
COMMENTARY ON
First Corinthians

Practical and Explanatory

Howard Winters



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"I never altered one syllable of God's word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it might be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me."

— William Tyndale

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
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**DEDICATED
TO**

Johnny Melton, a huge man in
both heart and mind, a true
friend, a faithful co-worker,
a trusted teacher, and a
useful critic.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Alford, Henry — **Alford's Greek New Testament, An Exegetical and Critical Commentary**

ASV — **American Standard Version**

Barnes, Albert — **Notes on the New Testament, First Corinthians**

Beck, William F. — **The New Testament in the Language of Today Bible Commentary, The** — F.C. Cook, Editor, Vol. IX

BV — **Berkeley Version**

DeHoff, George W. — **Sermons on First Corinthians**

Goodspeed, Edgar J. — **The Complete Bible, An American Translation**

Hodge, Charles — **A Commentary on I & II Corinthians**

HS — **Holy Spirit**

Lightfoot, J.B. — **Notes on the Epistles of Paul**

Lipscomb, David, and Shepherd, J.W. — **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, First Corinthians**

MacKnight, James — **Notes on the Apostolic Epistles**

McGarvey, J.W., and Pendleton, Philip — **Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans**

Moffett, James — **The Holy Bible, A New Translation**

NASV — **New American Standard Version**, From the New American Standard Bible, © Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975

NEB — **New English Bible**

NIV — **New International Version**, 1973, 1978 by International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers

NT — **New Testament**

OT — **Old Testament**

Robertson (WP), A.T. — **Word Pictures in the New Testament**

RSV — **Revised Standard Version**

TAB — **The Amplified Bible**

TEV — **Good News for Modern Man**, Today's English Version

Thayer, Joseph Henry — **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**

v. — verse; vv. — verses; v. 16 or vv. 16-18; 2:16 means 1 Cor. 2:16

Vincent (WS), M.R. — **Word Studies in the New Testament**

Williams, Charles B. — **The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People**

Willis, Mike — **A Commentary on Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians**

Young's, Robert — **Literal Translation of the Bible**

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

Clayton Winters

CORINTH: ITS PEOPLE AND CUSTOMS

The city of Corinth. Julius Caesar built the Corinth of New Testament fame, and peopled it as a Roman colony. Due to its geographic, military, and economic importance, it soon attained status as the capital city of Achaia (the Roman name for Greece). But beyond this, it, along with Athens, became a center for learning and disseminating the Greek philosophies; and it is this particular claim to fame that is of primary significance in a study of the First Corinthian epistle.

The Stoic and Epicurean philosophies. The Stoic philosophy of God was that He was nothing more than the Spirit or Reason of the universe. Man was but a mortal being who at death would have his soul burned or absorbed back into the elements of the universe. The wise man was thus encouraged to live according to reason, and in doing so was taught that he was perfect and totally self-sufficient. Such philosophy left no need of a Saviour; and much like the humanism of today, could only result in the enthroning of human pride, and the shameless profligacy of self-gratification.

The Epicureans, however, were the atheist of the day. They did not believe in God; and even if there were one (or more), he would be far removed, and would have no interest whatsoever in the miserable dust of humanity. Like the Stoics, the Epicurean believed that life ended at death; and that the greatest goal of life was that which afforded man the greatest pleasure (sensual or otherwise). This belief inevitably led to the grossest sensuality and crime: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (15:32).

It has been well said that the two ruling principles moral man has ever had to deal with -- pleasure and pride -- are exemplified in the Epicureans and the Stoics.

The corruptions of idolatry. An insight into the licentious nature of idol worship is given in God's warning to Israel: "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God for a votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God" (Dt. 23:17-18, NASV). According to Babylonian law every woman was obligated to submit to the embrace of a stranger at least once in her lifetime as an offering to Venus. Sons and daughters of leading Armenian

families were consecrated to the service of Anaitis for a longer or shorter period of time to entertain strangers. The females who received the greatest number were the most sought after for marriage. The Phoenicians were well known for promiscuous intercourse during certain religious festivals. The Babylonians erected sacred enclosures on their temples for the purpose of cult prostitution. In her apostasy this practice also found its way into the nation of Israel (2 Kgs. 23:7).

During New Testament times, the temple of Venus, located in the city of Corinth, was said to have had more than 1,000 of that city's choice women engaged in cult prostitution. This practice so corrupted the sexual morals of the Corinthians that the very name itself became a synonym for sexual impurity. Godless philosophy had produced some very despicable fruits.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Into such a morally bankrupt society the leaven of the gospel was conspicuously placed. While at Troas, Paul received the Macedonian call (Acts 16:9-10). He responded by planting the church in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. From there he traveled to Athens to dispute with the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers on Mars' Hill. After a relatively short stay in Athens, he made his way to the city of Corinth, some forty-five miles away. At first he supported himself by tent-making, and reasoned every sabbath day in the synagogue, persuading both Jews and Greeks. Paul was soon joined by his companions, Silas and Timothy, who evidently brought him a contribution from the Macedonian churches (Acts 18:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:15), enabling him to give his full time to the word of God (Acts 18:5, NIV). Paul's preaching aroused strong opposition among the Jews and they drove him from the synagogue. However, he continued his work in the home of Justus for a year and a half, and "Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:6-8). The success of the gospel caused an insurrection among the Jews, and Paul was brought before the Roman proconsul Gallio. But Gallio dismissed the case and drove the Jews from the judgment seat (Acts 18:12-16).

After an unspecified period of time (Acts 18:18) Paul left Corinth for Syria, but not without leaving behind a flourishing body of Christians who knew idols made with men's hands were nothing, and that there was in reality "but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. 8:6).

THE FIRST CORINTHIAN EPISTLE

Author. Unquestionably the epistle was written by Paul. It bears his signature (1:1). It is replete with personal references to the apostle: he mentions those he had baptized (1:14-16), the fact that he had planted the gospel seed in Corinth (3:6), pointed out that he was their father in the gospel (4:15), and that

they were his work in the Lord (9:1-2). Stronger evidence of its authorship could not be expected nor given.

Time and place of composition. Paul left Corinth in A.D. 54. He then came to Jerusalem where he spent some time (Acts 18:19-23). From there he journeyed through Phrygia and Galatia strengthening the churches (Acts 18:23). He then entered Ephesus for a three-year ministry (Acts 19:1-41; 20:1-3). It was from this city that Paul penned the First Corinthian epistle (16:8-9).

Sometime after Paul had spent more than two years at Ephesus (Acts 19:8, 10), he decided to send Timothy ahead of him to Corinth to prepare the collection he was hoping to take to the needy saints at Jerusalem (Acts 19:21-22). While Paul was writing the epistle, Timothy was already on his way to Corinth (4:17; 16:10). This would unquestionably date the letter near the end of Paul's stay in Ephesus, or around A.D. 57.

Contents of the epistle. Old practices die hard; and since the Corinthian church had been planted in the midst of Stoic pride, Epicurean materialism, and idolatrous sexual immorality, it would be quite natural to expect these philosophies to invade the church, creating problems among weak brethren. And, indeed, such was the case.

The pride of human reasoning manifested itself in the assumption of leadership to the division of the church (1:10-17). It set the wisdom of the world against the wisdom of God, considering the preaching of the cross foolishness (1:18-31); and it led some Christians to reject Spirit-inspired revelation and its proponents for the human reasoning of the philosophers (2:1-4:6). Perhaps even the inordinate desire for the gift of tongue-speaking was motivated by this element of pride (12-14).

Former idolatrous practices had resurfaced as overt sexual immorality. A man was living with his father's wife; but rather than mourning the immoral practice, the brethren seemingly were taking pride in it, and rushing to the man's defense (5:1-5). The satisfaction of sexual lusts outside of marriage was considered as natural as satisfying the appetite for food (6:12-14, NEB). One is almost tempted to believe that they were on the verge of establishing cult prostitution as a tenet of the Lord's church (6:15-20), and it is certain that it had so affected Christian women that they were appearing publicly with attire more in harmony with prostitution than with Christian modesty and subjection (11:3-16).

A further problem involving past idolatrous practice concerned the eating of meat offered to idols. Customarily the Corinthians had joined their friends in the idol's temple for a sacrificial feast. Some Christians had continued (or resumed) this practice, arguing that the knowledge that an idol is nothing nullified the act as service to an idol (8:1-6). But Paul contended that the Lord's Supper is communion with the body of Christ, and that idolatrous feasts were no less fellowship with devils, regardless of the knowledge of the nothingness of idols (10:19-21). Others would seem to have found a counterpart of idolatrous

feasts in the Lord's Supper, thus turning it into a gluttonous meal rather than the memorial which it was intended to be (11:17-34).

Materialism had also manifested itself in the Corinthian church, leading some to deny the bodily resurrection of the dead (15:12-20).

It was to address these departures from truth that Paul penned the First Corinthian epistle. But in addition to this he was responding to a letter from the church, inquiring about such matters as husband-wife responsibilities, marriage of believers to unbelievers, the marriage of virgins, and the remarriage of Christian widows (7:1-40).

It is unfortunate that the Corinthian church became embroiled in so many problems; but it is so fortunate for us that we have this epistle, since so many of the same problems experienced in ancient Corinth are alive and well in our own time.

1 CORINTHIANS 1

INTRODUCTION

1:1-3 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:1 **Paul**, — See note on Rom. 1:1. Paul had planted the church in the city of Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-10) and had remained with it for a year and a half. He wrote this epistle on his third journey near the end of his stay in Ephesus (16:8). Unquestionably Paul was one of the most amazing men to ever become a Christian. He did more to advance Christianity than anyone else in recorded history. But in addition to all his other labors, he wrote more of the NT than any other (13 or 14 books, from Rom. through Phlm. and probably through Heb.). **called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ** — A called apostle of Christ. His was a heavenly calling (Acts 9:10-18; 22:12-16; 26:16-18; Gal. 1:15-16), not of men but of God (Gal. 1:11-12). **through** — by (NIV). **the will of God**, — He was an apostle by God's will or choice. This fact alone establishes his apostolic authority. That is, it proves his call came from God, not from others or by usurpation on his part. **and Sosthenes our brother**, — A companion of Paul and probably the ruler of the synagogue who was beaten in Acts 18:17. If so, his experience before Gallio may have been a factor in his conversion to Christ.

1:2 **Unto the church of God which is at Corinth**, — The born again (Jn. 3:5; 1 Pt. 1:23), called out, separated people of God who were located in the city of Corinth. This is a designation of ownership. In the NT, the church is never thought of as some super organization, such as characterizes Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism, nor is it thought of as a faction or party, but is simply all the Christians, locally or universally, who make up the body of Christ (12:12-27; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). This is the way it should be today. It is sinful for Christians to divide themselves up into sects and parties and then call themselves a church or the church. **to them that are sanctified** — Set apart, made holy, or devoted to sacred use. Their sanctification occurred when they became Christians (6:11), at which time they were called out of the world (2 Cor. 6:17-18) and set apart to the service of God (cf. Eph. 5:26-27; 2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Pt. 1:2). It has no reference whatsoever to a supposed second working of grace, which is a modern, not a Scriptural, concept of sanc-

tification. **in Christ Jesus**, — The sphere in which their sanctification had occurred and in which it continues. **called to be saints**, — Called saints or saints who are divinely called. Paul was a called apostle (v. 1). The sanctified are the called saints. They were called by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14). All the called out are sanctified and all the sanctified are saints. **with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord**, — All who recognize Jesus as Lord and thus invoke His aid on the basis of that faith. One cannot call on Jesus as Lord while refusing to do His will (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46), regardless of whether it is in becoming a Christian or in living the Christian life (cf. Acts 22:16; Rom. 10:13-17). **both their's and our's**: — Canon Evans (Bible Commentary) lists five ways commentators have understood this difficult expression. Only two seem plausible to my mind: (1) "Their's and our's" connect with place, thus meaning their place and ours. (2) I think it is best understood as connecting to Christ (as Lord) and thus meaning both their Lord and ours. We are told that (1) is better grammatically; yet (2) makes more sense, especially in this context. Jesus is Lord of all who call upon His name, regardless of where they are.

1:3 **Grace be unto you**, — The favor of God. This is one of the great words in the writings of Paul and it reminds us that we are totally dependent upon the mercy and favor of God, not our own merit, for the salvation of our souls. As a form of greeting, we would use an equivalent expression, "May God's blessings be upon you." **and peace**, — Peace with God, with others, with self, and with the world (creation). While tranquility (the absence of turmoil and strife) is most certainly involved in this word, that does not exhaust its meaning. It is the result of the unmerited favor of God — the recipients of His divine blessings. **from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ**. — The source of the grace and peace He invokes upon them is both the Father and the Son.

THANKSGIVING

1:4-9 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

1:4 **I thank my God always on your behalf**, — I always thank God for you (NIV). His gratitude to God for them was constant, even with all their problems and shortcomings. This is the kind of gratitude that all Christians ought to have one for another. Rather than condemning one another and dividing over differences (in non-essential matters) we should work them out (in harmony with the word of God) in love and gratitude. **for the grace of God** — God's favor, as manifested in His provision for the scheme of human redemption.

which is given you by Jesus Christ; — which was given to you in Christ Jesus (ASV). The grace which was given to them at the time they entered into union with Christ (Acts 18:8; Gal. 3:27). In Christ is the sphere of salvation (2 Tm. 2:10), redemption (Eph. 1:7), and all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). (It is possible that Paul here has in mind spiritual gifts, that is, miraculous gifts, such as are mentioned in 12:1-11, but my own judgment is that he meant salvation from sins, which is freely offered to all.)

1:5 **That in every thing ye are enriched** — that in every way you were enriched (RSV). The grace of God had been richly poured out upon them (in utterance and in knowledge) when they became children of God, the most valuable gift in the universe (2 Cor. 8:9). Thus to become a Christian is the most enriching experience known to man. **by him,** — in him (ASV). In Christ, the sphere of all spiritual gifts (Eph. 1:3). **in all utterance,** — The power of speech by which they could tell others the saving truth of the gospel. Their tongues had been set free, not miraculously, but by the marvelous gift of grace. Their utterance had been enriched with the vocabulary of the gospel, the message of salvation, and the hope of eternal life. They, as all true Christians down through the ages, loved to tell the story of Jesus (cf. Acts 8:4). **and in all knowledge;** — Nothing necessary to their soul's welfare was lacking in the truth that had been delivered unto them (Jn. 8:32; 16:13; 2 Tm. 3:16-17; 2 Pt. 1:3-4). (If one should conclude, however, that the grace given to them [v. 4] was spiritual gifts, then he would naturally conclude that utterance here was speaking in tongues and knowledge would then be that which was miraculously given, e.g., 12:8; 13:8; but it is my judgment that Paul had in mind the spiritual results of receiving and obeying the gospel.)

1:6 **Even as the testimony of Christ** — The witness Paul bore concerning Christ, that is, his preaching Christ and Him crucified (2:2). **was confirmed in you:** — The message of truth, the fact that Christ was the risen Lord and Savior, was established or validated by their experience in becoming Christians. When they had heard the gospel and believed it (Acts 18:8), they obeyed Christ as Lord and as a result of this He had saved them from their sins (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Thus the truth was confirmed (or made to stand) in them.

1:7 **So that ye come behind in no gift;** — So that you are falling behind in no Christian grace (BV). This has reference to the gifts which resulted from grace (v. 4), not the miraculous gifts (although they might be included in the broad general blessings received by the Corinthian church). The problems in the church were not the result of a lack of ability on the part of Christians, nor were they caused by a watered down version of grace on God's part. They did not fall short in anything that was needful in their service to God (cf. v. 5). **waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:** — Waiting for the appearing of Christ at His second coming (Acts 1:11), the hope of all those who have experienced the grace of God in obedience to His word (1 Thes. 4:14-18; Ti. 2:13; 2 Pt. 3:9-13).

1:8 **Who** — Christ. **shall also confirm you** — Who will sustain you (RSV). The Lord had been faithful to confirm His testimony in them (v. 6) and here He promises to continue to sustain them by supplying all their spiritual needs until they arrive safely at their eternal destiny, dressed in Christ as their robe of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:1-8). Their responsibility was to continue to walk in the faith delivered to them (15:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:7; Jude 3). **unto the end**, — To the end of the age — that is, He would sustain them in both life and death . . . and even in the day of judgment (Ps. 23). **that ye may be blameless** — Unimpeachable, guiltless, or stand with no accuser in that great and dreadful day when all men will be called to account. They had their sins forgiven and would thus stand justified before God (Col. 1:28). **in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**. — The day of judgment (Mt. 25:31-46; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).

1:9 **God is faithful**, — Dependable, reliable, trustworthy. He does not change His mind (Rom. 11:29) or His plans (Jas. 1:17) arbitrarily. He always keeps His promises (Ti. 1:2; Mk. 16:16). Thus they could depend on Him to confirm them to the end (v. 8). **by whom ye were called** — Through the gospel (v. 2; 2 Thes. 2:14). **unto the fellowship** — The Greek word for fellowship here appears 20 times in the NT. The KJV translates it fellowship 12 times, communion four, and contribution, distribution, communication, and communicate one time each. It means a common or joint participation, sharing, or communion. It is established with God (1 Jn. 1:3) by walking in truth (1 Jn. 1:6), continued in Christ (1 Jn. 1:7), and shared by all true Christians (Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9). Fellowship with Christ and His saints is one of the sweetest and most valuable aspects of being a Christian, and to withdraw it is the severest punishment the church can inflict (5:4-5, 9-11). **of his Son** — The genitive here is probably subjective, meaning fellowship with the Son. The whole Christian system, with all the blessings it brings, is described as being in union with Christ (in Christ) and the Christian life is fellowship (joint participation, Rom. 8:17) with Him. This is illustrated in the Lord's Supper, which Paul calls a communion (fellowship) of the body and blood of Christ (10:16). **Jesus Christ our Lord**. — This is the ninth time, in nine vv., that Paul has mentioned and magnified the name of Christ. His name is exalted above every name (Phil. 2:5-11) and His preeminence shown in view of the forthcoming rebuke to the Corinthians for dividing over men (vv. 10-17). To Paul, Christ is the very essence of Christianity. He is all and in all (Col. 3:11). In Him, man is in right relationship with God; without Him, he is hopelessly lost.

DIVISION

1:10-17 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but

Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

1:10 **Now** — But (BV). Contrasting the things for which he was thankful (vv. 4-9) with the party spirit he is now to exhort them to remedy. **I beseech you**, — An urgent appeal for their immediate attention and action. **brethren**, — Fellow Christians, adopted children in God's family, members of the church of God, sanctified, and in fellowship with the Son (v. 9). **by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, — Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (ASV). The high and holy name of Christ is the instrument through which he makes his appeal. **that ye all speak the same thing**, — To be harmonious in what you say (Williams). This has reference to unity of doctrine, which can be achieved only by all recognizing and accepting the divine standard as the only source of faith and practice. There can be no doctrinal unity as long as each man or each (human) church feels free to devise and promulgate its own conjectures, opinions, and doctrines. To have doctrinal unity, we must all return to the original and only authoritative source of divine wisdom and knowledge, the inspired word of God, delivered by the apostles of Jesus Christ (Jude 3). We must accept and follow the Bible and the Bible alone. What it teaches, we must teach; what it condemns, we must condemn; what it leaves unrevealed, we must let remain a secret known only to God (Dt. 29:29). The only way for all to speak the same thing is for all to speak from the same Book (14:37; 2 Tm. 4:2; 1 Pt. 4:11). **and that there be no divisions among you**; — That the division (or party spirit) among you may be repaired or cease to be. While the dissension among them had not yet ruptured the body completely, it had been fractured, and they were to restore the structural division caused by the factious spirit and which had resulted in different ones following different teachers, represented by Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (v. 12; 4:6). The Lord built but one church (Mt. 16:16-18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6). And it is nothing short of blatant human folly to build and maintain human organizations and call them the Lord's church. Christ never intended for His people to be divided into sectarian organizations or human denominations. He has but one body (12:12, 20; Rom. 12:4-5), to which He adds all the saved (Acts 2:47), and all the members of that one body are a unit (12:12-27). There are therefore to be no additional bodies and no factional spirit within the one body. All division is condemned (Mt. 12:25; Rom. 16:17-18; Jas. 3:16) and unity is demanded (Jn. 17:20-21; Eph. 4:1-6). **but that ye be perfectly joined together** — But that ye be perfected together (ASV). That is, they were to restore the perfect unity of the body, to return to its original condition. They were to repair the division in the body as one repairs a ripped garment or mends a net. **in the same mind and in the same judgment**. — In mind and thought (RSV), in mind and attitude (BV). They were to be united in both the inner state of the mind as well as in the outer exhibition of it. When people have the same mind and judgment about the doctrine and structure of

the Lord's body, when they accept and follow the same divine standard, unity is the natural result — they are united in mind and in judgment.

1:11 **For it hath been declared unto me** — It had been signified or made clear to him. That is, the evidence had been presented to him (which he seems to have been reluctant to accept, cf. 11:18). **of you, my brethren,** — The Corinthian Christians. **by them which are of the house of Chloe,** — By omitting the supplied words, "which are of the house," this literally reads by them of Chloe. Nothing more is known of her. Nor is the precise relationship of Paul's informers to her known. They could have been some of her immediate family, or her relatives, or her slaves. **that there are contentions among you.** — Unchristian wrangling, strife, debate, or quarrels. They had gone beyond discussing matters of differences among themselves; instead they were quarreling. Discussions, when carried out with love and respect, coupled with a desire to learn, are beneficial; quarrelings, heated controversies to prove one's self right and all others wrong or to bring others in line with his party, always result in strife. And strife, if pursued, will eventually disrupt the church.

1:12 **Now this I say, that every one of you saith,** — What I mean is that each one of you says (RSV). **I am of Paul;** — I am a disciple of Paul. They were thus dividing into parties, some following one man and some another. Just who these men were is not known. What is known is that the Corinthians were accepting the authority of men over and above the revealed will of God and as a consequence they were following men rather than the divine Scriptures. Paul, probably to spare the men involved, who may have been innocent of trying to form parties in the church around themselves, substituted his name and those of Apollos and Cephas for the real party names (4:6). This made the point more forceful: for if it were not legitimate to follow (in a party spirit) the apostle who had planted the church (3:6), how much less those who are not apostles? **and I of Apollos;** — Apollos followed Paul in the work at Corinth (Acts 18:1-18; 19:1) and is said to have watered what Paul planted (3:6). To emphasize the fact that Christians should follow no man except as he follows Christ (11:1), Paul said that neither he, who had planted, nor Apollos, who had watered, was anything; God was the all in all (3:7). **and I of Cephas;** — That is, disciples of Peter. **and I of Christ.** — In the midst of the party spirit, it was the choice of some to follow Christ alone. They had rejected the parties and were following the true authority in Christianity. As far as I can determine the conclusion of most commentators is totally unfounded when they say that this group was making Christ the head of their party, reducing Him to nothing more than a party leader. This makes Paul use the high and holy name of Christ to represent a factious spirit at Corinth — that is, he uses the name of Christ as an illustration of partyism just as he does of himself, Apollos, and Cephas. This stretches credence beyond the breaking point. It is far more reasonable to conclude, and more in harmony with Paul's reverence for the name of Christ, that he is saying there are still some who have the proper concept of Christian discipleship, even though others have developed a factious spirit. As Christians, we should all be

of Christ — we belong to Him, and we are His disciples and His alone! To support this, Paul later says that he is of Christ (2 Cor. 10:7), or that he belongs to Christ (NIV). So if Paul could be of Christ without forming a party, why not the Corinthians . . . and all Christians?

1:13 Is Christ divided? — Christ has been divided up! (Goodspeed). It is not easy to determine exactly whether Paul meant the literal body of Christ or His spiritual body, the church. I think the latter is the case. The Greek construction permits a positive answer to the question (hence Goodspeed's translation). They were by their party spirit fragmenting the body of Christ. Thus to divide the church into factious parties is to divide Christ — to parcel Him out through different leaders. This should not be (and in the absolute sense cannot be). The body of Christ is one (12:27; Eph. 4:4-6) and it cannot be rent in pieces by division among its members. **Is Christ divided? No.** But division depicts a divided Christ. **was Paul crucified for you?** — Positively not. This necessarily implies that one should belong to (be of) no man who has not died for him. But Paul had not died for anyone. Therefore no one should be of Paul (or Apollos, of Cephas, or any other man). **or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?** — No, absolutely not. The force of the argument here is that no one could belong to (be a disciple of) Paul because no one had been baptized into Paul's name. But all had been baptized into the name of Christ (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38). The conclusion is inevitable: we are of Christ, we belong to Christ, we are His disciples, because we have been baptized into His name. Paul's argument here is to prove unity in the body of Christ but he incidentally makes one of the most powerful arguments for the necessity of baptism to be found in the Scriptures. If one is a disciple of Christ because he has been baptized into His name, where does this leave those who have never been Scripturally baptized? They are not His disciples — they are not in Him (12:13; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). If this is not the necessary implication, then Paul's argument is meaningless.

1:14-16 I thank God — In view of the questions of v. 13, he was grateful that in the providence of God nothing he had done could be interpreted as lending support to the party spirit among them. **that I baptized none of you,** — As the Lord before him had done in His personal ministry (Jn. 4:1-2), Paul did the preaching and left the baptizing to his assistants. Contrary to the conclusions of many, this in no way minimizes the importance of baptism or its place in God's scheme of redemption. In giving the great commission, Jesus had commanded it (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16). In carrying out the commission, the apostles preached (Acts 2:38) and practiced it (Acts 8:12-13, 35-39). The Corinthians obeyed it (Acts 18:8). The thrust of the statement is against partyism, not baptism. Or as MacKnight paraphrases it, "Since ye reckon yourselves the disciples of the persons who baptized you, rather than of Christ, I give thanks to God that I baptized none of you." **but Crispus and Gaius;** — Two exceptions to the statement that he had baptized none of them. Crispus was the synagogue ruler at Corinth before his conversion. Gaius was probably the host of Paul

when he wrote the Roman epistle (Rom. 16:23). **Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.** — Since he had baptized none of them personally (except the few named in vv. 14, 16), no one could say that he was baptized by Paul and was thus bound to him — that he was baptized by him into his name and was thereby made his follower. **And I baptized also the household of Stephanas:** — More exceptions to the statement that he had baptized none of them. Stephanas and his house were the first to obey the gospel in Achaia (16:15). He was with Paul at the time of this writing (16:17) and may have reminded him of this fact. **besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.** — It was possible that he had baptized a few others, but if so he could not remember them. It was not the design or purpose of inspiration to bring all such matter to remembrance; inspiration dealt only with revelation essential to salvation, either directly or indirectly (2:12-13; John 16:13).

