passage (1Thess4:16). However, there is no basis for equating it to the 7th Trumpet Judgment of Rev11:15-18; by doing so some have incorrectly concluded that the rapture of the church occurs near the end of the Tribulation (i.e., a post-tribulational rapture).

- [53] By the instantaneous transformation of the bodies of living believers at the time of the rapture, they like the resurrected believers will have bodies that are incorruptible and immortal and perfectly suited for a heavenly existence.

PROMISE OF RESURRECTION A MOTIVE FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE

- [54] When the bodies of believers, whether resurrected or raptured, have been changed to incorruptible and immortal bodies no longer subject to sin and death, then death and the one who has power over it (i.e., the Devil, Heb2:14-15) will no longer be the enemies they are now. That this coming day was long-expected is supported by Paul's quotation of Isa25:8
- [55] Similarly, Paul alludes to Hos13:14.
- [56] Death was introduced into the creation as punishment for man's sin (Gen2:17; Rom5:12; 6:23). The "law" actually compounded the problem by increasing the transgressions of men and making them even more guilty (Rom7:13), which was its purpose (Rom5:20; Gal3:19).
- [57] But in Christ, Who was born apart from the fallen nature of Adam (Lk1:35), Who never sinned (2Cor5:21; Heb4:15), and Who perfectly fulfilled the Law (Mt5:17), Death has been destroyed for all who have been born again in Him (2Cor5:17). This indeed is an unspeakable gift for which we must be eternally grateful (2Cor9:15; Rev4:10-11)!
- [58] Whereas Paul had said that to risk persecution, suffering, tribulation and even death by living the Christian life was foolish if there were no resurrection (vv29-32), in fact it is the sure promise of God of a coming glorious resurrection of all believers that provides a rational motivation for fervent and unwavering service for the Lord.

CHAPTER 16

ANSWERS TO FINAL QUESTIONS AND THE APOSTLE'S PLANS

- [1] In this closing chapter of the epistle, Paul turns to some practical instructions for the Corinthian church. He begins by addressing another question from the Corinthians (i.e., "now concerning").

While at Corinth Paul had apparently communicated to them the condition of the saints (Hebrew Christians) in Jerusalem (v3) who were being sorely persecuted, imprisoned, and having their property confiscated (Act8:1-3; Heb10:32-33). As he had in other churches (i.e., Act24:17; Rom15:26), Paul encouraged the predominantly Gentile Christians at Corinth to send financial support to their Jewish brethren in need. The question from Corinth apparently had to do with how the collection was to be taken, since Paul proceeds to give detailed instructions.

- [2] Giving is expected from all (e.g., "every one of you"). Contributions are not to be haphazardly given, nor given in response to an emotional appeal made with the Apostle present. Rather, giving is to be systematically planned in proportion to personal income (e.g., "as God hath prospered him"). The offerings are to be received weekly when the church gathers together on "first day of the week" (i.e., Sunday).

Giving by the believer in the Church Age differs from that of Israel under the Law (i.e., the tithe was required; Lev27:30-33). Today, giving is a "grace" (2Cor8:7) motivated by a heart of gratitude to God rather than a requirement of the Law (2Cor8:8; 9:7). Our giving should be liberal (2Cor9:13), even bountiful (2Cor9:6), remembering that Christ, as our example, was willing to be made poor for our sakes (2Cor8:9). Whereas under the Dispensation of the Law material prosperity was a promised blessing to the Jew for obedience (Deut28:1-14), that is not a promise to believers in the Dispensation of Grace; today, God blesses some believers with prosperity, not so they can keep more, but so they can give more (2Cor9:8,11-13).

- [3] Paul, always concerned that the ministry not be damaged by charges of financial impropriety (1Cor9:6-18; 2Cor8:20-21), refuses to personally handle the money collected by the Corinthian church; the church should identify trusted men from among them who will take the offering to Jerusalem.
- [4] If it so happens that the collection is ready at a time when Paul is also traveling to Jerusalem, he would be happy for the Corinthian representatives as well as representatives from the many other churches who are contributing to accompany him (2Cor8:19).
- [5] Here Paul announces his travel plans. It is currently spring and he is at Ephesus (v8), but intends to come to Corinth to spend the winter with the Corinthian believers (v6); however, he intends to visit the churches in Macedonia (i.e., Thessalonika, Philippi) on his way from Ephesus to Corinth.
- [6] Paul's intention to come to Corinth for the winter apparently did not happen, which became a source of strife between him and the Corinthians (2Cor1:15-17).
- [7] Note, however, that Paul's statement of his intention to come to Corinth was expressed only as a possibility, subject to the Lord's direction. While it is good and acceptable for believers to make plans, we must recognize that our plans are always subordinate to the sovereign will of God (Js4:13-15).

- [8] Paul is currently nearing the end of his 3-year stay at Ephesus (Act19:10; 20:31) and plans to leave there after Pentecost (i.e., the Feast of Weeks, in approximately June on our calendar).

It is interesting to note that while Paul still reckons time by the Jewish calendar (i.e., Pentecost), he recognizes that as a Jewish Christian in the Church Age he is no longer "under the Law" (Gal3:24-25), since the Law would have required he be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks (Deut16:16).