1:17 **For Christ sent me not to baptize,** — Robertson (WP) translates, “For Christ did not send me to be a baptizer.” That is, his mission was not merely to baptize. Many do to this passage precisely what Peter said the ignorant and unstable would do, namely, twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pt. 3:16). They do so in order to disparage baptism as it is taught by Christ and His apostles. They falsely reason: Paul was not sent to baptize; therefore baptism has no place in the gospel plan of salvation. But if one puts this interpretation on these words, he runs into a worse problem. He must then say that Paul had no authority to baptize. And this would mean that he was not preaching under the orders of the great commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). But if Paul had no authority to baptize, then how may we account for him baptizing Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas? Did he baptize them without authority? The fact is, Paul was not disparaging baptism (to do so would mean a repudiation of the great commission); he was refuting their practice of wearing human labels and thus forming parties around men (perhaps the men who had baptized them). The whole argument (vv. 10-17) shows that for one to be of Paul (Apollos, Cephas, or anyone else, even Christ) two things were necessary: (1) Paul would have had to be crucified for him; and (2) he would have had to be baptized into the name of Paul. But Paul had not been crucified for them, neither had they been baptized into the name of Paul. So to make his case as strong as possible, he reminds them that his mission was to preach, not to administer baptism. He was under necessity to preach (9:16). However, it was not necessary for him to personally do the baptizing. This is Paul’s point here and it comes with poor grace (and a shabby attitude toward a command of God) to rip his statement from its context to prop up a false human theory, namely, that baptism is no part of God’s plan to save. (Applying Paul’s point to Christ, the conclusion is obvious: [1] Christ had been crucified for them. [2] They had been baptized into His name [Mt. 28:19; Acts 18:8]. [3] Therefore they were of Christ — they were His disciples because He had died for them on the cross and they had been baptized into His name. How anyone could conclude otherwise is beyond my power to comprehend.) **but to preach the**

gospel: — His primary mission was to proclaim the good news (Rom. 15:20-24). When people heard and believed the gospel, as the Corinthians had done (Acts 18:8), they were commanded to be baptized (Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16; 1 Pt. 3:21), but it was not essential that Paul himself be the administrator. **not with wisdom of words,** — not with words of human wisdom (NIV). Not with the philosophical system of wisdom common among the Greeks, but by divine revelation, as he will show in the remainder of this chapter and in chapter 2. **lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.** — lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power (RSV). It was the power of the cross (the death of Christ on the cross), not some system of human wisdom, that made possible the salvation of the human soul from sin. To substitute words of wisdom for the preaching of the cross would drain the latter of its efficacy and meaning.

THE REVELATION OF GOD VS. THE WISDOM OF MAN

1:18-2:16 This section is a contrast between the wisdom (philosophical systems) of this world and the revelation of God, as given by Jesus Christ through Spirit-directed men. Man cannot know God (which means to know the will of God) by his own systems of learning or intellectual achievements. To prove this, Paul draws a sharp contrast between the wisdom of man and the power (knowledge, revelation) of God (vv. 18-31). Knowledge of the will of God must come by divine revelation (2:1-16). There is no other way for man to know the mind of God. But if man is to please God, it is absolutely essential that he know and do the divine will. This, however, is the very thing man cannot know until God in some manner makes it known to him. God does not think as man thinks (Is. 55:8-9). Nor is it in the power of unaided man to discover the ways of God (Jer. 10:23). Thus man cannot know what is in the mind of God until God makes it known to him (2:11). If man, therefore, knows anything about God, about His will, about His plans, promises, and purposes, he must learn it from revelation, not from his own mental resources. This is not an indictment of higher education, sound reason, or true science. It is simply to say that the philosophical systems of learning are not the source of the knowledge of God. Hence the contrast between the wisdom of man and the revelation of God.

PREACHING THE CROSS

1:18-25 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1:18 **For the preaching of the cross** — The word or message of the cross, namely, the death of Christ for the sins of the world (1 Jn. 2:2). The contrast is between the message of salvation, revealed by God, made possible by the cross, and human wisdom, that which man could arrive at by his own unaided powers of reason. **is to them that perish foolishness;** — is to those who are perishing foolishness (NASB). They are lost and in the process of being destroyed because they trust in the adequacy of human reason to supply them with all that is necessary to be saved. To all such, the gospel plan of salvation is nothing short of nonsense. By what reason or logic could the death of Christ on a Roman cross redeem fallen man and bring about his reconciliation with God? To the philosopher, such a plan was foolish. **but unto us which are saved** — But to us who are being saved (NASB). Those already saved from their past sins by the shed blood of Christ and are now in the process of attaining eternal salvation. **it is the power of God.** — The power (wisdom, means, or method) of God to save (Rom. 1:16).

1:19 **For it is written,** — Is. 29:14; cf. Ps. 33:10. Isaiah was discussing a siege of Jerusalem, probably by the Assyrians (2 Kgs. 19; Is. 37). He says that the saving of the city is by God and not by the military strategy of men. Paul appropriates the terminology, or uses the words of Scripture, to make his point. **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,** — God's revelation would nullify or reduce to frustration their systems of learning, as far as the salvation of the soul is concerned. The philosophers could know absolutely nothing, by their own process of reasoning, of the things of God and especially as it related to the world's greatest question, "What must I do to be saved?" **and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.** — And will set aside the learning of the learned (Williams). All the learning of man, while of inestimable worth in its proper sphere, is worthless in one's quest for spirituality. God's revelation, which was foolishness in their sight, set aside all the philosophical systems and intellectual achievements of men — that is, its source was not the learning of men but the manifestation of the mind of God. Thus it was not the result of reason but of revelation.

1:20 **Where is the wise?** — The Greek philosophers, the professed lovers of wisdom. **where is the scribe?** — The Jewish scholar, teacher, or interpreter of the law. **where is the disputer of this world?** — The sophisticated debater and reasoner, such as those in Athens who spent their time in learning and telling new things (Acts 17:18-21). This series of questions is probably based on Is. 33:18, though not necessarily meant as quotations. They drive home the point that when it comes to knowing God's plan and purpose, all worldly wisdom stands dumbfounded (cf. Luke 10:21). **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** — While the world looked at the plan of God as foolish, God made a fool of the world's wisdom — that is, He reduced all the learning and wisdom of the world to an absurdity by His revelation of the scheme of human redemption. TAB treats this v. in the following manner: "Where is the wise man — the philosopher? Where is the scribe — the scholar?"

Where is the investigator — the logician, the debater — of this present time and age? Has not God shown up the nonsense and the folly of this world's wisdom?" This makes a distinction in the word world in the third and fourth questions. The first means this transitory age; the second, orderly arrangement.

1:21 **For after** — For seeing (RSV). **that in the wisdom of God** — By God's wisdom the world by its wisdom could not know Him — in His wisdom or design man would have to depend upon revelation to know the will of God. Thus it was in God's plan from the beginning that man would know Him (that is, know His will) only by divine revelation. Certainly one could learn of the existence of God from nature (Rom. 1:19-20), but not His will. **the world by wisdom knew not God**, — The world through its wisdom knew not God (ASV). By their systems of logic the philosophers could never have arrived at the means by which God had chosen to save the world. This can be illustrated by the Athenians. Athens was the philosophical center of the ancient Greek world. It had known and produced some of the wisest men of all time, such as Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. They knew all the gods worshipped in their time and had erected altars to them. Yet they knew nothing of the God of heaven (except that He existed). To Him they had built an altar and dedicated it to "The Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). Of Him (or His will) they thus confessed that they had learned nothing. Paul stated his intention of proclaiming Him to them by the revelation given through him (Eph. 3:1-7). **it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching** — The foolishness (to the worldly wise) of the message preached. Paul has in mind the contents of the message, not the act of proclaiming it. The message is Christ crucified (v. 23; 2:2), the means by which man could be saved from his sins. **to save them that believe**. — Those who continue to put their trust in the divine message, even when it may appear foolish when measured by the systems of human wisdom. God's power to save is in this message (Rom. 1:16), the revelation of His will. Those who try to approach Him by other means, such as mysticism, emotional experiences, intuition (often erroneously called the leading of the Spirit), etc., have abandoned revelation and returned in principle to human wisdom. One lesson we should learn well from Paul's emphasis is that man can know the will of God only as it is disclosed to him by revelation through the gospel message (and that message has been delivered to us in the word of God [Jude 3]). Thus man can know the will of God only by the word of God.

1:22 **For the Jews require a sign**, — For Jews insist upon miracles (Goodspeed). They demanded a miraculous manifestation of the power of God (cf. Mt. 12:38-41; 16:1; Mk. 8:11; Jn. 6:30). **and the Greeks seek after wisdom**: — The Greeks loved philosophical speculation, which they called wisdom, and they were advanced in its use beyond any people in the ancient world. They sought to correctly arrive at all conclusions by the exercise of the mind. Anything that could not be logically stated, could not be accepted — it was foolishness. There was, however, no logical reason for or explanation of the cross. In it God's revelation and their wisdom reached an absolute impasse.

This meant that for them to retain the all-sufficiency of reason they would have to reject revelation; to accept revelation they would have to deny the all-sufficiency of reason. They were faced with a radical choice. So are we!

1:23-24 **But we preach Christ crucified**, — The message of the cross, the vicarious death of Christ, the plan by which His shed blood pays man's sin debt (Rom. 5:6-10). **unto the Jews a stumblingblock**, — An idea that is revolting to the Jews (Goodspeed). To their minds the cross was an insult, an instrument of weakness and defeat (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23) rather than power and conquest. Thus the cross did not meet their requirements (v. 22). How could a Christ too weak to save Himself save others? **and unto the Greeks foolishness**; — Absurd to the heathen (Goodspeed). It did not meet the logical demands of their philosophical systems. It was to them nonsense. **But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks**, — To the called out, the church (v. 1). Those who had accepted the message of the cross and by obedience had appropriated God's plan to their own sins were a distinct group made up of both Jews and Gentiles. The three groups under consideration are: (1) the Jews, to whom the cross was a stone of stumbling; (2) the Greeks, to whom it was utter folly; and (3) the called, to whom it was both the power and the wisdom of God. **Christ the power of God**, — His power to save. **and the wisdom of God**. — His message, the truth (Jn. 14:6). There is no power greater than the cross (to save); there is no wisdom wiser than its message (God's scheme of redemption). A crucified Christ was a powerless one to the Jews and a foolish one to the Greeks. To the Jews God could never be manifested in anything but power and to the Greeks in nothing but wisdom. In their minds the cross was neither. It was a scandal to Jews and a folly to the Greeks. But to the saved it displayed both power and wisdom: the power of God in its end (the salvation from sin) and the wisdom of God in its contents (Eph. 3:10-11). That is to say, Christ crucified was the very thing, in reality, pursued by both Jews and Greeks, although none but the called recognized it.

1:25 **Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men**; — The foolish thing God does is wiser than men (Beck). God is omniscient — He knows everything (Ps. 139:1-6; Acts 15:18; Rom. 15:27). There is therefore no foolishness in Him. But even that which appears as nonsense to the philosophical mind (the death of Christ as the means of human redemption) displays far more wisdom than could have been conceived by the mind of man (cf. 2:9-10). Thus God's act of foolishness (as the Greeks saw it) turned out to be wiser than all their wisdom. **and the weakness of God is stronger than men**. — And the weak thing God does is stronger than men (Beck). God is omnipotent — He has all power (Gn. 17:1; Jb. 42:2; Rom. 1:20). Hence, there is no weakness in Him. But that which appeared weak to the Jewish mind (the death of Christ on the cross as the means chosen by God to save) was more powerful than a miraculous manifestation (in its final outcome). God's act of weakness (as the Jews saw it) was more effectual than the signs sought by them (v. 22). The cross is therefore both the power of God and the wisdom of God (v. 24).

THE WISE AND MIGHTY CONFOUNDED

1:26-31 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

1:26 **For ye see your calling, brethren,** — For consider your calling, brethren (RSV). Their call had come by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14; cf. 4:15), by the preaching of the cross, not by miraculous intervention, philosophical wisdom, or family lineage. **how that not many** — This is not meant to be an equivalent to none, but only a very few. **wise men after the flesh,** — Those steeped in philosophical wisdom rather than the revelation of God. Those who trusted their systems of human reasoning as adequate to meet all physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Not many of this class could be found in the number of the Corinthian Christians because they were usually unwilling to give up their own wisdom for the wisdom of God. **not many mighty,** — Not many were powerful (RSV). That is, not many of those who seek after manifestation of power or those through or to whom power had been exerted. Thus their calling was not by that which the Jews required (v. 22) nor by that after which the Greeks sought. Their call, as is the call of all Christians, was by the preaching of the cross. **not many noble,** — Those of high birth or rank, the higher echelons of society. While they are not excluded because of their nobility (the gospel is for all), their attachment to the world, their love of material things, and their desire for prestige and honor often lead them to exclude themselves. Paul is simply showing that they were not called because of their status in the world. By calling the foolish (those unlearned in philosophical wisdom), the weak, and the social outcast God demonstrated His wisdom and power as exerted through the gospel. **are called:** — Supplied words.

1:27 **But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;** — Not many wise, mighty, or noble are called (v. 26). Rather the opposite is true. God has chosen those who appear foolish, weak, and of low birth to shame those who profess to be wise, strong, and noble. Every human system, along with those who embrace it, is bowed low in the presence of divine revelation. Revelation provides what all the wisdom, power, and prestige of this world could not conceive of (2:9-10), salvation by the shameful and cruel death of Christ on the cross. The cross thus puts to shame human wisdom, power, and nobility because they are totally disregarded as means of discovering and making known the will of God. Thus they are put to shame because of their total inadequacy to determine the contents of the divine mind.

1:28 **And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen**, — The opposite of the noble. In short, God has chosen the base (those having no family name) and despised to shame the high and noble. **yea, and things which are not**, — The base things, the despised things, and the things which are not, all describe the people God has called, those who were considered as nothing by the noble, so worthless in fact that they were regarded as nonentities. **to bring to nought things that are**: — The noble. Those who were considered as nothing (the Corinthian Christians) continued to thrive and spread their message throughout the whole world while the opposite systems came to a screeching halt. That is, the “nobodies” stopped the “somebodies” dead in their tracks.

1:29 **That no flesh** — So that no one (NIV). The human as contrasted with the divine. To go before God, whether in worship or service, with one’s own contrivances, with the product of his own fleshly wisdom, is to glory in the flesh — to glory in that which man has attained rather than in that which God has manifested through the revelation of His divine will (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7). **should glory in his presence**. — This means that no one can boast in God’s presence (TEV). No one can go before God and boast of his wisdom in making known the will of God. To prevent the presumptuous from trying is the very purpose of God’s choice of the foolish, weak, and base (vv. 27-28). Man simply cannot go before God and boast of his intellectual contrivances to serve and glorify Him. If he could he would have a reason to boast in the superiority of his wisdom. To do God’s will (which is the only way to glorify Him) one must obey His word. This is simply to say that to honor God we must do only what He has authorized. That is, one must serve God by the means revealed to him in the word of God (1 Thes. 5:5-21; Rom. 12:2).

1:30 **But of him** — But from God (BV). From God as the author and source. **are ye in Christ Jesus**, — That is, God is the author of the system (the gospel) by which you have been brought into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27), the sphere of your new life (2 Cor. 5:17) and salvation (2 Tm. 2:10). Their present blessed state, although they had been chosen from the foolish, weak, base, and despised of the world (vv. 27-28), is the result of the work of God, not of men, not even those through whom they had learned the glad news. **who of God is made unto us wisdom**, — Who has become for us wisdom from God (NIV). That is, Christ became God’s wisdom for us and that wisdom now makes possible righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (cf. Col. 1:13-20; 2:2-3), words which stand in apposition to wisdom. **and righteousness**, — Our means of right standing (Williams) (Rom. 1:17). Not merely uprightness or doing right deeds, but right standing before God; justification. By the means of Christ’s death on the cross, God can be just (keep His word that death must be paid for sin) and still justify the sinner when the sinner accepts the death of Christ as his sin offering (Rom. 3:26). What wisdom! **and sanctification**, — Holiness (NIV). The opposite of the life of sin (Rom. 6:19). Cf. note on v. 2. **and redemption**: — And ransom from sin (Beck).

Christ paid our sin debt (Rom. 5:6-9; 1 Pt. 1:18-19) and thereby redeemed us from death. This may also have reference to the resurrection, the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23), when the full fruits of redemption will be realized.

1:31 **That, according as it is written, — Jer. 9:23-24. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.** — Let him not glory in his own wisdom, might, or worth, but in the ways and means provided by the Lord for his righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Observe that the word Lord in Jer. refers to Jehovah God (ASV). Paul here applies it to Christ, identifying Him as deity and thereby exalting Him to the point beyond which no one or anything can be exalted (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

1 CORINTHIANS 2

THE MANNER AND CONTENTS OF PAUL'S PREACHING

2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

2:1 **And I, brethren,** — He gives himself, the manner and contents of his preaching, as an example of how one should glory in the Lord (1:31) rather than in the flesh (1:29). **when I came to you,** — When he had come to Corinth to proclaim the gospel (Acts 18:1-18). **came not with excellency of speech** — With superior oratorical power. There was more to his preaching than a display of rhetorical eloquence. That is, the power of the gospel did not depend upon the manner of delivery. **or of wisdom,** — Philosophical wisdom, of which the Greeks were so fond (1:22). That is, the contents of his preaching was more than mere human reasoning. We are not to conclude from this that Paul's speech was inadequate or that his preaching was unintelligent and void of reason. This would miss his point absolutely. He probably spoke with some degree of eloquence (cf. Acts 14:12), though not to the degree the Greeks expected in their best orators (2 Cor. 10:10), and, as is abundantly demonstrated in the book of Rom., he certainly spoke with profound wisdom. His point here is that the power of his message did not depend upon his manner of speech nor its contents upon philosophical reason. It was the revelation of God, not something created by the human intellect and given force by the tricks of superior speech. **declaring unto you** — Proclaiming unto you (NIV). **the testimony of God.** — The revelation of God. Some manuscripts have mystery instead of testimony. But the thought is basically the same regardless of which word was used by the apostle. It is the revelation of God (the gospel) which he proclaimed which is under consideration.

2:2 **For I determined not to know any thing among you,** — His resolution was that in his preaching he would know nothing except Christ crucified — that is, neither the manner nor the contents of his preaching depended upon rhetorical power or philosophical wisdom. This intent, or determination of mind, was formed long before he went to Athens (Acts 17:15-34), where some claim that his failure led him to change his approach when he reached Corinth. But this is not the case. In the first place, Paul did not fail in

Athens. He preached the gospel there (and that is precisely what the Lord had commissioned him to do) and made some converts (Acts 17:34). Second, the contents of the gospel is of such nature that it cannot be changed, either then or now, and remain the gospel. Robertson (WP) observes that the expression means, "Literally, 'For I did not decide to know anything among you.' The negative goes with *ekrina*, not with *ti*. Paul means that he did not think it fit or his business to know anything for his message beyond this 'mystery of God.' " It was not his business to know anything else. Third, to preach Christ is to preach the gospel, and Paul preached that everywhere and all the time, at Athens, at Corinth, and everywhere else. **save Jesus Christ, — Except Jesus Christ (RSV). and him crucified.** — The death of Christ and its purpose, namely, the redemption of lost man by the sacrifice of Himself upon the tree. This was a stumbling-stone to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (1:23). Yet it was Paul's theme — he made it the center, the cause, and the reason for everything he preached. Preaching is vital only because it points the lost to Christ as Savior (1:21; Jn. 1:29). Faith is important because it is belief in Christ (Jn. 8:24; Acts 8:36-39). Repentance is essential because it is a turning to Christ (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10). Preaching Scriptural baptism is preaching Christ because it puts one into Christ (12:13; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). Proclaiming Christian living is preaching Christ because it is living for Christ (2 Pt. 1:5-11). All these, and many more, Paul preached. Yet he preached nothing but Christ crucified. How may we harmonize these facts? Simply by observing that Paul preached Christ as the center or cause of preaching, faith, repentance, baptism, the Christian life, and everything else he preached. There is simply no way to preach Christ without preaching His will, as revealed in the gospel.

2:3 **And I was with you** — I came to you (NIV). **in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.** — The manner of his coming to them (with the gospel) was not with the rhetorical force or the philosophical wisdom the Greek mind expected from a public speaker. This, undoubtedly, was the source of his apprehension. Phillips renders it, "As a matter of fact, in myself I was feeling far from strong; I was nervous and rather shaky." But he had appeared before them in spite of his weakness, fear, and trembling because the Lord had promised to be with him (Acts 18:9-10). His point here is to show that the power of the gospel did not depend upon his bodily strength, his courage of mind, or his social confidence. The power was in the message itself, "Christ crucified" (v. 2).

2:4 **And my speech and my preaching** — When I spoke and preached (Beck). This I have understood, at different times, in two ways: first, that which he spoke (meaning his message and its contents) and the manner by which he delivered it. Second, his personal teaching (from house to house, Acts 20:20) and his public proclamation. I formerly preferred the latter; I now prefer the former. **was not with enticing words of man's wisdom,** — That is, the power in his speaking and preaching was not in oratorical sophistication — not just the clever speech of human wisdom. **but in demonstration of the**

Spirit and of power: — but rather in evidence of Spirit and power (BV). Paul's preaching was a demonstration of the power of God in the revelation of divine truth. That is, the power of Paul's message was more than the persuasive words of a learned philosopher. It derived its power from the fact that it was the revelation of divine truth by the Holy Spirit — the truth as delivered by the Spirit (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13) and confirmed by the power of God (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4). Or as Williams translates it, his words were "attended with proof and power given by the Spirit."

2:5 **That your faith** — Subjective faith; belief in things divine, Jesus Christ and the revelation of His scheme to redeem. **should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.** — This gives the reason or purpose for his statement in v. 4. The faith produced by the preaching of Paul (and other inspired men) does not rest on the art of rhetorical speech, but on the will of God, revealed, confirmed, and delivered by His power through His Spirit. Thus all true faith, the kind that saves, rests on the revealed will of God rather than on human philosophies. The word of God is powerful (Heb. 4:12), perfect (Ps. 19:6; Jas. 1:25), complete (2 Tm. 3:16-17), always accomplishing its purpose (Is. 55:10-11) and revealing all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pt. 1:3-4). The theories, traditions, and philosophies of men, religious or otherwise, are the arms of flesh (Jer. 17:5), blind leaders of the blind (Mt. 15:14; Lk. 6:39), damnable heresies (2 Pt. 2:1) which lead to the destruction of souls. The revelation of God produces saving faith (Rom. 10:17); the wisdom of men nothing beyond the frail and limited knowledge of an unaided mind. We should therefore stop and seriously ponder the question, "Upon what does my faith rest, the revealed and immutable will of God or the fallible and changeable wisdom of men?"

GOD'S WISDOM WAS A MYSTERY

2:6-9 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

2:6 **Howbeit we** — The apostles or spiritual (Spirit inspired) men (see notes on vv. 14-16). **speak wisdom** — They did not speak the wisdom of man, as in v. 4, but the wisdom of God, as in v. 7. That is, they spoke the higher wisdom, the revelation of God's will to man. **among them that are perfect:** — Among the mature (RSV) or full grown (ASV). The contrast here is between the spiritual dwarfs, the rejectors of truth, who for one reason or another had not accepted the gospel, and those who readily received the word with gladness (cf. Acts 17:11), regardless of the social cost they had to pay (cf. 14:20; Eph. 4:13-14; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:12-14). **yet not the wisdom of this world,** — Not the passing wisdom of this age, that which characterized philosophers and

rulers. **nor of the princes of this world**, — Rulers (NIV), leaders (Williams), authorities (Goodspeed), or governing powers (NEB), the leading men of the world who guide and direct its affairs. It was this class who crucified the precious Son of God (v. 8). **that come to nought**: — Who are coming to nothing (NIV). The princes of this passing age (whether philosophers, scientists, educators, industrialists, playboys, or politicians) will come to an end and their wisdom will perish. And the sad part is that all those whose hopes are in their wisdom will perish with them.

2:7 **But we speak the wisdom of God** — The revelation of God, the gospel. This whole section (1:18-2:16) is a contrast between the wisdom of man and the revelation of God. It emphatically shows that man by his own unaided intellectual achievement, even with centuries of accumulated knowledge, is absolutely helpless in arriving at the will of God, the scheme of human redemption as it is revealed in the Christian system (Eph. 3:3-5). Thus divine wisdom here equals the revelation of God as given by the Holy Spirit through inspired men in the soul saving gospel (Rom. 1:16). **in a mystery**, — The revelation (that which was in the mind of God but unknown to men) before it was made known. In Scriptural terminology we can speak of the revealed mystery (e.g., Rom. 16:25), but strictly speaking, when it is revealed, it is no longer a mystery but a revelation. **even the hidden wisdom**, — A concealed wisdom now revealed. That which was once known only to God is now made known by revelation to man. Or as Williams puts it, "Once a covered secret but now uncovered." The mystery, God's gospel plan of salvation, is that which man could never know by his own wisdom (1:21). **which God ordained before the world** — Which God purposed and planned before the patriarchal and Mosaic ages began (Eph. 3:10-11). **unto our glory**: — That which restores our glory or enables us to be children of God (Rom. 8:8; 15-17; Gal. 4:4-6). Man's glory is to be what God made him to be. Sin robs him of that glory by separating him from his Creator (Is. 59:1-2). The gospel provides for his reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19-21). Hence the gospel is to our glory because it enables us to be forgiven of our sins and thus to re-establish a divine relationship with God, both now and in eternity.

2:8 **Which none of the princes of this world** — The wise and the mighty (1:26), the powerful and the learned, the rulers and the philosophers, the leaders and the teachers of the present age. **knew**: — Understood it (NIV). That is, they had not conceived, nor could they have ever known (v. 9) by human knowledge alone, the hidden wisdom (v. 7) which Paul preached. The gospel of Christ originated in the mind of God and is made known only by revelation. **for had they known it**, — Had they known the hidden mystery (v. 7), the truth of the gospel. **they would not have crucified the Lord** — Had they known they would not have crucified the Son of God, who brought life and immortality to light (2 Tm. 1:10), who is the heart, the power, and the meaning of the hidden mystery of v. 7. Their cruel deed was done in ignorance of the true facts of the case (Lk. 23:34; Acts 3:27; 13:37). **of glory**. — Our glorious Lord (Williams). Or perhaps better, the Lord of all in glory (heaven).

But the Lordship of Christ does not end with the host of heaven: He is Lord of all (Acts 2:36; 10:36; Phil. 2:11), both in heaven and on earth (cf. Acts 17:24), the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm. 6:15). He is thus more than our glorious Lord; He is Lord of all that is glorious.

2:9 **But as it is written**, — Probably has reference to Is. 64:4, but if so it is more of an exposition than a quotation. **Eye hath not seen**, — No eye has seen (Beck). **nor ear heard**, — No ear has heard (Beck). **neither have entered into the heart of man**, — No mind has conceived (NIV). The gospel plan was still in the mind of God, unrevealed, and no man, by human wisdom alone, could discover it. The prophets foretold its coming, but even they could not comprehend the depths of its contents and blessings (1 Pt. 1:10-12). **the things which God hath prepared** — The hidden mystery (v. 7), the gospel before it was revealed. This is confirmed in v. 10 where it is said that the unthought of, the unseen, the unconceived has now been revealed by the Spirit. The hidden mystery of v. 7 is the revelation of v. 10, that is, the gospel which was preached by Spirit guided men. This is often applied to heaven, that which God has yet to disclose to His people, but this is not its primary thrust. The unseen, the unheard, the unthought of was the Christian system, that which the OT foretold and that which the NT reveals. **for them that love him**. — Those who love Him enough to believe and receive the divine revelation of His will, that is, the great blessings which come through Jesus Christ and His gospel.

GOD'S WISDOM IS NOW REVEALED

2:10-13 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

2:10 **But God hath revealed them** — The things not seen, heard, nor conceived of v. 9, namely, the hidden wisdom (v. 7), the scheme of human redemption through Christ and His gospel. **unto us** — The apostles or chosen men through whom the revelation was made known (the spiritual man of v. 15). While this primarily has reference to those who received the revelation directly through the Spirit, indirectly it is true of us also — they have been revealed to us through the word of truth spoken and written by the chosen men. **by his Spirit**: — The HS, whose work it was to reveal the truth to the apostles (Jn. 16:13), to deliver the truth in its written form (2 Tm. 3:16-17), and to confirm it as truth by the manifestation of divine power (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4). **for the Spirit searcheth all things**, — The Spirit finds out everything (Beck); or the Spirit fathoms everything (Goodspeed) in the sense that He sounds out the depths (cf. Rom. 8:27; 11:33). **yea, the deep things of God**. — The things that are hidden in the mind of God. The will of God for man was in the mind of

God, unrevealed. Man, unaided, could not penetrate that mind and thus learn its contents. But the Spirit sounded out that which was beyond man's scrutiny and has now revealed those hidden things. The essential point in vv. 9-10 is that man can know the will of God only by divine revelation — the revelation that was given through chosen men by the Spirit of God. The Spirit carried them along (2 Pt. 1:21), uttering through them the innermost secrets of God which pertained to man's salvation.

2:11 **For what man knoweth the things of a man,** — Who knows what a man thinks (Beck) or who can penetrate the mind of another and know its innermost thoughts. No one. There are no authentic mind readers. **save the spirit of man which is in him?** — Only the man himself can know what is in his mind. Before others can perceive his thought, he must in some way communicate it to them. **even so** — In the same way (NIV). **the things of God** — His purposes, His plans, His will, especially that pertaining to the gospel plan of salvation. **knoweth no man,** — Just as one man cannot know the mind of another, it is impossible for man to scrutinize the contents of the divine mind. The eye cannot see, the ear cannot hear, nor can the heart perceive the things of God apart from divine revelation. **but the Spirit of God.** — The Spirit of God knows the mind (the deep things, v. 10) of God just as the spirit of man knows the mind of man. He is thus fully qualified to sound out and reveal the things of God. The HS is here depicted as relating to the triune God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the HS) just as man's spirit relates to his triune being (body, soul, and spirit). Here is the point made: in order for man to be saved, he must know the will of God. But the will of God is in the mind of God, and man, unaided, has no access to it. Thus for man to be saved the contents of the divine mind must, in some way, be conveyed to him. This (the manifestation of the divine mind by the HS) is what we call revelation. Revelation is therefore the work of the HS. He took the mind of God, clothed it in human words, and thus communicated it to the mind of man. Man can now know the will of God, not by his own wisdom, but by revelation — the disclosure of the divine mind by the divine Spirit.

2:12 **Now we** — The apostles or those through whom the revelation was delivered. It can be applied to all Christians only indirectly. **have received,** — That which follows is a contrast between human wisdom and divine revelation. **not the spirit of the world,** — The spirit which characterizes the present order of things, namely, the spirit of worldly wisdom and human philosophy. **but the spirit which is of God;** — I know not the rationale behind the small "s" in the KJV and ASV; the whole context shows that it should be Spirit, that is the HS, the Spirit who knows the deep things of God (v. 10) and whose function it was to reveal them to the mind of man (v. 13). This has no reference to the ordinary gift of the Spirit received by every Christian (Rom. 8:9; Acts 2:38), but the miraculous gift given to the apostles to guide them into all truth. **that we might know** — That the things of God might be fully manifested to them, the apostles. **the things that are freely given to us of God.** — The things

pertaining to salvation, the gospel (Eph. 3:3-6; 1 Pt. 1:22-25). The same as the things God has prepared in v. 9. The HS knew the mind of God and He guided the apostles into the revelation of all truth essential to salvation (Jn. 16:13). They spoke by divine authority because the Spirit was with them (Jn. 16:7) and spoke through them (Mt. 10:20). What they delivered, orally or in written form, were the commandments of God (14:37). That message (the things of God) was complete (2 Tm. 3:14-17) and delivered once and for all to the saints (Jude 3). The revelation (now contained in the written words of the NT) was delivered through Spirit-guided men (2 Pt. 1:19-21) and confirmed by the power of God (Heb. 2:1-4). The apostles thus knew the things of God by direct revelation; we know them indirectly through the written word. What the apostles delivered to us was not the product of their own minds nor the systematic arrangement of their own wisdom. It was the revelation of God's will to man.

2:13 **Which things** — The things freely given to us of God (v. 12), the hidden wisdom (v. 7), the things not seen, heard, or conceived but revealed to the apostles (vv. 9-10). **also we speak**, — The apostles delivered only what had been revealed to them by the Spirit, that is, they spoke the things of God, not the things of man. **not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth**, — Not in words taught by human wisdom (NIV). The philosophical wisdom of man was not the source of their words nor was the structure of the Christian system composed of human rhetoric. **but which the Holy Ghost teacheth**; — But in words taught by the Spirit (NIV). The wisdom of man is revealed by the words of man; the wisdom (revelation) of God is disclosed in the words of God, words which the HS spoke through the apostles (and which are now recorded in the NT). Paul here again enforces his point that the will of God cannot be known by human wisdom but must come by divine revelation. **comparing spiritual things with spiritual**. — Combining spiritual things with spiritual words (ASV). While there are a number of ways this can be understood, the thought seems to be best expressed by the ASV: the Spirit combines spiritual things (the things of God, His will) with spiritual words (words chosen by the Spirit). Williams translates it, "In this way fitting spiritual words to spiritual truths." The point is that the Spirit fits the spiritual ideas (the mind or will of God) to the words that sufficiently reveal them to the mind of man. While Paul does not use the word inspiration here (it appears only one time in the NT, 2 Tm. 3:16), he is discussing the method of revelation. And, in the final analysis, inspiration is the method by which revelation was delivered. How was the will of God (revelation) transmitted? It was delivered through Spirit-chosen (God-breathed) words. The Spirit took the mind of God and put it into words, and by the chosen words, spoken through chosen men, He conveyed to the human mind the thoughts or will of God. Even though the revelation was delivered through men, its source was not their wisdom nor their words. They spoke, not their own mind, but the mind of God (2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Pt. 1:10-12; 2 Pt. 1:20-21). We refer to them as inspired men, but in fact, as this verse plainly shows, it was the words they spoke that were inspired (Spirit chosen), not the

men through whom the words were spoken. Chosen men were directed by the HS to deliver the divine message — the revelation of the will of God. Thus the method of revelation was inspiration — that is, the divine will was clothed in words chosen by the Spirit, which can mean nothing but verbal inspiration. The revelation of God does not depend, in any shape, form, or fashion, upon the wisdom of man. Nor was it affected by the ignorance and cultural limitations of the writers. It was delivered by the Spirit of God, who chose the words by which it was expressed.

THE METHOD OF REVELATION

2:14-16 To properly understand these verses it is imperative that both the context and Paul's purpose be kept in view. From 1:18 through 2:16 he is showing that the will of God can be learned only by divine revelation, not by human wisdom. This is not an indictment of human wisdom *per se*. The Scriptures have no argument with sound reason or true science when they are properly used — and they are properly used when utilized to learn, apply, and follow revelation. In fact, I believe that it is the will of God for us to learn all we are capable of learning (wherever the Bible has gone, advanced learning has followed close on its heels). But the fact remains that one may get all the degrees offered by all the institutions of higher learning in the world; he may advance in technology to the point where he can level the mountains, bridge the seas, dry up marshes, water the deserts, harness the atom, and explore the outer reaches of space; but if he is to know the will of God he must come to revelation, the gospel, as revealed by the Spirit. (Cf. 1:30; 2 Cor. 10:5.) Thus Paul's objective here is to show the impossibility of knowing God's plans and purposes by unaided intellectual processes. That knowledge comes only by divine revelation. And he is here (vv. 14-16) telling us that the revelation did not come through natural man (man without the aid of the Spirit) but through spiritual men (men through whom the Spirit worked to deliver the revelation). They are therefore a restatement of Paul's total argument (as begun in 1:18), given in the form of a conclusion.

2:14-16 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

2:14 **But the natural man** — A man without revelation, an uninspired man, a man who has nothing but his natural ability to rely upon to determine the will of God. This has no reference to an unregenerated or worldly person *per se*, but rather to a man, any man, who has nothing but human wisdom to guide him. The natural man stands in contrast to the spiritual man of v. 15. If we made application of this today, it would be comparable to a man who has never seen or heard the Scriptures, a man who has no word from God. Certainly

a man without the Bible cannot understand the things of God: for God has no other means today by which He reveals them. But the man with the Bible, the revelation of the things of God, can know them because they have been revealed. The Bible is not a mystery; it is the revelation of a mystery. **receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:** — He cannot conceive of them (v. 9). He does not receive them because he cannot know them and the reason he cannot know them is that they have not been revealed to him. Paul's intent (from 1:18) has been to show the impossibility of one knowing the hidden wisdom of God (the gospel) by human means alone. **for they** — The things of the Spirit. **are foolishness unto him:** — Foolish (or unknown) to his forms of philosophical reasoning (1:23, 27-29). **neither can he know them,** — Because they are hidden in the mind of God and without revelation he has no means of penetrating that mind. **because they are spiritually discerned.** — They are sought out by the Spirit (v. 10) and revealed to man by divine revelation. And that revelation is delivered to us by inspiration in the written word of God.

2:15 **But he that is spiritual** — The spiritual man (RSV). The exact opposite of the natural man of v. 14. Hence, the inspired man — the man through whom the revelation is delivered, the instrument used by the Spirit to make known God's will to man (cf. 14:37). Contextually the natural man is the man without revelation — that is, he is not an instrument through whom revelation is delivered; the spiritual man is the one with revelation — that is, he is the one through whom the HS reveals the will of God. The natural man has nothing but human wisdom to guide him; the spiritual man receives and delivers the revelation. It should be noted here that while revelation is delivered to us today in a different form (it is in the written word rather than in living men) the principle remains the same: man cannot know the will of God by his own wisdom; he must depend upon revelation, that which is found only in the inspired Scriptures. **judgeth all things,** — Makes judgments about all things (NIV). He does so by revelation. Judge is from the same word as discern in v. 14. Thus this v. ascribes to inspired men precisely what is ascribed to the Spirit in v. 14. It has reference to apostolic authority to receive and proclaim the will of God (Mt. 10:20, 40; 16:19; 2 Cor. 5:19-20). **yet he himself is judged of no man.** — But he himself is not subject to any man's judgment (NIV). That is, his message is not subject to ultimate examination by the human wisdom of the natural man; it is not on trial before philosophical wisdom. The revelation is given by the Spirit (through spiritual men) and man must either accept it or reject it; he cannot delve into the mind of God to examine or investigate it. This, of course, has reference to the source and method by which the original revelation was received. Once it was delivered it could then be investigated by the natural man (1 Jn. 4:10), but this is not Paul's point here.

2:16 **For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?** — Quoted from Is. 40:13. The answer would be no man (cf. Rom. 11:33-35). That is, no man by his own wisdom can know the truth which is in

the mind of God; consequently he cannot instruct others in that truth without divine revelation. **But we** — The apostles or spiritual men. **have the mind of Christ.** — Not in the sense of Phil. 2:5, but in the sense that the HS had revealed it unto them. Hence, they knew and preached the mind of Christ by revelation. They were His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), His official spokesmen. What they said (under the direction of the Spirit) was bound upon all (Mt. 16:19; 18:18). What the spiritual men knew directly by revelation we can now know indirectly through the written word. They received the mind of Christ by revelation and they delivered that mind to us in the gospel. Thus when one knows the gospel he knows the mind of Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 3

THE SPIRITUALLY IMMATURE

3:1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

3:1 **And I, brethren,** — Paul the apostle addressing the weak, immature carnal Christians of Corinth as brethren in Christ. They were wrong on some points but they were still brethren. **could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,** — Reverting back to the subject matter of 1:10-17, not to 1:18-2:16. Thus spiritual does not mean the miraculously endowed, as in 2:15, but spiritually minded, spiritually mature, or Spirit directed by the revelation delivered through spiritual (miraculously endowed) men. To be spiritual in this sense is to be mature enough to receive and practice the full revelation — it is to do the will of God, the opposite of carnality. While he obviously has reference to a condition of the past (v. 2), the same or similar condition still prevailed (v. 3). **but as unto carnal,** — The spiritually immature, those ruled by the flesh rather than by the Spirit (through revelation). Not the same as the natural man of 2:14. Neither the words nor the meaning is the same. There the meaning is one without revelation; here it means made of flesh or fleshy, that is, immature, the opposite of spiritual. **even as unto babes in Christ.** — Mere infants in Christ (NIV). This seems to be set in apposition to the carnal. Thus the carnal are the immature. Revelation had been delivered unto them by Spirit-filled men, but rather than follow it they were following men (1:10-17), the weak and fallible philosophies which had their origin in the flesh. They thus fell short of what God had made it possible for them to be (cf. 14:20; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pt. 2:1-2; Eph. 4:14-16).

3:2 **I have fed you with milk,** — A metaphor for the elementary aspects of the gospel or the first principles of the oracles of God (Heb. 5:12). The sincere milk of the word (1 Pt. 2:2). It is a condition characterizing one who is unskilled in the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13). **and not with meat:** — The more advanced truths pertaining to the gospel. This is the state characterized by one who has his spiritual senses trained by practice to discern right from wrong (Heb. 5:14). **for hitherto ye were not able to bear it,** — For you were not yet ready for it (NIV). Everyone who enters the kingdom by the

new birth is an infant in the faith (1 Pt. 2:2). This was a natural condition at the time of their conversion, at which time Paul could not give them solid food. **neither yet now are ye able.** — They had remained in the infant stage, immature, carnal. They should have grown (2 Pt. 3:18) so as to leave the milk diet and progress to the meat. While there is nothing in all the world sweeter and more delightful than an infant in his infancy, few things are sadder than for an adult in age and body to have the mind, emotions, and disposition of a child. So it is with a Christian (Heb. 5:12-14; 6:1). But to make it even sadder for the Christian, the physical person who remains a child cannot help his retardation, but a Christian remains a child by neglect or refusal to grow. His immaturity is willful.

3:3 **For ye are yet carnal:** — They still had the nature of flesh, that is, fleshly or governed by the flesh. Their conduct was such as characterized men ruled by the dictates of flesh rather than by the Spirit. The division among them, as discussed in 1:10-17, identified them more with the world than with the Lord. **for whereas there is among you** — The practice of things which proved their fleshly nature — things which belong to the world, not to spirituality. **envying,** — Jealousy (ASV). Zeal carried to the illegitimate extremes, probably here to the point of causing strife. **and strife,** — Quarreling (NIV), conflict, or contentious disputes. Both envy and strife belong to the works of the flesh, not the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23). **and divisions,** — And forming different parties (Beck). The factions resulting from envy and strife (1:10-17). Omitted by the ASV and most other versions because of weak manuscript support. **are ye not carnal,** — Fleshly as in the early part of the v. **and walk as men?** — And do ye not walk after the manner of men (ASV) or like men (NASV), men governed by the flesh rather than by the Spirit through revelation? This gives us a divine definition of what Paul means by carnal (fleshly) in this v.

3:4 **For while one saith,** — What follows proves Paul's charge in v. 3. **I am of Paul;** — A disciple or follower of Paul (cf. 1:12-17). **and another,** — Of another party. **I am of Apollos;** — A follower of Apollos. While neither Paul nor Apollos (4:6) were the actual men the Corinthians were following (and that with jealous strife, v. 3), they are used to illustrate the folly of following men and thus dividing the body of Christ. Such emulation and strife characterize fleshly led people, not those following divine revelation. **are ye not carnal?** — Are ye not men (ASV), are you not mere men (NIV)? That is, are you not men governed by the flesh when your emulation of men leads to strife, to the party spirit, and ultimately to division? See v. 3.

THE PROPER FUNCTION OF PAUL AND APOLLOS

3:5-9 These vv. give an additional reason why it is fleshly rather than spiritual to follow men. It is not the function of a preacher to form parties around himself or to encourage others to follow him in any way. He is to preach Christ and Him crucified (2:2). When the gospel is believed and obeyed, men will follow Christ (John 1:29-46). As it is with all ministers of the gospel, Paul and Apollos had different

functions within the body of Christ (12:12-26). Paul planted; Apollos watered; God gave the increase (v. 6). They both had their own particular function and each function was vital to the body, but neither was the body nor was either indispensable to it. Though each had his own function, they were one within the body (v. 8). Each was doing what God made him to do. They were therefore not superior to other members of the body. Each member, whether in apostolic times or today, has its own function which is as vital to the body as that of any other member. They were all laborers together (v. 9). Thus there was no justification for forming parties around Paul or Apollos or any other member.

3:5-9 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

3:5 **Who — What (ASV). then is Paul, and who is Apollos,** — The answer: they are servants who have administered the word. And while they can be loved and respected as instruments through whom the message of faith was delivered, they are not to be followed as masters or made heads of parties, as in v. 4 and 1:12-17. Christ is the only head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23) and it is the highest sort of presumption for man to lay claim to that position. **but ministers** — That is, servants (in contrast to masters). **by whom ye believed,** — through whom you came to believe (NIV). They, like all other members of the body, were only filling the function to which God had called them. **even as the Lord gave to every man?** — As the Lord assigned to each (RSV). They were merely doing the work God had assigned to them. The same should characterize every true member of the body. Paul is not here minimizing the work of preaching; rather he is showing that it is a function of certain members of the body. It takes every member to make up the body, and the function of one member is no more important than that of another. Every member should be doing what God set him in the body to do (cf. 12:12-31). Thus no member is to honor another member above measure (that is, to follow him or become his disciple), regardless of the function of that member. Whether one plants or waters is of little significance. This shows very forcefully that preachers are servants of the word, not sources of power and authority. Every member of the body is engaged equally in the work of the body, namely, to glorify God by preaching the soul-saving gospel. It is therefore a departure from God's order of things for one member to follow, belong to, or call himself after another member, even if that member happens to be a great leader, such as Luther or Calvin. In Christianity the great are distinguished only by their service (Mt. 20:25-26). To form a party around a servant of the Lord is to dishonor both the servant and his Lord.

3:6 **I have planted,** — I planted (ASV). He sowed the seed (the word of God) into good soil (Lk. 8:5-15). That is, he was the first to preach the gospel to them

(Acts 18:1-18). Paul considered his primary mission to preach where Christ had not been named (Rom. 15:19-20). **Apollos watered;** — After Paul had planted, after they had received the word into their hearts, Apollos irrigated and cultivated it — that is, he instructed the new converts in the way of righteousness, thus leading them on toward maturity (Acts 18:24-19:1). Again Paul's purpose here is to show that each has a different function in the body of Christ, and that each function is equally essential. Who can say that planting is more important than watering? Both functions are necessary, and both men are filling their God-given function. What is true here of Paul and Apollos is true of every Christian — each has a function to fill in God's divine order of things. **but God gave the increase.** — But God was causing the growth (NASV). If God had not given the seed, the soil, and the sunshine, both the planting and the watering would have been in vain. The seed would neither germinate nor grow without life from God. So it is in the preaching of the gospel (Is. 55:10-11). It is the function of men to preach the word and cultivate the new converts in righteousness, but without the power and grace of God (by which the gospel is given) there can be no salvation. All the glory thus belongs to God who gives, not to men who plant and water.

3:7 **So then** — Introduces a conclusion that follows from v. 6. **neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth;** — Neither the planter nor the waterer deserves credit (BV). In v. 5 he had raised the question, "What is Paul and what is Apollos?" He answered: they are ministers or servants who deserve no special honor. While they are vital links in God's chain, the ones who plant and water are only serving the function God gave them. In relation to God's work of providing the scheme of human redemption, giving the seed and its power to grow, they are comparatively nothing. Men can proclaim the divine message of salvation, the life-giving truth, but they are powerless in relation to its origin, source, power, and contents — they had absolutely nothing to do with designing, producing, or giving power to the gospel (Eph.2:8; Gal. 1:6-11). It is *God's* power to save (Rom. 1:16), not man's. Thus men who proclaim the marvelous message of truth deserve no praise above other members of the body and should certainly not be followed as party leaders. **but God that giveth the increase.** — But only God, who makes things grow (NIV). God is all in all (15:28; Eph. 4:6). All should therefore follow, praise, and glorify Him (1:31) rather than another laborer in the vineyard. Party makers dethrone God and give to mere men the honor that is due Him. This makes the party spirit, the exalting of men above that which is written (4:6), a despicable thing in the eyes of both God and all faithful Christians who understand its ramifications.

3:8 **Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one:** — Not divided; they are a unit, working together for the same cause. They are ministers (v. 5) serving different functions (v. 6) but are members of the one body (12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6). While each has his own function, when each serves the purpose for which he was set in the body, the body functions as a unit. Thus each member is of equal value, even though no two members have the same work to do. It is therefore a distortion of the body to follow one of the members or to make him the head of a party, thus separating him and his followers from the divine head. All who serve the

function given to them by God are one — that is, they all together make up the one body. **and every man** — Whether Paul, Apollos, or anyone else who is a member of the body. **shall receive his own reward** — Though they are one, each will be paid his wages independently — he will be rewarded for his own labor (function) and not for that of another. The planter will receive the planter's pay; the waterer will receive the reward of watering. The reward is based upon their labor, not their function. **according to his own labour.** — In keeping with the service rendered or his faithfulness in doing the work God has assigned to him. Each man is rewarded in proportion to his work, not by the value of his function, or his superior or inferior position in the body, or the successful increase produced by his labor (God alone is responsible for the increase, v. 6). The results of his labor may be lost and yet the laborer rewarded (vv. 12-15). All cannot serve equally in the same function, but all can serve equally acceptably in their God assigned function and thus be equally rewarded.

3:9 For we are labourers together with God: — For we are God's fellow-workers (NASV). We are not divided into parties (v. 8). Rather we are, as different members of the same body, co-workers in God's service (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). The progression in the clause should be noted: (1) **We are laborers** — Tillers of God's soil, workers in His vineyard, soldiers in His army, employees in His service, citizens in His kingdom. (2) **We are laborers together** — a unit (v. 8) functioning as a body in His divine service. And in a body, while each member serves its own function, no member functions apart from the body as a whole. When a member functions properly, the whole body functions through it. (3) **We are laborers together with God** — God is over all. While every member fills the function God assigns to him, he fills it for God, not for himself. **ye are God's husbandry,** — You are God's field (NASV), God's vineyard. The metaphor here looks back to the discussion in vv. 6-9, where Paul plants in God's field and Apollos waters in God's field but God alone gives the increase. **ye are God's building.** — The building of God, His house, His temple, His church (cf. v. 16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Tm. 3:15; 1 Pt. 2:5). The metaphor here anticipates what follows in vv. 10-11, where the structure is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The aim here, and in the whole of vv. 6-11, is to get the Corinthians to lift their eyes from the laborers to God. The field and the building belong to Him, not to the laborers. It is degrading to the exalted position of God for them to follow or call themselves after Paul and Apollos, who are merely workers in God's field, builders in His house. Honor should not be given to the workers (who are comparatively nothing) but to God, the designer and owner (who is everything).