- [9] The "great" and "effectual" door open for Paul in Ephesus was his opportunity to daily teach in the School of Tyrannus (Act19:9). This school was essentially a seminary, where men were trained by Paul in the Scriptures and sent out as evangelists and church planters, so that "all they who dwelt in Asia hear the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Act19:10). It was this work that gave rise to the churches in Asia (e.g., Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colosse).

However, with the fruitful work came great opposition, especially from the guild of the silversmiths who's idol-making business was being impacted by Paul's success (Act19:23-28).

- [10] In place of his own personal visit to Corinth, which is expressed only as a possibility, Paul suggests that he may send his faithful assistance Timothy to visit the Corinthians; it was not unusual for Paul to send Timothy on errands such as this (e.g., Phil2:19-24).
- [11] That Paul expresses concern for how the Corinthians might treat Timothy speaks yet again to the carnality and worldliness of this church (1Cor1:11; 3:3). Paul's command that they not "despise" Timothy may have been related to his youth (see 1Tim4:12).
- [12] The final question (i.e., "as touching") from the Corinthians addressed by Paul concerned Apollos. Apollos had spent some time teaching in Corinth after Paul had departed (Act18:27-19:1), and evidently the Corinthians are anxious for him to return; Apollos was a Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria with an eloquent preaching style that undoubtedly appealed to the Greeks at Corinth (Act18:24). Paul also thought another visit by Apollos would be helpful, and had apparently encouraged him along these lines, but Apollos had other plans at this time.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

- [13] Paul concludes the epistle with a five-fold exhortation to the Corinthian believers: 1) "watch", meaning to continually be on guard against error and false doctrine (2Tim3:13-4:4; Tit1:9), 2) "stand fast in the faith", meaning not to retreat or back down in the face of demon-inspired opposition (Eph6:13; 1Pet5:8-9), 3) "quit [act] you like men", is an command to grow from their infantile condition into mature believers (1Cor3:1-3), 4) "be strong", which in the passive voice suggests they be made strong by the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph3:16; 5:18).
- [14] And the final reminder to: 5) "let all your things be done with *agape*", is a reiteration of Paul's extended treatment on what is to motivate the believer (1Cor12:31-14:1).
- [15] Paul recognizes Stephanas and his family as devoted servants in the church. Apparently, this family was Paul's first converts in Corinth, whom he had personally baptized (1Cor1:16).

- [16] Paul further encourages the Corinthians to themselves recognize the Biblical shepherding being provided by Stephanas and to submit to his leadership.
- [17] Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, from the church in Corinth, had visited Paul in Ephesus and brought him much encouragement. Unfortunately, they undoubtedly also confirmed the rumors Paul had heard regarding the condition of the Corinthian church (1Cor1:11). Most assume that it is the visit by these men that brought the letter with the church's questions for Paul (1Cor7:1), which this epistle spends much time answering.
- [18] Paul recognized these men as leaders in the church and encouraged the members to do so as well. It is likely that they brought this epistle from Paul with them on their return to Corinth.
- [19] Paul sends greetings from the churches in Asia (i.e., modern-day Turkey), among which he has been laboring for almost three years (Act20:31).

Greetings are also sent from Aquila and Priscilla. This couple were Jewish believers who had been expelled from Rome by the edict of Claudius and had come to live in Corinth (Act18:1-3), where they met Paul; thus, they would be well-known by the believers at Corinth. When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, they accompanied him to help with his ministry and to support him financially (Act18:18-19). They seem to have supported a church in their home wherever they went (Rom16:3-5).

- [20] The expression of Christian love among believers in the early church included the "holy kiss" by both sexes (Rom16:16; 1Thess5:26), as is still widely practiced by peoples of the Middle East even today.
- [21] While Paul generally did not pen his epistles himself, he did end each one with his personal "token" in his own handwriting (2Thess3:17); this was in part due to attempts by some to circulate forged letters attributed to the Apostle (2Thess2:2).
- [22] A grave reminder is given that for those who "love not the Lord Jesus Christ", their fate will be *anathema* (Grk., "to be accursed"). *Maranatha* is an Aramaic expression meaning "our Lord cometh". The Lord's coming for those who believe not should be greatly feared, as it will be a coming in judgment; for the believer, however, the Lord's coming will be to reward His faithful (2Tim4:8; Rev22:12) and nothing should be more desired (Rev22:17,20).
- [23] This phrase is apparently the "token" (i.e., sign or mark) to which Paul has elsewhere referred (2Thess3:17), as it is included in the ending of every epistle from Paul (and not used by any of the other NT epistle writers).
- Paul always ended his epistles by commending his readers to the grace of God. No one understood the grace of God more than the Apostle Paul, who had benefited so uniquely from it (1Cor15:9-10; 1Tim1:12-15; note the principle in Lk7:47).
- [24] Paul closes with an expression of his own *agape* love for the believers in Corinth. The carnal Corinthian believers certainly had little to commend themselves to the Apostle's love, which highlights the unconditional nature of *agape* love.

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