THE BUILDING AND ITS FOUNDATION

3:10-11 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, — In His love God gave me a work to do (Beck). The grace extended to him in his call to the apostleship (1:1), in the opportunities to preach the gospel where Christ had not been

named (Rom. 15:20), and the vast natural and acquired abilities he possessed (15:10). Paul always recognized and praised God as the ultimate source of all things pertaining to human redemption. **as a wise masterbuilder**, — As a skilled and experienced architect (cf. Ex. 35:10), he had preached the gospel and thereby followed heaven's blueprint (Heb. 8:5) in laying Christ as the foundation (v. 11). **I have laid the foundation**, — By preaching the gospel he had laid the foundation to God's building, the church. Christ is the foundation upon which the whole structure of Christianity is built. As any architect knows, no structure is stronger than its foundation. No foundation, however, is more secure than Christ, the divine Son of God whose shed blood on the cross atones for the sins of the world (1 Jn. 2:2). While the metaphor is changed, the point here is essentially the same as in v. 6 where he planted. **and another buildeth thereon**. — Another builds on his initial work of preaching the gospel. The same point as in Apollos watered in v. 6 but broadened here to include any Christian who works to build on the foundation laid by Paul. **But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon**. — Let each builder be careful that he builds in keeping with the foundation — that the building corresponds in quality with the foundation. No one can build on Christ by preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

3:11 **For other foundation** — Another Christ or another gospel. There are many stones in the building (1 Pt. 2:5), but there is and can be but one foundation (Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 2 Tm. 2:19; 1 Pt. 2:6). Paul had laid the foundation in Corinth by preaching the gospel (v. 10), but in reality the foundation he had laid had already been laid by God (Is. 28:16). **can no man lay** — No man can lay and still be right, and still teach the truth. **than that is laid**, — Than the one that is already laid (Beck), namely, the one laid by God through Paul's proclamation of the gospel. No other Christ, no other gospel, no other doctrine, no other plan can rightly be brought in alongside the Christ he preached (Acts 4:12). **which is Jesus Christ**. — The true, tried, and precious stone (Is. 28:16), the rock upon which the church is built (Mt. 16:16-18). The central fact of Christianity is summed up in this: Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God (Mt. 16:16; Jn. 6:68-69; Rom. 1:4; 10:9-10), God incarnated in human flesh (Mt. 1:23; Jn. 1:14). Remove this fact from Christianity and the church will crumble into dust. Other institutions may exist apart from this fact, that is they may be built upon something other than Christ, but not the church of God. It is a theology of folly to say, as Catholicism does, that the church is built on Peter. Not so! Christ is the foundation laid by God and preached by Paul, and no other is permissible . . . or possible if the building is the house of God. God's foundation can neither be altered nor replaced.

TESTED BY FIRE

3:12-15 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

3:12 **Now if any man build upon this foundation** — The foundation of Christ (see notes on vv. 10-11). **gold, silver, precious stones**, — Metaphors for

building materials (converts) which would stand the test of fire (v. 13). That is, they represent work that is durable (v. 14), true converts who would continue to mature and stand firm in time of trial (cf. 1 Pt. 2:5). **wood, hay, stubble;** — Metaphors for individuals (or churches) who fall away from the faith because they are not of the substance to stand true when testing time comes. They represent works (converts) who are lost (v. 15) to the foundation. It must be kept in mind that a preacher or teacher (indeed, any Christian) is responsible for the message he preaches but he is not responsible for the reception or rejection of it. He who builds on the foundation of Christ must preach the truth, but when truth is preached it falls into different kinds of hearts (Mt. 13:1-8; 18-23). Some fall away and are lost. Thus the teacher loses his labor if his converts turn out to be wood, hay, or stubble. He is to build on the foundation by preaching the same truth Paul preached. If some of the results (the converts out of which the building is constructed) turn out to be perishable, the work he puts into building is lost, but this neither affects his salvation nor his message (v. 15).

3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: — The true quality of his work (his converts, the living stones out of which he has built on the foundation of Christ, see v. 12) will be determined. **for the day shall declare it,** — The day of adversity will expose its true nature. Most translations and many commentators see this as the day of judgment (and unquestionably everything will come to light on that day), but the context strongly favors the testings which come in this life — a testing of the fire of time and temptation. **because it shall be revealed by fire;** — Because the fire will reveal it and test it (Beck). It is difficult to determine the antecedent of "it," whether it is day or testing. I have concluded with Beck that it is testing. This fits the context better when it is concluded that the day is the day of adversity or affliction. **and the fire** — Metaphor for testing, trial, affliction, or persecution. **shall try every man's work of what sort it is.** — Will test the quality of each man's work (NASV). The fire will consume (destroy) the perishable (the wood, hay, stubble of v. 12) but will only refine or purge the durable (gold, silver, precious stones) (cf. Mal. 4:1; 1 Pt. 4:12).

3:14 If any man's work abide — If it survives the test of fire (v. 13). **which he hath built thereupon,** — Built upon the foundation of Christ (vv. 11-12). **he shall receive a reward.** — The joyful wages of an abiding work (2 Jn. 1-4), the delight of knowing that one's labor has not been in vain (Phil. 2:16).

3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, — If it does not stand the test of fire (v. 13); if his converts (the building stones of the house of God) do not remain faithful unto the end. **he shall suffer loss:** — He will be the loser (BV). He will lose his work. If a teacher's work endures (v. 14), he receives wages; if it does not endure, he is fined — that is, something is taken from him. In the former case he gains; in the latter, he loses. That is, his labor in converting will be lost (cf. 15:1-4; Gal. 4:11; 1 Thes. 3:5). **but he himself shall be saved;** — A worker's salvation does not depend upon the faithfulness of those he reaches with the truth, but upon his own personal relationship with Christ and his faithfulness in proclaiming the divine message (2:2). **yet so as by fire.** — Yet so as through fire (ASV). Or perhaps better, "Though it will be like going

through fire” (Beck). Not only must a teacher’s work be tried by fire, the teacher himself must also be tested. If he stands true (in the face of his losses), if he is faithful unto death (Rv. 2:10), he proves himself to be gold, silver, precious stones, saved by safely passing through the fire (cf. Jude 23), although by his loss he suffers difficulties. To apply vv. 12-15 to Catholicism’s fires of purgatory is flatly false. In the first place, the fire here is figurative — it is a metaphor for passing through difficulty. Second, the Bible knows absolutely nothing of such a purgatory nor the vast theological network from which it is deduced. Finally and more to the point, nothing is here said of purging one from sins, but rather the testing (danger) one must face when he passes through the fire — that is the difficult or narrow escape the teacher may experience when he loses his work. Every Christian (both the teacher and the taught) is tested, and both Scripture and experience teach us that some endure and some do not. Those who endure are made stronger by the ordeal (cf. Jas. 1:3); others are destroyed by it.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

3:16-17 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

3:16 **Know ye not** — Do you not know (NASV). Rhetorical in nature, suggesting something they should know and demanding either one of two answers: “Yes, we do know,” or “It is to our shame that we do not know.” It is a common device of Paul in this epistle (5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 15-16, 19; 9:13, 24). **that ye are the temple of God,** — Paul now changes the metaphor from a building (v. 9) to the temple, but it is still the church, the dwelling place of God, the place where God is worshipped, praised, and served. The figure is drawn from the Jewish temple (not the whole structure with its precincts but the sanctuary), which stood on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem, first built by Solomon (1 Kgs. 5-6), rebuilt by Zerubbabel (Ezr. 1-6), restored by Herod the Great (Jn. 2:20), and finally and totally destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Mt. 24:2). The temple of God is no longer a physical building but a spiritual house (1 Pt. 2:5), in which each Christian is a living stone. It is called a temple because each one is built into it in order to honor and praise God (Eph. 1:6; 1 Pt. 2:9) and because God dwells in it through the HS (Eph. 2:20-22). **and that the Spirit of God** — The HS. **dwelleth in you?** — As God formerly dwelt in the temple, the HS now dwells in the church. Paul is addressing Christians collectively; hence, he is saying that the Spirit dwells in the church. Christians have the Spirit dwelling in them individually (6:19; Rom. 8:9; Acts 2:38). Collectively they make up the church (12:12-27). The conclusion seems inevitably, then, that the Spirit dwells in the temple, the church, the body, through Christians. This states a fact: the Spirit dwells in God’s temple. The method of His indwelling must be determined from other sources. Some believe that this means a

direct indwelling — that is, a literal, actual, personal indwelling apart from or in addition to the word of God. This view leads to all kinds of difficulties and misapplications, not the least of which is to disregard the Bible as the sole source of authority in religious matters, causing many to follow what they term “the leading of the Spirit” rather than divine revelation as expressed in the Scriptures. I believe that the method of indwelling is indirect: that is, He dwells in Christians, and therefore in the church, through the truth, the inspired word of the Living God. The truth, the revealed will of God, is the means by which He dwells in God’s people.

3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, — If any man destroys the temple of God (NASV). The division (1:10-17), the jealousy and strife (vv. 1-3), among them would destroy the church at Corinth (or anywhere else) and those causing the division would be proven to be wood, hay, stubble (v. 12). **him shall God destroy;** — Wrecked or cut off as an integral part of the temple (cf. 9:27; Gal. 5:4; 2 Pt. 2:20-22). The thought here is similar, if not identical, with the works which are burned in v. 15. The destroyers of the temple would be destroyed. **for the temple of God is holy,** — For God’s temple is sacred (NIV), that is, consecrated, devoted, or set apart to the service and praise of God. If one ceases to serve his purpose in the temple, or if he tries to divide the temple into many temples (parties), he has destroyed its proper function and he will in the process destroy himself as well as the temple. **which temple ye are.** — And such are ye (ASV). The original simply reads, “Which are you.” “Temple” is a supplied word to aid our understanding, but the antecedent of which may be either holy or temple. The meaning, however, is not materially changed either way. In order for the temple to be holy, each living stone in it must also be holy. Thus holy people make up the holy temple.

WISDOM OF THIS WORLD

3:18-20 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

3:18 Let no man deceive himself. — Deceive himself into thinking that some man is wise enough to discover the will of God by some private interpretation (2 Pt. 2:20) and thus be worthy to become a party leader . . . and safe to follow. To follow the wisdom of man results in human religious service, all of which is vain (Jas. 1:26). Only the self-deceived can think they can either be or follow a party leader and still remain the temple of God. **If any man among you** — Any member of the church in contrast with those of the world. **seemeth to be wise in this world,** — Thinketh that he is wise among you in this world (ASV). If he thinks he is wise in the philosophical wisdom of the world (1:19-20). Christians need to be wise (v. 10) with heavenly wisdom (Jas. 3:13-18). **let him become a fool,** — A fool to the world and its wisdom — a

fool in the sense that he recognizes his inability to discover the will of God by his own unaided reason (2:9-10; Is. 55:8-9). **that he may be wise.** — Let him be looked upon as a fool by the world that he may appear wise before God (1:21). He will be wise because he accepts the revelation of God's wisdom as the highest wisdom possible to attain. This is a hard blow to the intellectual pride of those who believe that the human mind, through the instrument of science, can arrive at all necessary knowledge to solve human problems. According to them, if man needs it the mind can discover it. But the unaided intellect of man is not properly equipped to arrive at the will of God apart from divine revelation. Thus the intellectuals must turn from their attitude of self-sufficiency (that is, become fools) to a total reliance upon the revealed will of God. Paul's point should not be misunderstood or misapplied. He is not condemning wisdom and learning *per se*. On the contrary, the principles of the Bible encourage learning. This can be seen from the fact that everywhere pure Christianity goes illiteracy declines. Thus we may rightfully seek and attain all the education that is within our power. But when it comes to knowing the will of God we must turn to revelation. There is absolutely no knowledge of God's will, regardless of how advanced in learning man becomes, in the absence of revelation. Paul is therefore not saying, "Give us more unlearned or ignorant men," but "Give us more men who will acknowledge that they cannot know God and His will apart from divine revelation." It is a wise man who becomes a fool in this sense.

3:19 **For the wisdom of this world** — Wisdom which has as its source human systems of philosophical reason and designed to discover God's will and man's duty without the aid of divine revelation. **is foolishness with God.** — An exercise of folly in God's sight (cf. 1:25). See 1:20 and the note there. **For it is written,** — Jb. 5:13. The words quoted are the words of Eliphaz to Job. And while he misapplies them in Job's case (it should be remembered that Eliphaz was not an inspired man), the statement is nonetheless true. Paul's point does not approve of the misapplication but only the truthfulness of the words as applied to God's dealings with the worldly wise. **He taketh the wise** — He catches the wise (Beck). Worldly wise but heavenly foolish. **in their own craftiness.** — With their own trickery (Beck). He shows the folly of their wisdom by fouling them up with their own systems and schemes. That is, God uses their own craftiness, their own devices, their own trickery, to overthrow or defeat them (e.g., Rom. 1:22-27 where the sin against nature results in its own just punishment).

3:20 **And again,** — Yet another passage (Ps. 94:11) confirms the fact that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. **The Lord knoweth** — Nothing is hidden from Him (Heb. 4:13). He knows everything man knows or can know and still all that knowledge is but foolishness in comparison with His infinite wisdom (1:25). **the thoughts** — The planning (Beck), deliberations (Goodspeed), and reasonings (NASV). Paralleled with the craftiness of v. 19. **of the wise,** — Those possessing only the wisdom of this world (v. 19). **that they are vain.** — Useless, fruitless, foolish (v. 19), void of results. Man cannot

reason his way to the knowledge of God's scheme to redeem (Jer. 10:23); that knowledge comes only through revealed truth. Any effort (regardless of how learned) to circumvent revelation is a vain and foolish effort, one that is sure to entrap, defeat, and ultimately destroy the circumventer.

THE GLORY IS GOD'S

3:21-23 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

3:21 **Therefore let no man glory in men.** — Let no one boast that he is a follower of men, such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas (cf. v. 4; 1:12-13). Positively, we are to glory in the Lord (1:31); negatively, we are not to glory or boast in man. To glory in man is inconsistent with glorying in God alone. We must learn and practice the divine principle of rendering to God the things which are His (cf. Mt. 22:21). **For all things** — All things made by God and put under man's dominion (Gn. 1:26), whether material, physical, social, mental, or spiritual, all things in every category when they are used for the purpose for which they were made. All things are the common possession of all men. Why then should some be exalted as party leaders? **are your's;** — Yours to properly use and enjoy. A thing (anything) belongs to us when it is our servant — when we control it or when it is made to work for our good (cf. Rom. 8:28); we belong to a thing when we are its servant — when it controls our life (cf. Rom. 6:16-18; 2 Pt. 2:19). The thought here is basically the same as expressed by our Lord when He said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt. 5:5). The meek (the children of God) have inherited the earth now. It is theirs to have and to hold, to occupy and enjoy, as a place to prepare for that which is yet to come. It should be noted, however, that there is a difference in being heir to it and in the actual possession. Man was given dominion over the earth, but he has yet to fully sway the scepter; Israel had been given the promised land, but until the time of Joshua it was yet to be conquered; man has a powerful intellect, but it must be trained. The ocean with its thundering waves and mysterious depths is ours, but at present we are able to possess or appropriate only a small part of it. The land with all its potential production is ours, but it must be cultivated. Space is ours, but it is yet to be explored. As Christians we need to rise up and take possession of all that belongs to us. For example: (1) Christ is ours — follow Him; (2) the Bible is ours — study it, learn it, obey it; (3) salvation is ours — receive it, apply it; (4) peace is ours — accept it, delight in it; (5) the Christian life is ours — live it; (6) love is ours — fill our hearts with it; (7) heaven is ours — aspire to it. All is ours! But we are Christ's. And Christ is God's (v. 23). Thus it is by the grace of God that all have been given to us (1 Tm. 6:17). It therefore comes with poor grace to give to men the honor that belongs to God alone.

3:22-23 **Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,** — All apostles,

teachers, or leaders are equally yours — instead of you belonging to them, they belong to you. All are for your benefit. Why then single out one who belongs to you and build a party around him as if you were his servant? Why wear his name (1:12-13) instead of the highest and holiest name in heaven and earth (Phil. 2:5-11)? **or the world,** — The material universe; the creative works of God. Everything God made was good (Gn. 1:31) and it was made for man's use. Thus the world and everything in it is right, and useful to man, when used for its intended purpose. The world is ours to use . . . but not to abuse. **or life,** — The span of time between birth and the grave. Life is ours because it is used for a higher purpose or to fill a greater need than characterizes the brief period we call time. It is the time to prepare ourselves and others for eternity (Phil. 1:20-24). **or death,** — The point at which earthly life ends, or as James expressed it, the separation of the body and spirit (Jas. 2:26). For the child of God it is not a day of terror, a day of defeat, but the day of victory — the day for which all of life is lived. When we die in keeping with God's great plan (Rom. 14:7-8), that is, die the death of the righteous (Nm. 23:10), it is gain (Phil. 1:21). When we are on the other side we can look back from our vantage point in eternity and exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (15:55). We will have won the battle! (1 Cor. 15:57). Death will have served us. **or things present,** — All the circumstances and conditions of this life (cf. Rom. 8:37-39). **or things to come;** — The unknown future and all it may hold for us. **all are your's;** — All work together for your good (Rom. 8:28). Repeated from v. 21. See the note there. **And ye are Christ's;** — But you belong to Christ (Beck). All things are yours because you are Christ's and you are His by right of both creation and purchase (6:19-20; Acts 20:28; Col. 1:16). How utterly unthinkable then for anyone to form a party, be in a party, or follow men as party leaders. In Christ all are one (Gal. 3:26-29; Mt. 23:8-11). **and Christ is God's.** — No inferiority of nature could be meant here because Christ is God (Jn. 1:1-3). Rather the design is to show the function of Christ as the Son in the divine scheme of things, that His office of Mediator, Savior, and Redeemer places Him between God and man (cf. 11:3; 15:28). Since all things belong to man, and man belongs to Christ, and Christ belongs to God, the conclusion is clear: ultimately all things belong to God. Therefore glory only in Him!

1 CORINTHIANS 4

THE PROPER ESTIMATE OF PREACHERS

4:1-5 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

4:1 **Let a man so account** — Regard or consider. That is, let every man regard us properly as ministers and stewards, not as party builders. **of us**, — The apostles or inspired men, but in the context it is probably limited to Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (Peter) whose names have been figuratively used to designate the divisive heads of parties (1:12-13; 3:22). **as of the ministers of Christ**, — Not Paul's usual word for minister (as in 3:5) but one which means an attendant or servant who had submitted himself to carry out the will or work of the owner. Thus they were not to be viewed as masters (party leaders) to whom others owed allegiance but rather as servants who had been entrusted with a service to render — messengers with a message to proclaim. **and stewards** — Managers (Goodspeed). Men into whose hands the property of another had been entrusted. Since the property was not his own, he had to account for his use and disposal of it (Lk. 16:1-2). **of the mysteries of God**. — Authorized to distribute the secret truths of God (Goodspeed). They were stewards of the gospel, dispensers of the truth which for ages past had been hidden in the mind of God but was now revealed by the Spirit through chosen men, Paul, Apollos, and Peter being among them (Eph. 3:1-6).

4:2 **Moreover it is required in stewards**, — Now it is required that those who have been given a trust (NIV). The qualifications of honesty and fidelity are both sought and expected in those appointed to a trust. **that a man be found faithful**. — that one be found trustworthy (NASV). Fidelity is expected in anyone who has been put in charge of material things. How much more then of the apostles who had been entrusted with the gospel, the divine mystery of God (v. 1). This is to say that the messengers of heavenly truth are not exempt from the rule of fidelity. Paul proved faithful to his charge (cf. Acts 20:20-21; 2 Tm. 4:6-8), and so should every minister of the gospel, every teacher of the word, every leader in the church, and every member of the body of Christ (1 Pt. 4:10). Into our hands (into our stewardship) has been placed the

gospel message, that is, it was delivered to us by the apostles and we have the charge to deliver it to others (cf. 2 Tm. 2:2; 4:2), and unless we are faithful to proclaim it unto the uttermost men will die in darkness, with no hope of eternal life (Eph. 2:12), and their blood, the loss of their souls, will be required at our hands (Ez. 33:1-9; Acts 20:26).

4:3 **But with me it is a very small thing** — Not a non-existent thing but one that amounted to very little. This is not said in arrogance as, “I do not care what people think of me,” but rather that it was a small concern in comparison to the Lord’s judgment (v. 5). He was God’s steward and it was to Him that he must ultimately account. No human court delivers the final verdict. And it is the final verdict with which Paul is concerned. **that I should be judged of you**, — that I should be examined by you (NASV). If a distinction is to be made in this and man’s judgment (which follows) then this has reference to Christians. The judgment is that of a preliminary investigation, not that of passing final sentence as in v. 5. However, the examination is in view of either exoneration or condemnation. **or of man’s judgment:** — Any human court (RSV). Literally any human day, a difficult expression. It probably means any examination by a human tribunal in man’s day — that is, man’s day of judgment in contrast with God’s day. Paul could not be swayed in the fidelity of his stewardship by any kind of examination by man. **yea, I judge not mine own self.** — Even his own judgment did not settle matters with him. He would stand or fall by his Master’s judgment alone (Rom. 14:3). This (along with the next v.) is a death blow to subjectivism (personal experience) as an evidence of pardon, the means by which one determines his stand before God. Those who say, “I know I am saved because I feel it in my soul,” are judging themselves by their subjective feelings — that is, they are approving themselves, the exact opposite of what Paul here says. The problem here lies in confusing the cause and the effect. Does the knowledge (of pardon and acceptance with God) produce the feeling or does the feeling produce the knowledge? Obviously the former (the cause) produces the latter (the effect). But subjectivism reverses this: it proves the knowledge by the effect. But God, not one’s feelings, is the judge. If He judges one right, he is right; if He judges one wrong, regardless of how he may feel or what his own judgment might be, he is wrong. Thus our knowledge of pardon (and acceptance) must be based upon what the Bible teaches and not upon how we feel.

4:4 **For I know nothing by myself;** — For I know nothing against myself (ASV). In his self-examination he could find nothing in which his trust as a steward in the mysteries of God had been violated (v. 1). **yet am I not hereby justified:** — But that doesn’t make me righteous (Beck). He had learned long before that one might sin, even persecute the church of God (Acts 26:9; 1 Tm. 1:15), with the approval of conscience (Acts 23:1). The conscience has a vital role to play in the Christian’s life, but that role is not to determine right and wrong. Its function is to commend when one is true to what he believes is right and to condemn when he does what he believes is wrong. Right

and wrong are determined by God, not by man's conscience. Thus no one is right merely because he believes he is right (see note on v. 3). **but he that judgeth me is the Lord.** — It is the Lord who examines me (Beck). The Lord investigates my life, my work, my stewardship, and He will make the determination and disposition. That is, He will acquit (justify) or condemn me. It is a fortunate day in the life of any man when he resigns himself absolutely to the judgment of God. He simply says, "God is right and He will do right."

4:5 **Therefore judge nothing** — So do not pass premature judgment (BV). The word judge is not the same here as in vv. 3-4. There it is a preliminary examination; here it is the passing of the final verdict. When they followed a teacher as a party leader they were thereby judging him superior and all others inferior. **before the time,** — Before the day appointed by the Lord (Acts 17:31), the judgment day, the day when all will be brought before the judge of all the earth. All judgment is not wrong (Jn. 7:24), but it is wrong to pass final sentence on God's stewards before the heart's desires and secrets are known, before all the deeds of life are done, before one's work has been tried (3:13-15), and before all the evidences (hidden things) are in. And all these man cannot know: hence, he simply cannot know enough to pass the final sentence. This judgment must be left to God alone: for His examination alone can provide the minute details, all the circumstances and all the results, that go into the final judgment. **until the Lord come,** — Christ's second coming, the appointed day of judgment (Acts 17:31; Mt. 25:31-46). **who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness,** — Who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness (RSV). Nothing will escape His examination (Heb. 4:13), not even the secret thoughts of the heart (Eccl. 12:13) nor idle words (Mt. 12:36). **and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts:** — The thoughts and intents of the heart will be revealed. God knows, not only man's deeds, but the motives back of them as well. **and then shall every man have praise of God.** — Then, and only then, can one be truly judged. Thus only God can properly reward or praise. He will not praise only party leaders, but every man who has been faithful in his stewardship.

NO CAUSE FOR BOASTING

4:6-7 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

4:6 **And these things,** — Things pertaining to division and the party leaders, as discussed from 1:10 to 4:5. **brethren,** — The Christians at Corinth. Its insertion here seems to have special significance, probably to emphasize, in view of what he is about to say, the fact that they are one family, and families should not be divided into factions. **I have in a figure transferred** — I have

figuratively applied (NASV) or by using us as an illustration (Goodspeed). **to myself and to Apollos for your sakes;** — That is, he had used his name and that of Apollos (1:12-13; 3:3-8) to represent the party leaders rather than to name the partisans. But if it was wrong to belong to or call themselves after Paul and Apollos, then even the most immature among them could correctly conclude that it would be wrong in the case of all other leaders or teachers. Unfortunately modern religious leaders have chosen to ignore these instructions and continue to follow men and build party churches. **that ye might learn in us** — Paul and Apollos. “So that you might learn the lesson” (Williams) at our expense and thus permit me to spare the feelings of those who may have innocently fallen victim to following men instead of the Scriptures. **not to think of men above that which is written,** — Not to go beyond the things which are written (ASV). The point here is that no one should esteem men above or follow them beyond what the Scriptures teach. Teachers (especially the apostles) were vital in God’s scheme (1:21; Rom. 10:14-17), but a faithful steward (vv. 1-2) will always preach the word (2 Tm. 4:2) and urge all to follow it. His message will be, “To the law and to the testimony” (Is. 8:20) for every article of faith and practice. If all would heed these instructions and never esteem men, their philosophies, their leadership, their rules, their organizations, above or follow them beyond the Scriptures, it would be the end of human creeds and their fruits, denominationalism (and all other forms of division). That which is written, that which the HS has revealed to us in the inspired word, would then become the fundamental limits of every act of faith and duty (cf. 2 Tm. 3:16-17; 1 Pt. 4:11; 1 Thes. 5:21). All division, whether ancient or modern, starts with a departure from the holy Scriptures and ends up making man, rather than the Scriptures, the pattern of belief and conduct. **that no one of you be puffed up** — Arrogant, self-conceited, or blown up like a balloon. As v. 7 shows, there is no justification in anyone for inflated pride. **for one against another.** — Favoring one teacher over another (to the extent that he is made a party leader). This is precisely the result of those who follow a party line. Taking a stand for one (e.g., Paul) necessitates taking a stand against all others (e.g., Apollos, Peter, etc.). The spirit of inclusion and exclusion herein manifested is the very heart and soul of division.

4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? — A rhetorical question which demands the answer, “No one.” It connects with v. 6 and shows that no one has a cause to be puffed up as though he and his party leader were superior to others because they had by their own merit, work, wisdom, or power attained to a higher or more gifted position. In the final analysis, no one has anything but that which has been given to him by God. Thus each man is what he is and has what he has by the gift and grace of God. Paul is not denying that the Corinthians (and in principle all others) had different talents, abilities, opportunities, and gifts; his point is that all distinctions, whether by nature or by a miraculous gift, come from God (cf. 12:7-9; Ps. 75:7; Dt. 8:18). Even knowledge of God’s will must come by revelation rather than by human wisdom

(1:18-2:16). This leaves man with nothing to brag about — nothing over which to be puffed up. **and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?** — What do you have that you did not receive? (NIV). Nothing, absolutely nothing. The boasting might have been justified if the distinction had resulted from human work or wisdom. **now if thou didst receive it,** — If it was a gift to you from God rather than attained by your own work and worth. **why dost thou glory,** — Why do you brag, boast, be puffed up for one against another, or exalt yourself above others? No one is more than God made him. **as if thou hadst not received it?** — As if it was your own attainment rather than the gift of God (cf. Lk. 17:10).

A SARCASTIC REBUKE

4:8-13 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace: and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

4:8-13 To be understood, this section must be seen as bitter irony, contrasting the claims of those puffed up one against the other (v. 6) with the apostles, through whom the revelation of God's will had been delivered. In sarcastic terms he exalts the partisans to the position of knowing everything, having everything, and ruling over others as lords while the apostles must depend upon the HS for their knowledge, have no material possessions, and who were servants in their Master's house. The partisans had far outstripped the apostles in importance, in position, and in power — they were receiving all the benefits while the apostles were suffering all the indignities. This cutting sarcasm must have had a sharp edge with them: for he had already shown (1:18-2:16) that all anyone could know about the will of God, all the knowledge he could have of the Christian system, had to come by revelation given through the apostles. Yet they had positioned themselves on thrones without the benefit of apostolic authority — that is, they had no revelation for the formation of parties over which they ruled as lords. Thus they reigned without the apostles. The conclusion is clear: all party leaders must rule without the benefit of divine revelation (indeed, against the condemnation of revelation).

4:8 **Now ye are full,** — You are already filled (NASV). Ironically addressed to those who were puffed up for the one against others (v. 6). They were satiated, filled to satisfaction. Their knowledge was complete (by their own wisdom) while the apostles were fools (v. 10). They had arrived in contrast with the apostles who had not yet apprehended (Phil. 3:13). **now ye are rich,** — You have already become rich (NASV). Cf. Rv. 3:17. They were secure in material things in contrast with the apostles (God's true spokesmen), who lived

in poverty (v. 11). **ye have reigned as kings** — You have become kings (NASV). They were masters over their subjects while the apostles were only servants (v. 1). **without us:** — They had dethroned the apostles (through whom the revelation had come) by the assumption of authority to themselves. They were reigning lords while the apostles were the filth of the earth (v. 13). **and I would to God ye did reign, that we might also reign with you.** — Dropping the irony momentarily, he shows that their fullness, their security, their reign were improper. There is a sense in which all Christians should be full, rich, and reigning (cf. 2 Pt. 1:3-4; 1 Pt. 2:5, 9; Rv. 1:6), but not in the sense the puffed up Corinthians were. Thus Paul's wish here is that they were reigning properly so that the apostles could reign with them, that all might work together as one in the family of God.

4:9 **For I think** — In view of the partisan practice, his thoughts were centered on the base condition in which this placed the apostles. **that God hath set forth us the apostles last,** — God has had us apostles to come last (Beck). Ironically suggesting that rather than being kings (v. 8) at the head of a procession, the partisans were first in rank and the apostles last, filling the lowest possible position, the exact opposite of the truth. **as it were appointed to death:** — Men condemned to death (NASV). A metaphor describing the manner in which they were doomed — that is, the party spirit had reduced the work of the apostles to a non-entity. **for we are made a spectacle** — As men who are appointed to die in the arena are put on public exhibit. **unto the world, and to angels, and to men.** — Unto the world, both to angels and men (ASV). The universe, both the heavenly (spiritual) and the earthly (material) worlds. Both angels and men are spectators to the low estate of the apostles (and consequently to the exaltation of the ruling partisans). While Paul here may be using the actual condition of the apostles in preaching the gospel, the hardship and difficulties they had to endure, his point is, by an ironical contrast, to depict the partisans as ruling on the throne, leading God's people through the land which flows with milk and honey, while the apostles are groveling in the dust. The irony emphatically shows that the very opposite should be true.

4:10 The irony continues here in three sets of contrast, showing how the apostles are put on exhibit before the whole universe (v. 9). The apostles are fools, weak, and despised; the partisans are wise, strong, and honorable. **We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ;** — The party spirit resulted in the apostles being looked upon as fools; it reduced them to the lowest level of knowledge while exalting the partisans as possessors of all the wisdom and knowledge that is in Christ (cf. Col. 2:3). **we are weak, but ye are strong;** — The apostles were feeble and powerless — they had only the revelation of God to rely upon, but the party lovers were bold and full of strength — they were full, rich, and reigning (v. 8). **ye are honourable, but we are despised.** — They were distinguished as esteemed leaders while the apostles and their divine message of unity and peace were rejected and held in

contempt. One of the strange ironies of the religious world (Christendom) is that it is so easily turned aside from the divine plan and message (revealed by the Spirit through the apostles in the NT) to embrace, love, defend, and honor the doctrines, names, organizations, and cultish leadership of men. Man thus glories in his own independence, self-sufficiency, and wisdom by setting up his own systems and forms of religion (and then binding them upon others as if they were divine). But in doing so, he rejects God's plan and brings into contempt the true messengers of God, as the irony here is designed to show. While this is now almost a universal practice, nevertheless it is still, as in the days of old, a sure characteristic of carnality (3:1-9).

4:11 Even unto this present hour — To the very day he was writing (v. 13). This is in contrast with the now (already, ASV) of v. 8. They had already arrived but the apostles were still in the grip of struggle. **we both hunger, and thirst,** — They were often without the necessities of life while the partisans were full (v. 8; 2 Cor. 11:27). **and are naked,** — And are poorly clothed (NASV) or we are in rags (NIV). This in contrast with those who reigned as kings (v. 8). **and are buffeted,** — Slapped around, brutally treated, beaten as with the fist. **and have no certain dwellingplace;** — They were always on the go (Rom. 15:20-23) and consequently had no fixed place of their own (cf. Heb. 11:37-38) — that is, they were homeless (cf. Mt. 8:19-20; 10:37-39; 16:24).

4:12 And labour, working with our own hands: — He toiled to the point of weariness at his trade of tentmaking (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8) to provide his livelihood. Those carried away with the party spirit probably looked upon such work as unbecoming a person of status. Thus Paul is continuing his irony by depicting them as nobles and the apostles as worthless, something to be looked down upon with contempt. **being reviled,** — Abused, insulted, and spoken ill of. **we bless;** — We return good for evil (Mt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14, 20-21). **being persecuted,** — Afflicted for the faith (Acts 14:19; 2 Cor. 11:23-27). **we suffer it:** — We patiently bear up under it without retaliation.

4:13 Being defamed, we intreat: — When we are slandered, we try to conciliate (NASV). They were publicly blasphemed or spoken against, but they just as publicly tried to conciliate or console and thus bring about peace and unity. **we are made** — That is, looked upon or regarded. **as the filth** — They were looked upon as the rubbish which results when cleaning occurs. This undoubtedly has reference to the bloody mass that remained in the arena when the victims were forced to fight to the death with wild beasts (cf. 15:32; 2 Cor. 1:19). The remains were a repulsive heap of blood, flesh, and dirt. **of the world,** — The whole world is the arena and the apostles, as spectacles (v. 9), are viewed as both worthless and contemptible. Of course the very opposite was true: the world was not worthy of them. **and are the offscourings of all things** — Not only the filth which was gathered up and cast away, but also the scrapings, the sweepings, that were left behind. According to Lightfoot, it was a word used especially of condemned criminals of the lowest class, who

were sacrificed . . . because of their degraded life. **unto this day.** — Unto this very moment, showing that their condition was the opposite of that claimed by the partisans (see v. 11), even to the present hour.

PAUL'S TRUE POSITION

4:14-17 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

4:14 Paul now drops the use of irony and addresses the Corinthians, including the partisans, as a loving father speaking to his children. **I write not these things to shame you,** — It was not his object to make them blush with shame by the irony used in vv. 8-13, but rather to awaken them to the true nature of the party spirit. But, while it was not his primary purpose, they could scarcely have escaped the shame — they had exalted themselves (to the status of full, rich, and reigning) by debasing the apostles (to the status of being fools, poor, and the filth and offscourings of the world). They had cause to be ashamed, so ashamed in fact that Paul's true purpose should have been attained, namely, that all be laborers together with God — that is, that every man fill his function in the body without either exalting or debasing other members. **but as my beloved sons** — As my dear children (NIV). They were his sons in the sense that he had taught them the gospel, by which they had been begotten (v. 15; Jas. 1:18), that is, his children in the faith (1 Tm. 1:2; Ti. 1:4; Phlm. 10). This is the relationship that should obtain between them and the apostles rather than the distorted one depicted in vv. 8-13. **I warn you.** — Warn you of the danger into which you have fallen and thus admonish you to turn from it.

4:15 **For though ye have ten thousand instructors** — For though you have ten thousand tutors (ASV) or guardians (NIV). While the same word is used here as in Gal. 3:24-25, the context gives it a different connotation. There it means the one who is put in charge of the child, to supervise his physical activity and direct his moral behavior — the one who sees that the child is taught but not necessarily the teacher; here it means a teacher or leader. It may have reference to the party leaders, showing that they can never be permitted to take the place of Paul in the Corinthians' esteem and gratitude. But more likely it refers to all their teachers, such as Apollos who watered after Paul had planted (3:6). **in Christ,** — In the Christian life (Williams). The point here is that they may have innumerable leaders or guides in their spiritual relationship with Christ, but they had only one who brought them to Christ, in whom they received salvation (2 Tm. 2:10). **yet have ye not many fathers:** — While one might have many teachers in Christ, he can have only one father in the faith (1 Tm. 1:2; Ti. 1:4; Phlm. 10), only one who introduced him to Christ by means of the gospel. **for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through**

the gospel. — For in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel (NASV). Thus the gospel, not a direct work of the HS or a miraculous intervention upon the heart, is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16) and the means by which they (and all others) had been conceived as children of the most high God. It is the seed of the kingdom (Lk. 8:11), the incorruptible seed (1 Pt. 1:23), the word by which one is begotten (Jas. 1:18) and saved (Jas. 1:21). It is powerful (Heb. 4:12) enough to accomplish all the Lord sends it forth to do (Is. 55:10-11). It is blasphemy against both God and the gospel to reduce it to mere words, powerless to change the life without a direct operation of the Spirit to open the heart and prepare the mind to receive it. The Spirit works to prepare the heart, to change the mind, but He does so through the gospel, the means, and the only means, used by the Spirit to convict, convert, and sanctify. God put His power in the gospel. The best reply I have seen to the inability of a sinner to understand and obey the gospel without a direct operation of the HS was given by R.L. Whiteside. He said: "Some years ago I had a discussion with Mr. Ben M. Bogard. On the Spirit question, he made the usual argument on the depravity deadness of the sinner. In my first reply I made the statement: 'I object to Mr. Bogard's theory because it limits the power of God. He has the sinner so dead that God could not make a gospel that would rescue him. I object to a theory that makes God so helpless.' Mr. Bogard, with more than usual bluster, replied: 'It is not a question of God's power. God can do anything he wants to do. He could have made a gospel that would reach the dead sinner's heart, if he had wanted to do so.' I replied: 'The sinner is not so dead, then, as we have been hearing he was. Even this personal contact for which he contends would not have been necessary if God had made the right kind of gospel. So the trouble is not in the deadness of the sinner, but in the inefficiency of the gospel. But God could have made a better gospel, if he had wanted to. My contention is that he made the very gospel that Mr. Bogard says he could have made.' " That is my contention also . . . and the very affirmation made here by Paul.

4:16 **Wherefore** — Because I, as a father, have begotten you through the gospel (v. 15). **I beseech you,** — A tender appeal, a sincere exhortation, a fatherly urging, a mild admonition. He could have commanded them but instead he appealed to them to act out of respect to his position. **be ye followers of me.** — To follow my example (NEV) or be imitators of me (NASV). This is not an appeal for them to follow him personally, in the sense of a factional leader, but as a father who will carefully and faithfully lead his children in the right way — follow him because he is following Christ (cf. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:6). That is, they were to use Paul as an example of what their own life and conduct ought to be (2 Thes. 3:9). Everyone is an example, either for good or for ill, but when one, anyone, follows Christ, his example is good — he can profitably and safely be imitated (cf. 1 Tm. 4:12; Ti. 2:7; 1 Pt. 5:3), not because he is a party leader but because he himself is a follower of the true Leader.

4:17 **For this cause** — For this reason (NASV). That you may be instructed as to how to be a follower of me (v. 16). **have I sent unto you**

Timotheus, — Timothy had been dispatched to Corinth to remind them of Paul's way of life. He was well suited for this role. His father was a Greek but his mother a Jewess (Acts 16:1). He had been trained in the Scriptures from childhood (2 Tm. 3:14-17). He had undoubtedly been taught the truth by Paul because he calls him his son in the faith (1 Tm. 1:2), although Luke does not record his conversion in Acts. He was highly respected by those who knew him (Acts 16:2), and Paul chose him as his traveling companion and co-worker (Acts 16:3-5). Paul, by the laying on of hands, had imparted to him some miraculous gift (2 Tm. 1:6). He became the one closest to the heart and work of Paul (Phil. 2:19-20), and later Paul wrote two NT epistles to him (1 and 2 Tm.). Thus no one could have been a better representative of Paul. **who is my beloved son**, — That is, his son in the faith (1 Tm. 1:2). This context strongly supports the concept that this means that Paul was the one who taught him the saving truth of the gospel. **and faithful in the Lord**, — Trustworthy and dependable in every aspect of his Christian life and service. **who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ**, — He would reinforce on their minds the conduct of Paul so they could imitate him — follow him as their example (v. 16). **as I teach** — By word and by example. **every where in every church**. — Paul had a single message — Christ crucified (2:2) — and he preached it to every audience before which he appeared, regardless of where he was or of whom the audience was composed. He did not have one gospel (or practice) for Corinth, another for Ephesus, and still another for other places. Thus all who followed him would teach the same gospel, receive the same faith, and follow the same Christ.

PAUL PLANS A VISIT

4:18-21 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

4:18 **Now some are puffed up**, — Some have become inflated with pride (BV) or put on airs (Goodspeed). This arrogance undoubtedly had some connection with the sending of Timothy (v. 17). They either felt so secure in their position of control that they had no fear of a rebuke from Timothy or else they thought that Paul considered their position so secure that he was afraid to come and encounter them personally (cf. 2 Cor. 1:17; 10:10). Either way their pride had become overly inflated. **as though I would not come to you**. — As though I were not coming to you (ASV). They evidently thought that if Paul did not come in person they would be free from his apostolic authority. And being free from authority, there was no further danger of rebuke or discipline. This made them conceited, haughty, and arrogant.

4:19 **But I will come to you shortly**, — Although some had become puffed up because they thought Paul either would not come or else feared to

come (v. 18), he assures them that it was his intention to come, and that very soon. **if the Lord will**, — If the Lord is willing (NIV). He would come if it was in the Lord's plan for him to do so (cf. Jas. 4:14-15; Mt. 26:39, 42). He had made plans (as all men should do), but in the final analysis God controlled his life and work, and he was committed to following God's will in all things, even when he had to abandon his own plans (Acts 16:6-10). This should be the attitude of every follower of Christ. **and will know**, — And then I will find out (Beck). He would be able to ascertain the truth about the matters at hand. **not the speech of them which are puffed up**, — Not only what those conceited fellows say (Williams). They had talked powerfully in his absence, but he would go beyond their words and determine their real strength. **but the power**. — But what power they have (NIV). That is, he would determine the real strength of their claims. There is a contrast here between the eloquent speech of the factions and the authority of the apostle. They had the words, but he would test their power (and show it lacking). Their eloquent words would be no match for apostolic power.

4:20 **For the kingdom of God** — The sphere entered by the new birth (Jn. 3:3-5), that is, the living body over which the Lord reigns as King, mentioned also in 6:9-10; 15:24, 50. It is the same as the church (Mt. 4:17; 16:18-19; Col. 1:13), God's house (1 Tm. 3:15), God's building (3:9), God's temple (3:16). **is not in word**, — Is not a matter of talk (NIV), eloquent speech, flowery words, or rhetorical wisdom. It does not exist or subsist by oratorical power alone, as mentioned in v. 19. **but in power**. — The power of God exercised through the apostles (as in v. 19) in the preaching of the gospel.

4:21 **What will ye?** — Which do you prefer? (Williams). The manner of his coming, whether he came with the rod (and power) of correction or in the spirit of loving meekness, was their choice. **shall I come unto you with a rod**, — The rod of discipline (cf. Ps. 89:32; Prv. 13:24; 22:15), the means by which he would display his apostolic power (v. 19). **or in love**, — In the expression of love (in contrast with chastisement). He could come administering discipline or he could come in a gentle manner, expressing love and appreciation, depending on their response or conduct. **and in the spirit of meekness?** — And a spirit of gentleness (NASV). Their conduct, whether they continued in the puffed up and factious condition or amended their ways to meet apostolic standards, would determine the manner in which he would come. He who interprets this to mean that Paul would administer discipline, if that is what the Corinthians should choose, without love totally misinterprets it. His point is that he can come in either one of two ways: one way is to use the stern measures of discipline that are within his power and the other is as a loving father being reunited with his family. The contrast is not in loving or not loving but in the manner in which he would come, that is, whether to reprove or approve, punish or comfort, correct or commend. The choice was theirs, not his.

1 CORINTHIANS 5

A SCANDALOUS IMMORALITY

5:1-5 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

5:1 **It is reported commonly** — It is actually reported (ASV). Altogether reported, probably repeated everywhere and by many tongues. But perhaps Paul had heard it from those of Chloe's house, who had also reported the division (1:11). **that there is fornication** — That there is sexual immorality (NIV). Fornication is the general term which covers the whole range of sexual impurities. Here its specific connotation is incest. Thus incest, whether the couple are married or living in concubinage, is the sin condemned. **among you,** — Among the Corinthian Christians. They had knowledge of it. **and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles,** — Immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles (NASV). The church, which was trying to convert the heathen, was tolerating a sin within its own members which was not even practiced with approval by the pagans, neither Greeks nor Romans. They had become so morally insensitive that they were more tolerant of moral corruption than the world around them. What a shameful rebuke to Christians . . . either then or now. **that one should have his father's wife.** — His stepmother. There are some things we do not know about this case, e.g.: Was the father a polygamist, having more than one living wife? If not, was the son's mother divorced or deceased? Was the father living or dead? (It seems likely from 7:12 that he was living.) Had he divorced his incestuous wife? Or had she abandoned him for his son? Were she and the son married or just living together? It seems to me that it is more likely that the father is still living, that he had married a younger woman (the son's mother either being dead or divorced), that (if he was living) he had either divorced this woman or separated from her, and that the son had taken her to himself as a wife (even though there would have been some legal questions about it if the father had put her away). It seems incredible to me that the Corinthian church would have tolerated a situation where the two were just living together, especially if she was still married to the father. By what rationaliza-

tion could they have justified tolerating such a practice? But even if any or all of these opinions are wrong, we still know that their relationship was scandalously sinful, repulsively wrong — they were committing such an abominable evil that it was unacceptable even to the immoral pagan Corinthians, who had given their name to immorality. Not only did heathen law and sentiment prohibit such, the OT forbade a son taking his father's wife, even a concubine, upon the penalty of death (Lv. 18:8; 20:11; Dt. 22:30; 27:20; 2 Sm. 16:21-22; Gn. 35:22; 49:4), and to do so would still be considered, by Greek, Roman, and Hebrew, incest under all circumstances, whether the father was living, divorced, or dead. She would remain his stepmother, his father's wife, and neither divorce nor death would change this relationship. Thus it was an unthinkable sin, but here it was openly tolerated by the church of God, which was supposed to be heaven's citadel of truth and purity.

5:2 **And ye are puffed up**, — And you are proud! (NIV). There is a scandalous sin among you, and yet you are puffed up. At the very time you should be humbled and embarrassed you are exulting in arrogance and self-conceit. I doubt that the arrogance had any connection with the fornicator (and surely their pride was not in the fact of the brother's shameful conduct), but rather refers back to 4:6, 18-19. It is a contrast between what was and what should have been. They were puffed up when by all means they should have been mourning. **and have not rather mourned**, — Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief (NIV). They should be mourning the loss of a member rather than being puffed up — their pride should have given way to grief. This may give us some insight as to why they were full of pride. They may have seen themselves as aloof from the guilty in such a way as to suggest, "We are sexually pure; the fornicator can do us no harm. Therefore we live and let live." That is, while not condemning him, they were rejoicing, in a boastful way, that they were not sinners (cf. Lk. 18:10-14). **that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you**. — Might be disciplined, cut off from fellowship, or delivered to Satan (v. 5).

5:3 **For I verily**, — As for me (BV) or for my part (Williams). Unlike those who were puffed up (v. 2), he had already passed judgment or made a decision in this case. **as absent in body, but present in spirit**, — Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit (NIV). Bodily he was absent from Corinth, but he was with the church in heart, mind, and judgment. **have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed**, — I have already, as if present, passed sentence on the one who thus behaved (BV). Although Paul was bodily absent from them, he had taken the necessary action (made determination as to the proper action that should be taken) in his own mind — that is, he had taken the action they should have taken against the immoral man, namely, to deliver him to Satan (v. 5). As he had made the judgment in his mind, they should make it in theirs and then carry it out in practice.

5:4 **In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, — By His authority, exer-

cised by the HS working through the apostles (14:37). It is not certain whether this should be connected with “when ye are gathered together” or “To deliver such an one to Satan” (v. 5), but it seems more natural, in keeping with Scriptural terminology, to connect it with the assembly (Mt. 18:20), and when they are gathered together in the name of Christ they could administer discipline by His power and thus deliver the evil one to Satan, not by their own power or right, but by His. But in the final analysis, it makes little or no difference because the Christian religion is a religion of authority — that is, everything must be done in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17), which means that it must be done by His instructions, directions, or authority. Discipline is no exception to this rule. **when ye are gathered together**, — Ye being gathered together (ASV). When you assemble together (cf. Mt. 18:20) for the purpose of taking action against this man. Discipline is an action of the whole congregation, not just of one or a few. That is, the action is to be taken publicly, as in a court of law, even though disciplinary measures must be carried out on an individual level (v. 11). **and my spirit**, — With my spirit with you, as in v. 3. **with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ**, — Christ would be with them in their actions (Mt. 18:15-20). Thus when they administered the necessary discipline, they would not be standing alone or acting by their own authority: Christ would be working through them (cf. 2 Cor. 2:10).

5:5 **To deliver such an one unto Satan** — Hand such a person over to the devil (Beck). There are only two spiritual domains: the kingdom of Christ and the rule of Satan. Everyone is in one or the other. Thus to be delivered to Satan must mean to be excluded from the blessings of Christ’s kingdom, that is, the fellowship or company (vv. 2, 11) of the church and placed back under the rule or control of Satan (cf. 1 Tm. 1:20) to live in spiritual darkness, from which we are delivered by the gospel (Col. 1:13). In this exclusion all spiritual and social association were to be withdrawn (v. 11) to the point that one was to be counted as a heathen (for fellowship purposes) (Mt. 18:15-17), not in the sense of being an enemy to him but for the purpose of admonishing him to repentance (2 Thes. 3:14-15). In such exclusions, the purpose must always be to save the soul of the guilty. In this case, the Corinthians evidently followed Paul’s instructions and the desired end resulted (2 Cor. 2:6-7). **for the destruction of the flesh**, — To destroy his sinful ways (Beck). The purpose of the discipline was remedial, that is, to awaken him to the sin he was committing (in the flesh) and thus induce him to repent of it. His repentance would destroy his fleshly action — destroy this work of the flesh in him. In my judgment, this has no reference whatsoever (as many commentators think) to physical death or punishment beyond that suffered by the withdrawal of fellowship. **that the spirit** — The eternal part of man, sometimes called the soul. **may be saved** — May be brought to eternal salvation rather than eternal damnation (to which his fatal sin is leading him). The necessary implication here is that if he does not repent he will be lost. The purpose of discipline is therefore to save the man from his sin so that he may be saved from everlasting destruction (cf. 2 Thes.

1:7-9). **in the day of the Lord Jesus.** — The day when Christ will come in judgment, the day when all will be called to account for the deeds done in their body (2 Cor. 5:10).

PURGING THE OLD LEAVEN

5:6-8 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

5:6 **Your glorying is not good.** — Your boasting is no credit to you (Moffett). That is, the thing about which they were boasting brought no credit to their honor. Their pride in being able to tolerate such a condition in the church (see note on v. 2) was far from admirable. Such is not becoming to Christians . . . either then or now. **Know ye not** — Don't you know (NIV). It would be to their shame if they did not know. **that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?** — That a little yeast leavens the whole batch? (BV). This adds weight to the note on v. 2 where it is conjectured that their pride was not in the man's unthinkable sin but rather in their concept that another's sin would not affect them — that it would do no harm to the church. But in this they were wrong: sin, uncorrected, can pervade the whole body, just as leaven permeates a whole batch of dough (see Mt. 13:33). A church can no more tolerate sin in its members without becoming contaminated than one can take fire into his bosom without his clothes being burned (Prv. 6:27).

5:7 **Purge out** — Get rid of (NIV), clean out, or remove as Moses instructed Israel to remove all leaven from their houses on the eve of Passover (Ex. 12:15, 20; 13:6-7). **therefore** — Purge it because a little leaven will permeate the whole batch (v. 6). **the old leaven,** — Leaven here is a metaphor for evil corruption. The old leaven, specifically the shameful affair of the incestuous man who had his father's wife (v. 1), was the evil among them. **that ye may be a new lump,** — A new batch of dough with the corruption removed. **as ye are unleavened.** — Even as ye are unleavened (ASV). They had been made pure when they were baptized into Christ (6:11; 12:13; Gal. 3:27), but this purity was being threatened by permitting the sin to remain among them. **For** — Introduces the reason why they were to purge out the old leaven. **even Christ our passover is sacrificed** — Our Passover Lamb, Christ, has already been sacrificed (Williams). Christ had already died as the Paschal Lamb (cf. 1 Pt. 1:18-19; Rv. 5:6, 12) to take away the leaven of sin (Jn. 1:29) and yet the church at Corinth was still tolerating it right in its bosom. Jesus had already died as the Passover Lamb, to save men from sin, and yet here it was openly displayed in the church of God, and that after the Lamb had been offered. As all leaven was to be put away before the offering of the Passover lamb, so no immoral pollution should remain in the church. Sin in the church is an insult to the death of Christ. Why then do they (and we) harbor it in

their fellowship? **for us:** — The evidence indicates this was not in the original manuscript.

5:8 **Therefore let us keep the feast,** — The metaphor of v. 7 is continued. The OT feast of Passover is in view. And since Christ is our Passover, we are to continue the feast perpetually, and that without the leaven of sin. All wickedness therefore is to be put away, not just for seven days, but forever. **not with old leaven,** — The old leaven of evil and corruption, which characterized all before the offering of the Lamb. **neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness;** — That is, not with the old way of life. Malice is an ill disposition of the heart; wickedness is the overt action that springs from a malicious heart (cf. Prv. 23:7; Mt. 12:35; 15:17-20). **but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** — Sincerity and truth are here contrasted with malice and wickedness. The old bread was malice with its overt actions of wickedness; the new bread is the practice of truth from a sincere (pure) heart. Sincerity is the subjective convictions or motivations; truth is the overt practice, as in “walk in truth” (3 John 4). Here Paul states metaphorically practically the same concept as Jesus had in view when He said that true worship must be in spirit (from the heart) and in truth (according to the directions of truth) (Jn. 4:23-24).

WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP

5:9-13 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

5:9 **I wrote unto you in an epistle** — Undoubtedly an earlier epistle not preserved for us. What it contained beyond the matter mentioned here, and why it was not preserved by the providence of God (as were the other two letters to the Corinthians) are beyond our knowledge. Speculation and conjectures would be useless. One thing it does reveal, however, is that the written ministry of the apostles may have extended (we know it extended at least by one other epistle) far beyond the 27 books of the NT (cf. Col. 4:16; Phil. 3:1). Another thing: we believe strongly that regardless of how much they may have written that is unpreserved, the NT contains everything the HS intended to reveal to all mankind — that is, we have all that is necessary to guide us into the forgiveness of sins, living the Christian life, and into the inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven (2 Tm. 3:14-17; 1 Pt. 1:10-12; 2 Pt. 1:17-21). We would no more need every word the apostles wrote to know the full will of God for us than we would need the text of every sermon they preached or everything that Jesus did or said in His personal ministry (Jn. 20:30-31; 21:25). **not to company with fornicators:** — Not to associate with immoral people (Goodspeed) or not to

mix with those who live in sexual sin (Beck). That is, they were to withdraw all close and habitual relationship with the morally impure (vv. 11-13; 2 Thes. 3:14). He now (vv. 10-13) places some limitations on his previous instructions. These modifications make it all but certain that Paul had in mind another letter, not this one, as many commentators think.

5:10 **Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world**, — I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world (NASV). He meant their own brethren (v. 11), not non-Christians or the immoral outside the church. **or with the covetous**, — Greedy (RSV) or selfishly grasping for gain; especially this attitude toward that which belongs to another. It is called idolatry in Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5. Cf. 1 Tm. 6:10. **or extortioners**, — Swindlers (NASV) or robbers. Those who cheat in trade or practice fraud, even if it is in the open market place and considered as good business. The extortioner buys for less than an item is worth and sells it for more than it is worth. Solomon describes him in Prv. 20:14. **or with idolaters**; — Early in the Bible this meant those who worshipped idols. But it came to be used of anything that replaced God in one's heart and devotion. Thus covetousness is called idolatry (Col. 3:5) and the covetous man is called an idolater (Eph. 5:5). Hence greed becomes a god to the greedy. **for then must ye needs go out of the world**. — In that case you would have to leave this world (NIV). If they withdrew all association and commerce with the wicked of this world (as they were to do with the wicked in the church), it would be impossible for them to live in the world (cf. Jn. 17:15-18). Discipline is a corrective action taken by a church toward its own members, not toward people in the world. It is not designed to separate Christians (in a cluster, such as monasticism) from all association with wicked people but rather to bring the sinful church member to repentance.

5:11 **But now** — In this epistle in contrast with the former one mentioned in v. 9. **I have written unto you** — I write you now (BV). That is, I am now writing you. **not to keep company**, — Not to associate or have fellowship or social intercourse with him (cf. 2 Thes. 3:14). This obviously means any kind of association with him which would tend to leave the impression that one did not approve the action of the church or that he condones the evil practice of the disfellowshipped. **if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator**, — Any one who bears the name of brother (RSV). Only a brother in Christ was to be excluded from their association in the sense of the action here commanded, and that only after all other measures have been taken to bring the sinner to repentance (Mt. 18:15-17). **or covetous, or an idolater**, — See note on v. 10. **or a railer**, — One who reviles by abusive blasphemous speech, that is, one who has not learned to bridle his tongue (Jas. 3:2-12). **or a drunkard**, — One who drugs his mind with alcohol. Contrary to popular opinion, drunkenness comes in degrees, and there is no such thing as drinking alcoholic beverages without becoming drunk to one degree or another. All will admit that the Bible condemns drunkenness (Gal. 5:19-21). What degree does it condemn? I believe any degree when the drink is taken for the purpose of intoxication.

Why would any reasonable person conclude that it is a virtue to get one drink drunk but a vice to get nine or ten drinks drunk? God's sober old Book knows no such foolish distinctions. It condemns drunkenness . . . in any degree! **or an extortioner;** — See note on v. 10. **with such an one no not to eat.** — With such a man do not even eat (NIV). When the church withdraws fellowship from a sinful brother, whether he be a fornicator, covetous man, idolater, railer, drunkard, extortioner, or any other sin in this category, spiritual association, commerce, and social intercourse from other Christians must cease until he has repented. This has reference to any meal. At that time, and to some extent even today, to eat with a person was to acknowledge equality and friendship with him (cf. Mt. 9:10-11; Jn. 4:9). Thus to eat with a brother from whom the church had withdrawn would be to recognize him as equally faithful or to bid him God speed (2 Jn. 9-11). While this has no primary reference to the Lord's Supper, it would be included in principle. The church could not, of course, prevent him from assembling and taking the elements of the Supper any more than it could prevent him from singing in the assembly, but communion could not be extended to him in such a fashion as to imply fellowship.

5:12 **For what have I to do to judge them also that are without?** — What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? (NIV). Those outside the pale of the church were not under the jurisdiction of either Paul or the church, in the sense that discipline could be administered to them. They were already under the power of Satan (cf. v. 5) and their condition was terrible to contemplate (Eph. 2:12). Paul was willing to leave their punishment to God (v. 13). **do not ye judge them that are within?** — Do you not have those within the church to judge? (BV). This is a rhetorical question and requires an affirmative answer. That is, if any man is called a brother (v. 11), they were to judge him. And if he would not repent of his sin they were to put him away from them (v. 13), that is, withdraw fellowship from him. This form of discipline is possible, practical, and profitable with a brother in Christ, but impossible, impractical, and unprofitable with those in the world (vv. 9-11). The church's power of discipline is limited to its own membership.

5:13 **But them that are without** — But outsiders (BV). Those outside the church; the unsaved. **God judgeth.** — Christians have the divine obligation to administer discipline to sinful church members, but they must leave those in the world for God to judge. This is said in view of vv. 9-11, where the command not to keep company with the sinful is limited to a brother who is being disciplined. Discipline of those in the world is not the prerogative of the church. God will take care of that (now through the instrument of civil government and then through His own righteous judgment). **Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.** — Expel that wicked person from your own company (BV). That is, withdraw your fellowship, social and spiritual, from the fornicator mentioned in v. 1. The principle here would apply to any of the sins in the category mentioned in v. 11. This may be adapted from Dt. 17:7, where the Israelites were to put evil away from among them by

putting idolaters to death. By connecting the two incidents, Paul emphasizes the seriousness of withdrawing fellowship. It meant that the one withdrawn from was recognized as spiritually dead.

1 CORINTHIANS 6

CHRISTIANS ARE JUDGES

6:1-4 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

6:1 **Dare any of you**, — Can any of you be so impudent as to flaunt the will of God and outrage the church in such a shocking and sinful manner. It was unthinkable to Paul that they should seek the right from wrong-doers, justice from the unjust, enforcement of morals from the immoral, the establishment of Christian principles from non-Christians, etc. **having a matter** — A matter of grievance or litigation, that is, a lawsuit. **against another**, — Against his neighbor (ASV) or brother in Christ (v. 6). **go to law** — Take his dispute or grievance to a heathen court. As members of the church, they did not judge (that is, administer punishment) those in the world (5:12-13). Why then should they permit the world (courts made up of unbelievers, v. 6) to judge matters pertaining to the church? There are, of course, matters which must be settled by the court (cf. Acts 25:11, 21), matters beyond the jurisdiction of the church; but there are also internal church matters (e.g., the fornicator [5:1] and the disposition made of him [5:11]) that should and must be settled by the church. The courts would have little or no understanding of such matters. I believe the latter is what Paul has in mind in this chapter. **before the unjust**, — Before the unrighteous (NASV) or unbelievers (v. 6). This does not mean that their judgment would be unjust (even though that was a possibility) but that the judges were not Christians. The unjust are set in contrast with the saints. **and not before the saints?** — Not before your own brothers, as Christ had instructed (Mt. 18:15-17). The point is, if they took their case to court the matter would be settled by unholy judges; if taken to the church, it would be settled by the saints (holy people). How could saints, who are to judge the world (v. 2) seek judgment from the world? One would have to be extremely reckless with the truth, insensible to righteousness, unconcerned about the reputation of the church, and in honor preferring self over that of a brother to trust his case to unchristian judges rather than to a loving and concerned congregation of God's people.

6:2 **Do ye not know** — See note on 3:16. This expression is used five

additional times in this chapter, vv. 3, 9, 15, 16, and 19. It may be used as a rebuke, thus implying that it would be shameful if they did not know. If this is the case, then it is conclusive that the Corinthians knew more about this subject than has been revealed to us. **that the saints** — Christians. I see no reason (except to help escape a difficulty) to limit the saints here to the apostles (cf. v. 1). **shall judge the world?** — Many interpretations have been given to this expression, but as far as I can determine, no specific explanation is recorded in the divine Scriptures of the time, place, or manner of this judgment. The following passages are often thought to relate to it in one way or another: Ps. 49:14; Dn. 7:22-27; Mt. 19:28; 20:23; Jude 6; Rv. 2:26; 3:21; 20:4; but I am unable to see that any one of them, or all of them combined, adds much to our knowledge of the time, place, or manner. The subject may be rooted in the judging of the fornicator of 5:1, 9-13. While they could not judge the world in the sense of administering discipline (5:12-13), as they were commanded to do in cases of wicked church members, they could, in another sense, judge the fact that sin would condemn the sinner to eternal destruction. The world was thus brought before them as a court and judged as under the guilt, power, and condemnation of sin by the gospel which the saints preached and obeyed. The very fact that they proclaimed the remedy for sin necessarily passed judgment upon all who rejected its offer of forgiveness by grace. Whether this is the judgment Paul had in mind or not, all may feel free to question, along with the other concepts that have been presented down through the ages. In the final analysis, since the Scriptures are all but silent on the time, place, and manner, we may have to satisfy ourselves with the fact — the saints shall judge the world, either now or in the future, or both — without being able to absolutely determine the details of when, where, and how. **and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?** — And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? (NASV). If you judge in the gravest matters pertaining to eternity (that all souls are lost who are not brought under the blood of Christ by obedience to the gospel), are you incapable of judging (that is, have a court in which to judge) insignificant matters pertaining to this world? Whatever the judging of the saints may be, Paul's point is that if they judge in weighty matters of eternal importance, it ought to be obvious that they could and should be both able and willing to sit in judgment in cases of a more trivial nature — matters infinitely less significant than those pertaining to the world. That is, if you judge in the higher court (involving both men and angels, v. 4), are you not worthy to serve in the lower court (involving only trifling differences among brethren)?

6:3 **Know ye not** — See note on v. 2. **that we shall judge angels?** — Most likely refers to the wicked angels (2 Pt. 2:4; Jude 6) and the fact that Christians consent to the justice of God's judgment against them. This joining hands with God in judgment should prove to anyone going to law before unbelievers that a Christian tribunal (that is, a tribunal made up of Christians and judging in Christian causes) would be far superior to any heathen court.

how much more things that pertain to this life? — The smaller matters of v. 2 or things which confront them daily in their Christian life. The point is that if Christians judge the wicked (of both men and angels) in things pertaining to eternity, are they not capable of judging in matters of differences among themselves (that is, things pertaining to this life alone)? The contrast is between the higher judgment (which evidently they all admitted that they would enter into) and the lower judgments which they were not making when they went to law one with another.

6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, — If then you have ordinary matters to be settled (Goodspeed). That is, if you have disputes among yourselves that pertain to your life in the church that need to be settled. **set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.** — Why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the church? (RSV). This is unquestionably a difficult verse. Should it be understood as an imperative (as in the KJV)? If so, then they are commanded to appoint the least esteemed, that is, those who are of the least value or worth, to be their judges. If this be the case, Paul is saying that the least capable Christians are more worthy to judge their matters than the most capable unbeliever. (And this would undoubtedly be true in things pertaining to the spiritual life.) However, it may be indicative and thus correctly rendered interrogatively (as in the RSV), in which case it means that the courts before which they were taking their disputes had no worth or esteem by the church. They were composed of the unrighteous (v. 1) and unbelieving (v. 6) and thus Christians could have no confidence in their decisions. Or as Barnes states, “The heathen magistrates enforce such a character as not to be worthy of the confidence of the church in settling matters of controversy.” It seems to me that the latter is more in harmony with the whole context for two weighty reasons: (1) Why would Paul command them to set as judges the least capable in the church? If this had been meant as a command, it seems certain that he would have charged them to let the wisest among them (cf. v. 5) be their judges. (2) This whole section is a rebuke to those who seek to settle their matters of dispute by taking them to a heathen court.

THE SHAME OF GOING TO LAW

6:5-8 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

6:5 I speak to your shame. — I say this to put you to shame (Moffett) or to make you ashamed (Beck). In 4:14 he was not writing to shame them; here he is. The very purpose of what he said was to bring them to realize the shame of Christians going to law with Christians before unchristian courts to settle

Christian matters. **Is it so**, — Is it possible (NIV) or has it come to this (Williams). **that there is not a wise man among you?** — The question is designed to elicit the response, “No, it is not so.” There were admittedly among them men wise enough to administer proper decisions. (The fact that he raises the question implies that the wise and not the least worthy were to judge in matters of differences among them. This makes it all but certain that the exegesis given in v. 4 is the correct one.) **no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?** — Again the question is designed to evoke the answer, “No. There are those among us wise enough to arbitrate and settle our differences.” But if so, why then take your matters before unbelieving judges? Why seek settlement before those who had no standing in the church — that is, the heathen judges?

6:6 But brother goeth to law with brother, — But instead, one brother goes to law against another (NIV). Paul here reaches a climax, one that forms a severe rebuke. Instead of letting the wise and capable among them (v. 5) arbitrate their disputes, they were going to law one with another, which was bad enough, but what was worse, they were taking their causes before unbelievers to seek solutions to their controversies. In this they were utterly wrong (v. 7). **and that before the unbelievers**. — Before the unjust (v. 1) or non-Christian. Unbelieving judges would have no understanding of the Christian system or the differences that would arise between brethren. Can anyone imagine a heathen judge in immoral Corinth rendering a Scriptural verdict as to what a congregation should do about a fornicator in its midst?

6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, — To say no more, it is a mark of moral failure among you (Williams). They were defeating themselves even before the verdict of the unbelieving court was rendered. By a failure to let the wise among them settle their differences and by entering a lawsuit against a brother they had fallen below the standard of Christian conduct and were thus defeating their purpose as Christians. Hence they were defeated by their defect because the thing they were doing was wrong. No one wins by giving his brother (or the church) a black eye. **because ye go to law one with another**. — That you have lawsuits with one another (NASV). They were in a lawsuit one with another rather than leaving vengeance to the Lord (Rom. 12:19; Prv. 20:22) and following the example of Christ (1 Pt. 2:21-22). **Why do ye not rather take wrong?** — Why not practice the principle taught by Jesus (Mt. 5:38-41) and Paul (Rom. 12:20) and be wronged rather than abandon it and do wrong? When brethren have lawsuits against each other both lose. Going to law one with another indicated a defect in character. **why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?** — Why don't you rather let yourselves be robbed? (Beck) or cheated (NIV). One might win his case in a lawsuit but it would be at the expense of his Christian character. But one's character is of far more value than the matter in dispute. Thus it is better to be wronged than to do wrong; better to be robbed than to be a robber; better to be mistreated than to mistreat; better to surrender in a

disputed matter than to abandon Christ to settle it; better to maintain spirituality than to gain materially; in short, better to be true to the faith than to win in a court of law.

6:8 **Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud,** — But instead of that you inflict wrong and practice frauds (Moffett). This is a contrast of what they should have done with what they were doing. Rather than receive injury and suffer defrauding (v. 7), they were inflicting wrong and practicing robbery. **and that your brethren.** — Their own Christian family. This does not imply that it would not be wrong to defraud non-Christians, but rather to show the depths of degradation reached in wronging another member of the body of Christ. It was a sin against a family member, against one to whom they should be attached by the tenderest ties of love (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1). One of the shocking events of my life was to be called to witness in a court of law for a mother whose own daughter had brought suit against her in an effort to take every item of her household furnishings. I blush at the very thought of such depravity. To this day I am stunned beyond words that a daughter could stoop low enough to do such to her own aged mother. But would it be less stunning for a brother to take another brother before an unbelieving judge to settle brotherly matters? Of course there are civil matters which must be settled by civil courts. Paul is not concerned here with such matters but with disputes among brethren — disputes which do not go beyond church or spiritual affairs.

THE UNRIGHTEOUS CANNOT BE SAVED

6:9-11 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

6:9-10 **Know ye not** — See note on v. 2. **that the unrighteous** — The wicked, unjust, wrongdoers. He had just concluded (v. 8) that they were committing wrong by having lawsuits against their brethren. And wrongdoers (the unrighteous), Christian or otherwise, cannot go to heaven. As Christians they were formerly among the unrighteous, who committed the sins named in these two vv., but now they are washed, sanctified, and justified (v. 11). Their actions should therefore reflect their new status (2 Cor. 5:17). **shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** — Will never come into possession of the kingdom of God (NEB). The kingdom is composed of the righteous and righteousness is its fundamental characteristic (Rom. 14:17), now and forever. Paul here obviously has in view the eternal state of the kingdom (cf. 15:50) or heaven itself. But since the church, the present state of the kingdom, is a spiritual kingdom and righteousness is its characteristic also, the wicked and worldly minded have no share in it here and now any more than then and there. **Be not deceived:** — Do not be fooled or misled, either by self, others, or the circumstances you find

yourself in. Christians cannot sin with impunity — that is, without suffering the consequences and paying the penalty (Rom. 6:23). God's law demands a reaping of that which one sows (Gal. 6:7-8). **neither fornicators, nor idolaters,** — See notes on 5:10-11. **nor adulterers,** — Adultery is a specific kind of immorality — a violation of marriage. Thus it is illicit sexual relations of one who is married with someone other than his lawful mate. This was considered serious enough under the law to carry the death penalty (Lv. 20:10) and Jesus saw it as a violation of such magnitude that He made it the only Scriptural cause for divorce and remarriage under the Christian system (Mt. 19:9). Because we have let the moral laxity of society seep into our thinking, few, perhaps none, ever see the immoral nature of adultery as severe as the Bible presents it. **nor effeminate,** — The word means soft to the touch (cf. Lk. 7:25; Mt. 11:8, the only other occurrences in the NT where it is translated soft). The context here seems to demand the meaning of one who has lost his distinction as a man, lives in ease and sensual luxury, or, more probably, who serves the role of a woman in sexual stimulation and activity. If so, it closely relates to the following: **nor abusers of themselves with mankind,** — Nor homosexuals (NASV) or sodomites. Those who debase themselves with their own sex (1 Tm. 1:10; see also Rom. 1:26-27), whether men or women. This is a despicable sin against nature (Rom. 1:26) — a sin against God's design of sex and marriage, the institution to which He limited sex. The woman was made for man (11:8-9, 11-12; Gn. 2:18) — made to fill his needs (7:2-5) — and the man is made to fill the woman's needs, that is, they complement each other. In the intimate relations between them (in marriage) God allows no substitutes. Homosexuality ignores and violates this sacred principle. In view of this fact, though modern society tolerates homosexuals, they are members of many churches, they fill some pulpits, and some churches are established especially for them, we must keep constantly before our minds Paul's statement that such shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Homosexuality may be accepted by society as an acceptable life-style, and denominational churches may even approve it, but God has condemned it and His people can never accept or approve the practice. **Nor thieves,** — Who steal (Beck). God has always recognized the right of private ownership and He demands that everyone respect it (cf. Gn. 3:19; Ex. 20:15; Eph. 4:28). What one earns by the sweat of his brow, another has no right to take. Stealing is selfishness and a violation of the divine principle of one's right to what he earns. A thief is thus one who takes for himself what belongs to another. **nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners,** — See notes on 5:10-11. **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** — See note on v. 9.

6:11 And such were some of you: — Before your conversion, some of you were guilty of committing these very sins (vv. 9-10). **but** — A contrast between then (before they became Christians) and now. Then some of them (not all) had lived in the sinful degradation described in vv. 9-10, but now, having been washed, sanctified, and justified by the gospel plan, they were different —

they were followers of Christ, and that makes all the difference in the world as to how they should live. They had changed and that change meant that they could no longer practice the evils of their former lives. **ye are washed**, — There can be no serious question but that this refers to their baptism into Christ (cf. Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 18:8), in which they had an active part, that is, they were voluntarily baptized. Lightfoot says, "A reference to baptism." MacKnight says, "And such persons were many of you formerly: But ye are washed with the water of baptism, in token of you having vowed to lead a new life." It is the same concept as born of water in Jn. 3:5, the washing of regeneration of Ti. 3:5, the washing of water by the word of Eph. 5:26, and having our bodies washed in pure water of Heb. 10:22. And in the final analysis, all of them are identical in meaning with Mk. 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." **but ye are sanctified**, — You have been consecrated (Williams). That is, separated from the world and devoted to the service of God. This has no reference to a gradual process but a definite past act which occurred at the time of their washing. **but ye are justified** — You are now in right standing with God (Williams). When one is justified he is in right relationship with God by virtue of the fact that his sins have been forgiven, covered by the blood of the Lamb. Washed, sanctified, and justified all have reference to the time when they became Christians, when they submitted themselves in total obedience to the Lord by being baptized as He had commanded in the great commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16) and as practiced by the apostolic church (Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 18:8; 22:16). They were then set apart to His service and through the means of Christ's death He forgave their sins, that is, stood them in right relationship with Him. **in the name of the Lord Jesus**, — They were baptized, sanctified, and justified in His name (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38). While it is difficult to determine here whether Paul means in the name of Christ (that is, by His authority) or by the name of Christ (that is, Christ as the means by which it is accomplished), either fits harmoniously the context. But as indicated, I lean toward the former (thus accepting the KJV as correct: *in the name of and by the Spirit of*). **and by the Spirit of our God**. — By the HS working through His divine message of truth, the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). There is no record of the Spirit working directly upon the heart of anyone to convert or sanctify him. There is therefore no such thing as a miraculous conversion known in the Bible — that is, God converting one without the consent of his will. The Spirit has always worked through the instrumentality of truth to reach the mind and heart, even in the days when He was confirming His message by miracles. The function of the Spirit in God's scheme is to reveal, confirm, and deliver the truth (this He has now done through the inspired word of God, recorded in the NT). It was the function of the apostles to faithfully proclaim the truth revealed and confirmed by the HS and to deliver it by His inspiration (this they did personally in apostolic time but now it is done through the gospel recorded). It is the function of all other preachers to preach the word (2 Tm. 4:2) delivered to them by the apostles (in the NT). When the

word is preached, it is the function of the hearer (the sinner) to believe and obey. In this he is active, not passive. When the truth is believed and obeyed (by the penitent believer volunteering to be washed in baptism), it is then the Lord's function to sanctify and justify. Thus the HS works on the heart of a sinner, not by a direct or miraculous operation, but through the message of truth.

ALL THINGS HAVE A PROPER USE

6:12-14 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

6:12 **All things are lawful unto me**, — Everything is permissible for me (NIV). When God had finished His creation, He viewed all that He had made and concluded that it was very good (Gn. 1:31). Thus everything God made is good (right, lawful) for the purpose for which He made it. Everything is therefore lawful when it is in its proper place and being used properly (cf. Rom. 14:14). Take sex, for example. It was made by God for a divine purpose. When it is used as God designed and ordained it (within the bond of marriage) few things in life are more beautiful, more satisfying, or more meaningful. In marriage it is pure and holy (Heb. 13:4). But outside of marriage, it is immoral — fornication. It is thus the improper use of sex, and not sex *per se*, which is sinful. And what is true of sex is true of all things. Everything is made for a proper use and is therefore lawful when used properly. All things are lawful when used for their divine purpose and in keeping with the will of God. But keep in mind the fact that all lawful things may be used unlawfully (e.g., fornication is an unlawful use of sex). This principle is broad enough to be applied to everything God made. **but all things are not expedient**: — but not everything is beneficial (BV). No unlawful thing can be expedient, and it is not always advantageous or profitable to do lawful things. Because a thing is lawful (e.g., sex) does not mean that it is always and under all circumstances permitted. For example, it is lawful to eat meat (v. 13; 1 Tm. 4:4-5) but it is not always expedient — that is, there are times and circumstances in which the eating of meat may be inexpedient or wrong (8:8-13; Rom. 14:15, 20-21). It is lawful to marry, but marriage is not always expedient (7:7, 26-30). **all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any**. — Everything is permissible for me, but I will not become a slave to anything (Williams). He would not be made a slave of lawful things. Appetite and desires are lawful, but Paul would not be so enslaved to them as to satisfy them unlawfully. Many a man becomes a slave to his freedom, but not Paul. He would not improperly use lawful things to satisfy his desires. Unlawful use of lawful things is the very nature of sin, and to be addicted to the unlawful use of a lawful thing (e.g., tobacco — I do not know the lawful use of tobacco but I am sure God did not design it for smoking) is abject slavery.

6:13 **Meats for the belly**, — Food is for the stomach (NASV). God designed food to appease the appetite. This was the purpose God had in view in creation — the lawful use of a created thing. **and the belly for meats**: — And the stomach is for food (NASV). God designed the appetite to desire food and the stomach to receive and digest it. Again, the design of creation is met. **but God shall destroy both it and them**. — Both stomach and meats serve only a temporary purpose and will eventually perish. This is in contrast with the body which will continue (v. 14). **Now the body is not for fornication**, — The body is not in the same class with food and the stomach and all reason that combines diverse things into the same category is fallacious. God did not make the body for immorality as He had made food for the stomach and the stomach for food. While He designed the body with sexual needs, He limited its fulfillment to marriage. Fornication is therefore the unlawful use of a lawful thing. This makes it sinful (cf. notes on v. 12). Paul's aim here is to show that there is a vast difference in satisfying the appetite with food and the sex drive with fornication. To satisfy hunger with food is as God meant it to be, but to satisfy the sex drive by fornication is a violation of the purpose of creation — that is, it is using a thing created by God for a purpose other than for that which He created it. **but for the Lord**; — The body was designed for service to the Lord, not for immoral purposes. To join the body to a harlot (commit fornication) is a misuse of the body (vv. 15-16) — a use contrary to the intentions of the Creator. **and the Lord for the body**. — Created for Him, for His glory and service. This may have reference to the fact that Christ indwells Christians through His Spirit (v. 19; Eph. 3:17; 2:22). But regardless of this, God designed man to be a Christian, a follower of Christ, and any other use of the body (which here equates the whole being or personality) constitutes a misuse. Thus the fundamental reason why fornication is wicked and immoral is that it is an abuse of sexuality — abused by removing it from its divine purpose and sphere.

6:14 **And God hath both raised up the Lord**, — God not only raised our Lord from the dead (NEB). That is, He raised up Christ and thereby broke the grip of death. The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the gospel (15:1-4; Acts 2:29-32; 1 Pt. 1:3). It proves His deity (Rom. 1:4) and our own salvation and resurrection is predicated upon it (15:12-20). **and will also raise up us by his own power**. — He will also raise us by His power (NEB). As He raised up Christ, He will also raise our bodies from the dead by His power (15:1-58; Rom. 8:10-11, 18-23), incorruptible and immortal (15:42-44). The body thus has a higher purpose than food and the stomach (v. 13) — it will live on while they perish. They are thus in entirely different classes, made for different purposes, and have different destinies. And because of its purpose (the Creator's design) it is sinful to prostitute the body, which is a part of God's eternal plan and is therefore destined for glory, to fornication.

THE BODY IS NOT FOR FORNICATION

6:15-18 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

6:15 **Know ye not** — See note on v. 2. **that your bodies are the members of Christ?** — You are in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27; 2 Cor. 5:17) and Christ is in you (Col. 1:27). He is the vine and you are the branches (Jn. 15:5). Or to say the same thing another way, you are members of His body (12:12-27). This means that you are one with Him — one spirit (v. 17). In Christ the body (human personality or being) serves the fundamental purpose for which it was made (vv. 13-14). Thus a Christian cannot act apart from Christ — from his relationship with Christ. His actions involve Christ as well as his own creative purpose. **shall I then take the members of Christ,** — Am I then to take away from Christ parts of His body (Goodspeed). That is, take away from Christ that which is His, the members of His body, and put them to an immoral use? **and make them the members of an harlot?** — And make them one with a harlot in immorality, thus making a member of Christ commit fornication. Such a connection between a member of Christ and a harlot is utterly unthinkable. The point here is that when a Christian commits fornication, he degrades Christ and abandons the purpose for which his body was made. **God forbid.** — Never! (NIV). A strong negative showing abhorrence at the very thought of such a thing.

6:16 **What?** — Or (ASV). **know ye not** — See note on v. 2. **that he which is joined** — Attached, glued to, or stuck together, as by adhesive (cf. the word cleave in Gn. 2:24; Mt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31). **to an harlot** — Any partner in fornication. **is one body?** — Makes his body one with hers? (Williams) or makes with her a physical union (Phillips). They are glued together and have become one in their immoral act. **for** — Introduces the reason why the foregoing is true. **two,** — A pair, a male and a female. **saith he,** — Said God through Adam (Gn. 2:24). **shall be one flesh.** — United sexually. God had said in the beginning that a husband and wife would become one flesh (Gn. 2:24) and Paul understood this to mean sexual union. This intimate relationship made them one — it glued them together. And if this means anything it means that marriage is consummated in the sex act — that God by His approval joined them (and all others who marry) as one flesh at this point. Some have argued that if this is the case then the initial sex act would be sinful because the two would not yet be one. But not so. What God has approved or authorized (in making them one) cannot be wrong. Paul quotes this to prove that when two engage in illicit sex, they also become one flesh. This does not mean that they are joined in marriage (as is the case with a husband and wife) but that they are joined in bodies

— that is, a member of Christ has been taken away from Him (v. 15) and unlawfully joined to the body of a harlot — and that which should be one with Christ is now one with a harlot.

6:17 But he that is joined unto the Lord — But he who links himself with Christ (NEB). One who is glued or attached to Him, a member of Christ (v. 15). Just as the joining of a male and female in sexual relations (either within marriage or an illicit union) is the most intimate relationship between two human beings, to be joined to Christ is the most intimate relationship between Him and His people (cf. Eph. 5:30). **is one spirit.** — Is one with Him in spirit (NIV). The contrast here is that those who are joined to a harlot become one body with her but those who are joined to Christ become one spirit with Him. The spirit of Christ (dispositional spirit, not the HS) (cf. Phil. 2:5; Jn. 17:21). This is simply to say that the union between Christ and Christians is spiritual. The Christian loses himself in Christ. In becoming a Christian he stepped out of himself and stepped into Christ (Gal. 2:20).

6:18 Flee fornication. — Keep on running from sexual immorality (Williams), as did Joseph (Gn. 39:1-12). Constantly shun it as you would a contagious plague (1 Thes. 5:22). It has a strong appeal to one of the most powerful drives in the human body and great fascination to the sensual mind (Prv. 5:3), but it ends in misery, death, and hell (Prv. 5:4-13). Thus whenever and wherever it may appear, fly from it by putting it out of sight, mind, and intent. **Every sin that a man doeth is without the body;** — Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body (NASV). Not without the participation of the body (for all sin has that), as one might conclude from the KJV, but outside (without a blending into) the body. Keep in mind that in this context (vv. 12-20) the body means the total being. And in fornication the total being, the personality, becomes one with a harlot. This intimacy, this blending together of personalities, this being glued to a harlot, does not characterize other sins. **but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.** — But if he sins sexually, he sins against his own body (Beck). This puts sexual sins in a class by themselves, a distinction that is quite difficult for us to comprehend. I am far from satisfied with what I have to offer (and in this I am joined by most other commentators), but for what they are worth, here are my thoughts on the matter: Other sins are outside (not blended with the total being) the body while this one is inside (involving the whole being); other sins are committed by the body but this one is committed against (the purpose and design of) the body; other sins involve the participation of (some parts of) the body but this one involves the whole body by joining it to (becoming one with) a harlot; other sins are a violation of the law (1 Jn. 3:4) but this sin, in addition to violating the law, violates the very essence and nature of the body. Or to say the same thing another way, fornication affects one within his own being as no other sin does — it joins him body and soul to whoredom. Whether this is the precise distinction Paul had in view or not, we may never know, but we can be certain of one thing: fornication is a perilous and singular sin and Christians are commanded

to constantly flee from it. And here would probably be as good a place as any to insert a summary of the seven components of Paul's argument against it: (1) Fornication is a wrong use of the body (vv. 12-13); (2) the body has a higher purpose than fleshly gratification (v. 14), shown by the fact that it will be raised from the dead; (3) The body of a Christian is a member of Christ and must not be taken away from Him and joined to a harlot — that is, become a member of a harlot (v. 15); (4) in this context, it is the unlawful union of a Christian with a harlot (vv. 16-17); (5) it is a sin against one's own body (v. 18); (6) the body is a temple of the HS (v. 19) and thus must not be joined to the sinful body of a harlot; (7) Because we have been bought with a price, we are to glorify God in our bodies (v. 20) and this cannot be done if the body is joined with a harlot in immorality.

PROPER USE OF THE BODY

6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

6:19 **What? — Or (ASV). know ye not —** See note on v. 2. **that your body —** Your total being, body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). **is the temple of the Holy Ghost —** The sanctuary (margin ASV) where the HS dwells. In 3:16-17 the church collectively is called the temple of God in which the Spirit dwells; here the body (being) of each member is the temple of the HS. The Spirit permeates (or indwells) the whole by permeating each part, and/or *vice versa*. **which is in you, —** Who dwells in you. That the HS indwells Christians is an unquestionable fact, clearly stated here and in many other passages (e.g., Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 4:6-7; Acts 2:38; 5:32). But the fact of indwelling does not reveal the method. The method may be either direct or indirect, immediate or mediate — that is, He may indwell either without means (this is called the personal or actual indwelling) or through means (this is called the indirect indwelling). I believe that both Scripture and experience teach us that He indwells through means, the inspired Spirit-filled word of God. If this is the case, then the truth is the instrument by which He indwells. We need to clearly distinguish between the fact and the method. They are two different things and should not be confused. The fact is, He is in us. The method by which He indwells us (is in our bodies or total being) is the truth, the word of God. The fact does not reveal the method, nor does the method change the fact. **which ye have of God, —** Which you have as a gift of God (Acts 5:32). **and ye are not your own? —** Not your own master. Your body does not belong to you to use as the flesh may desire — it is not yours to join to a harlot. This is true for three fundamental reasons: (1) God made the body. It therefore belongs to Him by virtue of creation. (2) Christ purchased it with His blood (v. 20). It is thus His by right of redemption. He is its Master. (3) In becoming a Christian, the body was surrendered to Christ — you voluntarily became His bondservant. Consequent-

ly it is His by surrender (Gal. 2:20; Mt. 16:24). Since the body belongs to the Lord, it can be used only for that which pleases Him. And that ultimately is the purpose for which the body was made.

6:20 **For ye** — Your total being (which in this section is called the body). **are bought** — Were bought (ASV). That is, they had been purchased or redeemed. All men had sinned (Gn. 3:1-7; Rom. 3:9, 23; 5:12) and as a penalty, eternal death had passed upon them (Gn. 2:17; Rom. 6:23). Man thus stood hopelessly doomed. But then Christ stepped in and died in man's stead (2 Cor. 5:13; 1 Jn. 2:2) — He paid the penalty of death for man. By His substitutionary death He purchased man from death — that is, He paid the price of death for man's sins. Thus when Christ bought us He redeemed us from eternal death. **with a price:** — And at what a price! (Phillips). The price paid was the precious blood of God's only Son (Mt. 20:28; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12-23; 1 Pt. 1:18-19). This means that our bodies are the property of God, both by creation (vv. 12-13) and by redemption. He is our Owner and Master. This is why we are not our own (v. 19). **therefore** — So (RSV) or now. **glorify God in your body,** — You must honor God with your bodies (Williams). Glorify God by using the body properly, for the purpose for which it was created . . . and do it with great urgency. God is glorified when man lives and serves his creative (and redemptive) purpose. That is to say that man glorifies God by being what he was made to be and by doing what he was made to do, both now and forever. Honoring God constitutes the proper (or lawful) use of the body; fornication constitutes its misuse — it defiles the body. **and in your spirit, which are God's.** — Undoubtedly added by later hands and consequently not a part of the inspired text.

1 CORINTHIANS 7

In chapter 6, Paul showed that the creative and redemptive purposes of the body prohibited fornication — all sexual relations outside of marriage. While sex *per se* is lawful, it is a sin of great magnitude to engage in it unlawfully. God's design (the creative purpose) calls for it to be limited to the sphere of marriage alone. Outside of marriage it is immoral, a sin against both the body of Christ and the human body (6:15-18). The Corinthians may have concluded that all sexual relations were wrong. But Paul taught no such thing. And so here he turns their attention to the lawful sphere of sex, namely, marriage, a subject that had raised numerous question among them. They had written Paul to secure his inspired advice and solutions. Chapter 7 is composed of his replies. In studying and applying his solutions to their problems, it should be remembered that some of the answers he gives to them are general enough to be applied universally (that is, in all situations) but some must find limitations in what he calls the "present distress" (v. 26) because they are directed to problems peculiar to that place and time. We must not (even though we can derive divine principles from them) be guilty of making a universal law out of instructions designed only for a local situation. On the other hand, we must not try to localize a universal principle and thereby bring to naught the will of God.

CELIBACY IS LAWFUL BUT MAY NOT BE EXPEDIENT

7:1-2 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: — Now concerning the things about which you wrote (NASV). This begins a new section of the book, which comprises the remainder of it, in which Paul deals with questions sent to him. In this whole chapter he deals with the questions pertaining to marriage. Later he will take up things offered to idols (8:1), spiritual gifts (12:1), the contribution (16:1), and a number of other problems, all of which were probably a part of the letter to him. In each case we have his answer but we do not have their question. **It is good** — It is lawful, proper, commendable, well, right, permissible, or acceptable. This does not mean that it is the best, or

even better, but rather that it is lawful for one to remain unmarried. Marriage is a choice. If one chooses not to marry (providing he can maintain his purity), that is acceptable. **for a man not to touch a woman.** — The word touch probably means not to cohabit with her sexually, and the only permissible cohabitation is marriage; hence the meaning is that it is good (acceptable to God) for a man not to marry. The question before Paul may have been, “In view of the fact that marriage is a divine institution, and that it is necessary to the propagation of humankind, is it lawful for a Christian to remain unmarried?” Paul responds, “Yes, it is lawful but [as is seen in v. 2] it may not be expedient” (cf. 6:12). There are two extremes to be guarded against: (1) Marriage is absolutely essential if he is to obey God (e.g., Gn. 1:28; 2:18). (2) Those who attain the highest purity and are totally committed to Christ must not marry. The truth lies between the two extremes. While marriage is of God and is necessary to His reproductive plans, and while the male and female bodies are so constructed as to both need and desire the companionship of marriage, He has left the decision to each individual. If he chooses not to marry (which means to refrain from all sexual activity), his choice is lawful or good. There is nothing wrong with that. But on the other hand, if he cannot control his sexual desires, he has no option but to marry. One must thus choose between the unmarried state without sexual fulfillment or the married state and sexual fulfillment. Both are good in their place and under proper circumstances, but one cannot have both. For those who can control their bodies, it is good (lawful) not to marry; for all others, marriage is the right course. In fact, it is mandatory.

7:2 **Nevertheless,** — But (ASV). Introducing a contrast to v. 1. While the celibate state is good (lawful) it is not expedient for everyone. Rather for the vast majority, it is not good to be alone (cf. Gn. 2:18). **to avoid fornication,** — But because of the temptation to immorality (RSV). While it is good not to marry (if one can contain, v. 9), everyone in that state cannot live chastely; hence God’s answer to sexual impurity is marriage. **let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.** — Let everyone who desires to fill his sexual needs marry. While some, with Paul (vv. 7, 40) would choose to remain unmarried, this was not to be bound upon anyone as a matter of law (vv. 9, 28, 36; 1 Tm. 4:3). To the contrary, Paul commands them to let each have his own mate. Sexual purity is not the only reason to marry, but it is a prime one — prime because it is fundamental to God’s purpose for the body (6:12-20) and because God has limited all sexual satisfaction to marriage.

MARITAL PRIVILEGES AND OBLIGATIONS

7:3-5 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

7:3 Let the husband render — Let him keep on rendering. **unto the wife due benevolence:** — The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife (NIV). The KJV is extremely delicate here, but the thought is clear, especially in the NIV: the wife has a sexual need and it is the duty of the husband to fill it (cf. Ex. 21:10). This proves conclusively that sexual enjoyment was not meant to be the exclusive right of the male. It was designed by God as a mutual exchange. **and likewise also the wife unto the husband.** — And a wife should do the same for her husband (Beck). The husband also has physical needs (usually conceived of as stronger and more demanding than those of the wife), and it is the duty of the wife to satisfy them. This is God's plan, God's order, God's command. The husband and wife have mutual needs, mutual privileges, and mutual obligations. They are to satisfy each other in order to prevent being tempted by the appeal of fornication. It is therefore an error of vast magnitude to conclude, as some have done, especially in the Middle Ages, that sexual activity in marriage is a necessary evil. Quite to the contrary, when two are one (that is, when they are married), their intimate relations are by the design and will of God. This means that they are both honorable and pure (Heb. 13:4), the highest expression of the deepest mutual love, and the most enriching physical experience created by God for human pleasure.

7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, — The wife's body does not belong to her alone (NIV). In marrying she transferred authority over it to the husband. **but to the husband:** — It is her husband's (Goodspeed). He has a divine and exclusive right to it, and thus has power or authority over it. **and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body,** — In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone (NIV). **but the wife.** — It is his wife's (Goodspeed). When two marry, each gives his body to the other. Sexually they transfer all rights to their mate. Let each recognize this principle, and practice it, and adultery will be all but annihilated from the earth. What wife would give that which belongs exclusively to her (the conjugal rights to her husband's body) to a harlot? Only the most depraved. Yet she alone (even if it were right and permissible by God, which it is not) would have the right to do so. No husband has the right (even apart from the argument against fornication presented in 6:12-20) to take that which belongs exclusively to his wife and share it with another. The same, of course, is true of a wife. Sexually, then, the wife controls the husband's body and the husband controls the wife's. This makes unfaithfulness on the part of either unthinkable.

7:5 Defraud — Stop depriving (NASV). **ye not one the other,** — That is, do not deny each other his sexual dues. **except it be with consent for a time,** — Unless you agree to do so just for a while (Williams). While marital partners may abstain with mutual consent for a specified time or for a specific reason, they do not have the right to withhold sexual privileges from each other (v. 4). **that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer;** — The purpose for the mutual consent to abstain for a season is that they might have leisure or be free to pray — devote themselves to religious service. Fasting here

lacks strong manuscript support and is omitted by the ASV and most other modern translations. Abstinence is not to be permanent. It is only for a short time to enable them to accomplish a specific goal. **and come together again**, — Then come together again (NIV). End the period of abstinence and come together again sexually. **that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency**. — Or the devil will tempt you (Beck). Lest through your weakness or inability to control yourself sexually you give Satan an advantage (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11).

MARRIAGE IS A CHOICE

7:6-9 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. — But I mean this as a concession, not a command (Goodspeed). The KJV can be understood to mean that Paul is speaking by permission of the Lord and not by His command. But I think Goodspeed more correctly renders the concept, showing that none are commanded to marry but are given permission to do so when there is a need (and the vast majority have the need). That is, marriage is by permission, not by command. If one can control his sexual desires, he may remain single (vv. 7-8), but otherwise he should marry (v. 9). Here I agree with MacKnight that this has reference to what follows rather than what precedes, as most commentators think. I see the whole section (vv. 6-9) as saying you have permission to marry but you are not commanded to do so. Furthermore, this statement says nothing about a lack of inspiration. The fact about the matter is that Paul is giving an inspired permission rather than an inspired command.

7:7 For I would that all men were even as myself. — I wish that all men were as I am (NIV). That is, unmarried (9:5), content, and in full control of his physical desires. The wish here is surely limited to “the present distress” (v. 26), to certain times and circumstances; otherwise he would be wishing the absolute end of man: for God has no plan for procreation outside of marriage. **But every man hath his proper gift of God,** — Each one has the natural abilities which God gives him. Gift here has no reference to miraculous gifts, such as are mentioned in 12:7-10, but to that which is given by God through His natural laws. But the source of both the natural and the miraculous is God (Jas. 1:17). He made each one for a purpose (He made Adam miraculously and all other naturally) and with special needs and abilities. But the purpose of the total man, whatever he is or whatever he has, is to glorify God (10:31; Rv. 4:11). Thus if God gives one the gift of continence (as He had Paul) he should exercise that gift and glorify God without the distraction and obligations which come with a wife; if one does not have the gift to control himself (and most do not

have) he should glorify God within the confines of marriage. Whether to marry or remain single is one's personal choice, but to glorify God is not — that is his purpose and duty. Everything should thus be done for the glory of God. **one after this manner, and another after that.** — One able to live celibate and the other in marriage. But whether one marries or remains unmarried, it should be to God's glory.

7:8 **I say therefore to the unmarried and widows,** — MacKnight renders this, "I say, then, to the unmarried men, and to the widows." This makes good sense, especially in view of the fact that virgins at that time had little or no choice in their marriage because it was arranged for them by the parents (vv. 36-38). But it seems better here to understand it as all who are without marital attachment or obligation, including widows whose unmarried state was likely to work a financial hardship on them. **It is good** — Desirable or permissible under the present distress (v. 26; see note on v. 1). **for them if they abide even as I.** — For them to remain unmarried as Paul was. But this would be true only if they had the gift of self-control (v. 7). Thus this should not be interpreted to mean that it is best or even better for all to remain single. The next v. shows that it is better for some to marry. It is good to remain out of marriage only if one can bridle and control his desires. Paul's wish is that all could under the present distress be free from the need to marry, but he was practical enough to recognize that this was not the case (cf. 1 Tm. 5:14). To him marriage was a beautiful relationship (Eph. 5:22-33) and to prohibit it was a mark of the apostasy (1 Tm. 4:3).

7:9 **But if they cannot contain,** — But if they cannot control themselves (NIV) or practice self-restraint in the single state, they should marry. Some have the gift of self-control (v. 7; cf. Mt. 19:10-12); others do not. **let them marry:** — Let them choose a mate to whom they are willing to be bound for life, thus preventing fornication (v. 2) while permitting sexual satisfaction in purity. **for it is better to marry than to burn.** — For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion (RSV). It was better, even under the distressing circumstances of that day (v. 26), to marry than to be constantly consumed with a burning and raging desire. God made both male and female with a powerful sexual need. He provided marriage so that the need could be gratified in purity. The need is stronger in some than in others. Some have the gift of self-control — they need not marry; others live in constant need — they should marry. But the choice is left to each individual. God neither commands nor prohibits marriage, but He does demand purity. Thus if one cannot remain pure in thought and in body, that is, reasonably restrain his desires, it is better to marry.

THE LORD INSTRUCTS THE MARRIED

7:10-11 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

7:10 **And unto the married I command,** — To the people already married I give this instruction (Williams). He had given his advice to those who choose to remain single and those who would need to marry (vv. 8-9), but now he turns his attention to those already married, thus moving from advice to command. Some think the context here limits marriage to two believers, but in my judgment it includes all marriages but such as are specifically exempted (vv. 12-15; Mt. 19:9). In short, vv. 10-11 state the general rule and vv. 12-15 discuss an exception to the rule in the case of unbelievers who would choose not to continue the marriage with believers. **yet not I, but the Lord,** — The command had already been given by the Lord personally. He is simply restating what Christ taught in His personal ministry here on earth concerning the breaking of the marriage bond by divorce (Mt. 19:3-9). Paul is not making a distinction between the Lord's commands and that which was delivered through His inspired apostles. The point (both here and in v. 12) is not between the Lord's commands and Paul's opinions, an inspired and an uninspired statement, but between what the Lord had said personally and what He is now saying through His apostles. See note on v. 12. **Let not the wife depart from her husband:** — The wife must not leave her husband (BV). That is, she must not destroy the marriage by separation or divorce. Since the body of the wife belongs to the husband (vv. 3-4), she has no right to deprive him of it by separating herself from him. Separation is not an option of a Christian. As far as I can determine there is no case when a Christian would be justified in being the cause of a broken marriage. He may break the marriage when fornication has been committed by his partner (Mt. 19:9); or he may consent to the departure of an unbelieving mate (vv. 12-15), thus ending the marriage relationship when it's the unbeliever's choice. But in no case should he be the cause of the dissolution.

7:11 **But and if she depart,** — If she has separated (Moffett). If she has left her husband contrary to the command of God. **let her remain unmarried,** — She must remain unmarried (NIV). Since her separation or divorce was contrary to God's will, that is, for an unscriptural cause, she is not at liberty to marry another. And if she does remarry, contrary to the Lord's command, she commits adultery (Mt. 19:9). **or be reconciled to her husband:** — Her obligation to him, the fact that her body is his, did not change simply because she left or divorced him. She had only two options before her: she could remain unmarried (but only if she could control her passions) or she could restore the marriage by reconciliation. These are Paul's clear instructions to one who is not remarried. But what is to be done in cases where there is a second marriage after divorce? As far as I can determine, Paul gave no instructions for such cases. Under the law, if a woman divorced by her husband married another man she could never, under any circumstance, return to her former husband (Dt. 24:1-4). Under the NT system could one put away his second mate and return to the first without sin? Or would such be prohibited by the principle (not the law *per se* but the principle back of the law) of Dt. 24:1-4? Since there are no explicit instructions in the NT as to the correct procedure in such cases, we

must arrive at our conclusions by studying all the principles involved. Others may legislate in the absence of specific instructions, but I choose not to do so. **and let not the husband put away his wife.** — Let him not leave or divorce her. What has just been said of the wife is true also of the husband. They both have a divine obligation (or command from the Lord Himself) to maintain the marriage. It is vital to understand this concept, this divine obligation that is imposed upon every married Christian, in order to properly understand vv. 12-15. Since this is the subject under discussion, it is then obvious that the word bondage in v. 15 has reference, not to the marriage bond *per se*, but to the divine obligation to maintain the marriage.

BELIEVERS MARRIED TO UNBELIEVERS

7:12-15 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

7:12 **But to the rest** — Those not specifically covered (the exemptions to the general rule) in vv. 10-11, namely, the believer who is married to an unbeliever who is not willing to continue the marriage. Christians have a divine obligation to keep the marriage intact (v. 10), and if it is broken to restore it (v. 11), but there is an exception to this rule, a case in which this obligation is not imposed on the believer. No one, not even the unbeliever, has a divine right to dissolve a marriage. But unbelievers do not respect the law of God and thus the believer is not to try to force that law upon him. If the unbeliever chooses to violate God's law pertaining to marriage, the Christian, as an innocent party, is released from his obligation to maintain the marriage. **speak I, not the Lord:** — I say, not the Lord (NASV). The Lord had personally given the general rule which obligated marital partners to maintain their marriage (Mt. 19:6), but He had not personally addressed Himself to this exception. The contrast here (see v. 10) is not between an inspired command of Christ and Paul's uninspired opinion, but rather between that which the Lord had spoken personally and that which He is now speaking through His inspired apostle. Paul spoke by inspiration (2 Tm. 3:16-17; 2 Pt. 3:15-16) and he closed this chapter by reminding the Corinthians that he had the Spirit of God (v. 40). Everything he wrote was to be considered the commandments of the Lord (14:37). So it is an error of great magnitude to interpret this or any passage to mean that Paul is only expressing a human opinion. When he spoke he spoke for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:19-21). His judgments (vv. 25, 40) are the judgments of the Lord. Thus this v. is not making a distinction between divine and human commandments, but between divine commandments delivered personally by the Lord and divine commandments given through His inspired spokesman. **If any brother** — A Christian.

hath a wife that believeth not, — That is, if he is married to an unbeliever or non-Christian. **and she be pleased to dwell with him,** — If she is willing to maintain the marriage. In such marriages there are always problems, but few if any that would justify the Christian in instigating its dissolution. Whether the marriage is maintained depends on the attitude of the unbeliever, not the believer. **let him not put her away.** — Evidently the Jewish law required (at least under some circumstances) that the non-Israelite woman be put away (Ezr. 9:1-10:44). Was this to be practiced by Christians? No. The rule of no separation applies to them. The believer thus has no option from God but to maintain the marriage, except when the unbeliever departs (v. 15).

7:13 **And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.** — What was true of a Christian husband married to an unbelieving wife is also true of a Christian wife married to an unbelieving husband (see note on v. 12). The change from “Let him not put her away” in v. 12 to “Let her not leave him” here, while meaning basically the same thing, reflects the cultural status of a husband and wife at that time. The husband could send the wife away from the home but the wife could not so send the husband away. (Incidentally, Dt. 24:1-4 was probably given, not to permit divorce *per se* for every cause, but to protect the woman from this injustice. A man under the law could not just drive her out, depriving her of home and property; he had to divorce her so that she would be free to form another union and thus to establish for herself another home.) Where Christianity has gone and influenced the changing of customs and the making of civil laws, the tendency has been toward giving the woman an equal right with the man. For this we can be grateful. Thus all Christians, whether male or female, have a divine obligation to maintain their marriage. Divorce is not an option for them (except when the unbeliever is the instigator).

7:14 **For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife,** — This gives the reason why the believer is not to depart from the unbeliever, as stated in vv. 12-13. The word sanctified cannot mean the same here as in 1:2 because salvation is an individual matter — that is, the faith of one cannot produce salvation in another (cf. Ez. 18:20; Rom. 3:9, 23; 5:12; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:30; Mk. 16:16). Thus Paul does not mean that the faith of the wife will save (or bring into the benefits of covenant relationship) the unbelieving husband and children. What then does he mean by being sanctified or made holy? It seems obvious to me from the context that he has in view the marriage relationship. His point is that the marriage is not made impure just because one or the other is an unbeliever. Rather the opposite is true: God recognizes the marriage as pure. Thus it is sanctified or holy and cannot be broken by the believer. **and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband:** — What is true of the wife-husband relationship is also true of the husband-wife relationship. It is holy (Heb. 13:4). **else were your children unclean;** — Otherwise your children would be unclean (NIV). That is, if your marriage was not sanctified, your children would be the results of an illegitimate union. **but now are they**

holy. — But as it is, they are holy (NIV). The marriage is pure; the children are therefore holy — they are the fruit of a legitimate (or sanctified) union.

7:15 **But if the unbelieving depart,** — If the non-Christian leaves or divorces the believer. **let him depart.** — Let the separation stand (Williams). Let him terminate the marriage. The believer is not to try to force the unbeliever to maintain the marital duties. And in this sense the Christian must submit to the will of the non-Christian. He has no right himself (in fact, no one has the right, but unbelievers are not concerned with rights) to break up the marriage or deny the unbeliever his marital dues (vv. 2-5), but neither does he have the right to force an unbeliever to maintain the marriage (he should not if he could and he could not if he would). The continuation of the marriage depends wholly upon the will of the unbeliever and the separation must be his responsibility. It is not that the law of God pertaining to him does not apply to him, but that he does not and will not respect and adhere to that law. (Incidentally, would this not be reason enough, if properly understood, to cause a believer to refuse marriage to an unbeliever?) **A brother or a sister — Believers. is not under bondage** — Is not bound (NIV). This does not refer to the bondage of marriage *per se* but the bondage or obligation to maintain the marriage, as imposed in vv. 10-14. All married people have a divine obligation to maintain their marriage. They are always to render sexual dues to their mate (vv. 2-3); their body is not their own (v. 4); all separation must be by mutual consent and for a limited duration (v. 5); the Lord personally commanded that the bond be not broken (v. 10); if any did depart (contrary to the will of God), then they were to either be reconciled or remain unmarried (v. 11); the believer was not to depart from the unbeliever (vv. 12-14). All this shows that Paul had the obligation to maintain the marriage in mind. And when the unbeliever departs from the believer, the believer is released from that obligation, that bondage. Whether a believer in such cases is free to remarry is neither affirmed nor denied in this passage. That is not its design. And that must be learned elsewhere. But in view of what Jesus said in Mt. 19:9, I think we are forced to the conclusion that he would not be except when fornication is committed on the part of the unbeliever. This view, unlike many others that are advanced, offers absolute harmony between Jesus and Paul, and one who believes in the inspiration of every Scripture has no choice but to harmonize the two. If there is lack of harmony, it is in our theories and explanations, not in what Jesus and Paul said. Thus I reject the concept that Paul permitted a second cause (the so-called Pauline privilege), desertion, for divorce and remarriage. Jesus permitted only one (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). If Paul allowed another, he allowed more than Christ Himself. Thus I believe that any interpretation of this v. that permits a second cause for divorce and remarriage is a misinterpretation. **in such cases:** — In such circumstances (NIV). The type of situation Paul had just described, where the believer departs from the unbeliever. This necessarily implies that in other situations (such as described in vv. 2-14) believers would be in bondage — they would be under obligation to maintain the marriage. **but**

God hath called us to peace. — To live and let live in peace; not to be the cause of useless turmoil.

ACCEPTING ONE'S STATION IN LIFE

7:16-17 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? — Conceivably the believer, when the unbeliever departed (v. 15) could live in guilt and grief because he had lost his best chance to lead his mate to Christ. Paul had charged him to live in peace (v. 15). Now he comforts him by pointing out that one did not know that he could have ever saved his mate. Hence he should accept his current status and serve God in it in peace and joy. Of course the possibility is there that he could have eventually saved his mate (1 Pt. 3:1-6), but one simply cannot live his life on the basis of what might have been. Paul is not urging an effort to continue the marriage in the hope that the unbeliever may be changed, but rather that the believer accept the separation and make the most of life in view of the fact that he has departed.

7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. — Nevertheless, each should retain the place in life the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him (NIV). Just because one becomes a Christian does not mean that his previous moral obligations or marital contract is no longer binding. Indeed, if there is any change at all, they are strengthened. Thus each must order his life and service to God by that which the Lord has given him and make the most of the situations in which he finds himself. One can serve God, walk in the way of truth and right, regardless of his marital or social state, so long as the relationship is not wrong within itself. **And so ordain I in all churches.** — This is the rule I lay down in all the churches (NIV). Paul taught all Christians, whether then or now, regardless of their station in life, to serve God the best they could with what they had where they were. This is emphasized by marriage in vv. 15-16 and by circumcision and slavery in vv. 18-24. This must not be interpreted to mean that Paul is instructing Christians to remain in a sinful relationship. If it is sinful, regardless of what that relationship may be, the Christian must sever himself from it. Nor does this mean that a Christian can never change or improve his status. Christianity encourages progress. Paul is simply urging them to overcome the situations of life in which they find themselves rather than being overcome by them.

ABIDE IN YOUR CALLING

7:18-24 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing,

but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

7:18 Is any man called being circumcised? — Was a man circumcised at the time he was called? (Moffett). Had he been circumcised at the time he obeyed the gospel or became a Christian. This would be the condition of most Jews and proselytes because the law had made it a divine requirement for them (Lv. 12:3; Ex. 12:48). **let him not become uncircumcised.** — Don't try to get rid of your circumcision (Beck). He should not try to change his condition either by a surgical process or by trying to cover up the fact of it, as some Jews were accustomed to do when they were in danger or when it became a source of embarrassment to them (cf. 1 Mac. 1:15, which is an uninspired source but supports the point here made). **Is any called in uncircumcision?** — Were you uncircumcised when you were called? (Beck). The opposite of the previous statement, as would have characterized Gentiles. Should they, now that they are Christians, be circumcised? The answer: **let him not be circumcised.** — Under the gospel system circumcision has no significance or merit whatsoever (v. 19) and as a religious rite it is positively forbidden (Gal. 5:3-4). Of course if one for health reasons wishes to change his state of circumcision, he may do so without the violation of any Christian principles, so long as it is not done as a religious service. The point here is that one need not change his station in life either to become a Christian or to continue his Christian life (cf. vv. 16-17).

7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, — Being circumcised or not being circumcised has no value (Williams). Neither has any merit in the Christian system — neither will influence the favor of God (cf. Gal. 5:6; 6:15). **but the keeping of the commandments of God.** — Submitting to the revealed will of God in all things. The contrast is between circumcision and uncircumcision being nothing and the keeping of the commands of God being everything. Under the law, circumcision was a command (Ex. 12:48; Lv. 12:3) and to please Him, one had to submit to it, but not so under the NT system. One must now keep the commands of God, but circumcision of the flesh is no longer commanded. The law of which it was a part is done away (2 Cor. 3:3-16). Circumcision is now of the heart (Col. 2:11-12), not fleshly. But this does not mean that salvation is attainable without obedience. Rather the contrary is true. Paul's system of salvation by faith (Rom. 3:22; 5:1) includes obedience to all God requires in His word — obedience as the overt expression of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Without the overt expression (called "works" by James, Jas. 2:24, and "faith working through love" by Paul, Gal. 5:6) faith is imperfect (Jas. 2:22) and dead (Jas. 2:20, 26). Thus from the Biblical perspective there is perfect harmony between Paul's justification by faith and James' justification by works. Paul's word "faith" includes obedience; James' word "works" means obedience. Both faith and obedience are essential in keep-

ing the commandments of God.

7:20 Let every man abide — Remain or continue. **in the same calling wherein he was called.** — See note on v. 17, where the same principle is taught. One need not change his marital status, his circumcision or uncircumcision, or his state of slavery in order to become a Christian or to live the Christian life. Such things do not make one a Christian . . . nor prevent him from being one. This passage presupposes that the condition, situation, or relationship in which one is called is an honorable one, not sinful in and of itself. No one can follow Christ and remain in a sinful situation. Thus any condition, situation, or relationship one is in that is wrong must be abandoned when the call comes to follow Jesus. One would do inexcusable violence to the whole Bible and to the character of God Himself were he to argue that if one is called operating a gambling house, a drinking bar, a drug ring, publishing pornography, or living in an unholy sexual union that he may or should remain in such. Nothing could be farther from the thought of Paul. One must repent of or turn away from all sin when he accepts the gospel call (cf. Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30).

7:21 Art thou called being a servant? — Were you called while a slave? (NASV). That is, did the gospel call (2 Thes. 2:14) come to you when you were in the bondage of slavery? It had to many, both at Corinth and elsewhere. While the institution of slavery is obviously a grave social evil, to be a slave did not prevent one from being a Christian. And being a Christian did not mean that one was duty-bound to rebel against his bondage. The Roman Empire was, on the whole, a cruel and wicked government, but this did not mean that one would have to renounce his citizenship when he became a Christian. So it was with slavery. **care not for it:** — Don't let it trouble you (NIV). A slave could be an acceptable servant of Christ (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-24; Ti. 2:9-10). **but if thou mayest be made free,** — If the opportunity comes for you to obtain your freedom in a Christian way. **use it rather.** — Avail yourself of the opportunity (RSV). Some argue that this means that they should remain in slavery as a preferred condition, even if freedom was offered. And while it is conceded that this is a possible interpretation, I do not believe it is a likely one. It would be as sensible to argue that if one is called as a prisoner he should remain in prison, even though a pardon might be obtained; that if one is called in poverty he should remain poor, even though he might legitimately become wealthy by inheritance or industry; that if one is called in illiteracy he should remain illiterate rather than trying to improve his education. One may serve God in slavery, in prison, in illiteracy, or in poverty but I believe it is contrary to the fundamental principles of Christianity to say that one should remain in either when the opportunity for self-improvement presents itself. Thus I believe the RSV has correctly rendered Paul's thought here. This being so, it shows the design of vv. 17, 20 is to instruct one to make the most of his condition, situation, or relationship, not to lock him into it. A Christian is to be content with his lot in life (Phil. 4:11; 1 Tm. 6:8; Heb. 13:5), but this does not mean that he cannot or should not work to improve it. If one is called while he is a slave, let him

be content to serve God as a slave, but even in that contentment he is at liberty to work toward his freedom. Paul's point is that whether one is a slave or free, he is to make the best use of his call to follow Christ that his condition, situation, or relationship will permit.

7:22 **For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant,** — The slave who becomes a Christian — who is called into union with the Lord and is thereby made a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). **is the Lord's freeman:** — The Lord's freedman. He is free in the Lord (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1), freed by truth (Jn. 8:32) from sin (Rom. 6:6-7, 14, 16-18) to righteousness (Rom. 6:22).

*Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free;
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.*

— Richard Lovelace

likewise also he that is called, being free, — In the same manner, he who was free (not a slave) when he was called. **is Christ's servant.** — He is now a slave of Christ (Rom. 6:16-18). The point here is that the slave becomes free in one sense and the free becomes a slave in another. The slave does not become free in the sense that he is no longer in bondage to his master (although he is free to work toward this freedom, v. 21), and the free does not become a slave to men (cf. v. 23). In Christ one is both free and in bondage. He has the true freedom (Jn. 8:36) — freedom from the law; freedom from sin and death; freedom to be and do right; freedom to serve God acceptably. On the other hand, when the free enters into Christ he is in bondage because he surrenders his will to the will of his new Master, Jesus Christ. He dies to self so that he can live for God (Gal. 2:20). His is the bondage that makes him free in the same sense as the slave in Christ. In Christ there is no bond and free (Gal. 3:26-28) — the freedom of the slave and the slavery of the free are one and the same.

7:23 **Ye are bought with a price;** — Repeated from 6:20. Both slave and free have been purchased (redeemed from sin and death) with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; 1 Pt. 1:18-19). **be not ye the servants of men.** — Do not become slaves of men (NASV). Rather be servants of God. This does not have reference to slavery *per se*, but to the Christian's real or ultimate Owner and Master. Some were and would continue to be slaves. This was not their choice alone (cf. Phlm.). But as Christians, they were free in Christ, and all service was to be rendered unto Him. A slave was serving Christ when he served his master because the service he was rendering was in obedience to the Lord's instructions (Eph. 6:5-8). Christ must be regarded as the Christian's only Master. And, whether bond or free, he is not to be in spiritual bondage or subjection to any

man (as would be the case if they followed party leaders, cf. 1:11-13; 3:3-4).

7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide — See notes on vv. 17, 20. **with God.** — Whether married or single, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, whether slave or free, let each one who is called serve God to his full potential — that is, serve God the best he can where he is with what he has. One's station in life does not exempt or exclude him from acceptable service.

ADVICE TO THE UNMARRIED

7:25-28 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

7:25 Now concerning virgins — Young unmarried women who had kept themselves sexually pure. From the way the subject is introduced it is evident that the Corinthians had asked him some question about virgins (cf. v. 1), to which he is now to reply. **I have no commandment of the Lord:** — That is, the Lord did not address that subject personally while He was in the flesh (see notes on vv. 6, 10-12). The contrast here is not between a commandment of the Lord and Paul's personal opinion, but between that which the Lord Himself had spoken and that which Paul was delivering under the inspiration of the Spirit (Jn. 16:13). **yet I give my judgment,** — His decision arrived from some source other than the personal command of the Lord, I, along with all who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of all Scripture, believe that this means an inspired judgment (cf. v. 40; 14:37) or Spirit-directed advice (2 Cor. 8:8-10), not merely his opinion. The Scriptures do not reflect the will of men, but the will of God (2 Pt. 1:19-21). **as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.** — As one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy (NASV). By God's mercy he had received the measure of the Spirit that enabled him to faithfully deliver to them the will of the Lord on all matters pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4), even though Christ had not personally and specifically spoken on the subject. He had proven trustworthy as God's messenger.

7:26 I suppose — That is, he would give his rule or judgment (cf. v. 25). **therefore that this is good for the present distress,** — What is good for the present distress? The best answer seems to be that which is stated in v. 27 (as it was also in vv. 17, 20, and 24), namely, that a man (person) remain in the marital state in which he was called. While it is too much to expect to be able to ascertain at this late date precisely what Paul had in view by the *present distress*, it was something that would add difficulty to one with family ties, as is the case in war, famine, natural disasters, persecution, or other afflictions that at times trouble a whole nation or community of people (cf. vv. 18-31). The word

signifies some adverse circumstances confronting the Corinthians (cf. Luke 21:23). Jesus said, of the destruction of Jerusalem, "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days" (Mt. 24:19). It would be a time of distress for all and that distress would be more severe on a pregnant woman and one with a small child. Paul may have had some similar event in mind here. **I say, that it is good for a man so to be.** — That it is good for a man to be as he is (ASV). It is good for a man (meaning a person, whether virgin, unmarried men, or the married, both men and women) to remain in his present state. The NIV renders the whole v.: "Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are."

7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. — Are you married? Do not seek a divorce (NIV). If you are already married, the present distress (v. 26) is no reason for you to put away your mate. Hardships do not cancel contracts, especially the marriage contract. **Art thou loosed from a wife?** — If you are not married. The context favors this being nothing more than unmarried men, in contrast with virgins (young unmarried women), with no reference to a previous marital bond. But if it does have reference to a previous marriage, then it must mean one whose mate is dead (Rom. 7:1-4) or one who has been Scripturally divorced (Mt. 5:32; 19:9) since v. 28 shows that he has a right to marry (or remarry as the case may be). Only those who have never been married, those whose mates are dead, or those who have been Scripturally divorced have a right to marry, and anyone who marries without a Scriptural right must do so in sin. But here is one who has a right to marry without sin. The conclusion is inevitable: here is one who has never been married, one whose mate is dead, or one who has been Scripturally divorced. **seek not a wife.** — Do not seek marriage (RSV). If you are free from marital ties (whether by being single, by death, or by a Scriptural divorce) then under the prevailing conditions do not seek marriage. Paul's point here seems to be the same as in vv. 17, 20, 24, namely, let both the married and the unmarried remain as they are.

7:28 But and if thou marry, — But if you should marry (NASV). Those only who have a Scriptural right to marry (see v. 27), the unmarried, one whose mate is dead, and the Scripturally divorced. **thou hast not sinned;** — They have violated no divine law. Paul is not giving a command not to marry that must be obeyed in order to please God but rather an inspired judgment of what would be good in the "present distress" (v. 26). Marriage is a choice God has left to each individual. However, if one cannot contain or keep himself pure, he should marry (v. 9), even if it means more trouble in this life. **and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned.** — What is true of all others who have a right to marry is also true of virgins. **Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh:** — Greater afflictions and difficulties in the crisis which faced them (see note on v. 26). **but I spare you.** — And I am trying to spare you this (Williams). His concern was to make their burden as light as possible.

USING ONE'S STATION WISELY

7:29-31 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

7:29 **But this I say, brethren,** — I tell you this, brothers (NIV). He turns from addressing special groups, such as virgins, to give the following instructions to the whole church. **the time is short:** — The time has been cut short (Williams) or shortened. This seems to have reference to a period of time bounded on both ends, that is, the ends have been compressed closer together. But what period of time? There are three possibilities: (1) the time of the present distress (v. 26); (2) the time before death would overtake them; (3) the time between then and the second coming of Christ. Regardless of which possibility one might accept, the time is short and Paul's point is to urge Christians to make the most of it in God's service. There was no time to waste — the ends had been compressed together. Thus they were to make haste to redeem it (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). Many accept the third possibility and so interpret it to mean that Paul believes (and thus taught) that Christ would be coming within a short time. But this interpretation cannot be correct because the Bible everywhere teaches that no one knows the time of His coming (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32). In fact, the Bible teaches that He will come as a thief in the night (1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Pt. 3:10). Just as a thief does not give signs of his coming, the Bible gives no signs, hidden or otherwise, of the second advent. All the NT writers taught the fact of His coming (e.g., 1 Thes. 4:15-18), but the time was not revealed to any of them. This simply means that the Bible does not reveal the time of Christ's coming. None of them taught that it would be in their lifetime. Had they done so, they would have been wrong; had they been wrong, they could not have been inspired; if they were not inspired, the NT is a human book; if the NT is a human book, we are all lost without hope. The third possibility must therefore be rejected. The second has nothing in the context to support it and to say that Paul was urging them to live more devotedly because God had cut their lives short by planning for them an early death does not commend it to our minds, and I see not how it would have done so to theirs. This leaves only the first possibility, which I believe is the correct one. Either he is pointing to the shortness of the time before the distress begins or else to the shortened time before it ends. And since v. 26 implies that the distress was presently upon them, I would think he is pointing to its end. But regardless of whether the beginning or the end is in view, the distress would not last forever and they should endure its hardships with hope. That is, they should make the most of the time in God's service. **it remaineth,** — So that from now on (NASV). That is, what time remains should be used to its fullest advantage. **that both they that have wives** — Those who are married. **be as though**

they had none; — Those who have wives should live as if they had none (NIV). This does not mean that they were to neglect their marital duties (vv. 3-11), but rather to encourage them to live as devotedly to God as if they were single (cf. vv. 33-35) and were not confronted with the extra hardships the marital state would impose upon them at that time.

7:30-31 **And they that weep,** — Those who mourn (NIV). They mourn because they live under the burden of the persecution or whatever the “present distress” of v. 26 might have been (cf. Mt. 5:10-12) or the increased difficulties because of their station in life (cf. Mt. 5:4). **as though they wept not;** — That is, they were to live as though they were not under an increased burden. **and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;** — The opposite of those who mourn. They do not have the increased difficulties, but a Christian’s devotion to Christ should remain the same whether he mourns or rejoices. **and they that buy,** — Those who have been blessed with worldly goods. **as though they possessed not;** — As though they did not own a thing (Williams). 7:31 **And they that use this world,** — The present order of things, whether they be concrete (the material things) or abstract (ideas). God made all things and all things are properly used when used for the purpose for which He made them. **as not abusing it:** — Things are abused (not used to their fullest) when they are used for something other than their creative purpose. It is difficult to determine the precise thought here, but in view of the concluding statement of this v. the BV’s rendering commends itself: “And those who make use of the world as if they had no use for it.” **for the fashion** — The form or outward order. **of this world passeth away.** — As in a stage play where there is a rapid shift from one scene to another, everything of a temporal nature is in constant change. The curtain will soon drop on all the current orders or forms of this world. As I see it, the point in vv. 29-31 is that one should not be overly affected in his service to God by the things of this life: for they are all swiftly passing. Rather everything should be used wisely to God’s glory and man’s salvation (Col. 3:1-2).

DIVIDED VS. UNDIVIDED CONCERN

7:32-35 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

7:32 **But I would have you without carefulness.** — But I want you to be free from concern (NASV). That is, free from the added anxieties of the marital state (which would be intensified by the “present distress” of v. 26). **He that is unmarried** — One who does not have the added responsibilities of a

wife and family. **careth for the things that belong to the Lord**, — Is concerned about the Lord's affairs (NIV). Things that pertain to the Lord in the salvation of human souls, His will, His work, and His cause. **how he may please the Lord**: — That is, have an undivided concern (v. 34, NASV) for the things of the Lord under the circumstances. I do not think that Paul is saying, as a general rule, the unmarried are more devoted to the Lord than the married. In my experience (and perhaps in Paul's also, cf. Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 18:24-26, and the fact that he himself instructed that elders must be the husband of one wife, 1 Tm. 3:2) the opposite seems to be the case. But he is saying that, in times of distress, the unmarried do not have as many encumbrances to be concerned about as the married. A married man must be concerned with the care and welfare of his wife and children (and that care is a thing of the Lord for him) as well as the church and its welfare. The unmarried do not have these additional responsibilities and anxieties. Hence, his concern is undivided. This section, vv. 32-35, should be applied only in times of persecution and distress and not as a general rule for happier and more settled times.

7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, — But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world (NIV). The things of this world have no reference to sinful things or worldliness but are in contrast with the things of the Lord of v. 32. The things of the Lord are eternal things; the things of the world are temporal, such as providing for and protecting one's family (things not wrong within themselves, but are in fact necessary because one cannot please God without doing his duty to his marital mate). **how he may please his wife**. — That is, in times of distress his concern is not undivided — he must consider both the Lord and his mate. In such times the unmarried have only one concern — the things of the Lord pertaining to himself; the married have an additional concern — the things which pertain to his family. And many of the things which pertain to the family (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) are temporal in nature. See note on v. 32.

7:34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. — The same difference exists between a wife (a married woman) and a virgin (probably any unmarried woman, whether virgin, widow, or divorcee) that exists between a married and an unmarried man, namely, the concern of the wife must be divided (see ASV) while that of the unmarried can remain undivided. See note on vv. 32-33. **The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord**, — She has an undivided concern. She is not burdened with the affairs of a family in time of distress. **that she may be holy both in body and in spirit**: — She has a single concern and can be devoted to the Lord in all her services. See note on v. 32. **but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband**. — See note on v. 33.

7:35 And this I speak for your own profit; — I am saying this for your own good (NIV). That which he had said about the status of the unmarried in distinction with the married (vv. 25-34, but especially 32-34) was said for their best interest, to prevent them from having additional burdens in the time of

distress (v. 28). As are the previous verses, this is addressed to unusual times, and instructions given to be applied in such times should not be generally or indiscriminately applied in other times and circumstances. **not that I may cast a snare upon you**, — Not to throw a noose over you (BV). He had no desire to tie them up with a slip-knot so as to force them to forego marriage. They still had an unfettered choice, although it was Paul's conclusion that under the circumstance it would be better for one to remain single (v. 40), providing he could contain (v. 9). **but for that which is comely**, — But to promote what is seemly (NASV) or that which is fitting under the circumstances. **and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction**. — That you may be able to serve the Lord with an undivided concern and without the distraction of family obligations.

VIRGIN DAUGHTERS

7:36-38 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

7:36 **But if any man** — Now if a father (Williams). At Corinth, as in most ancient societies and perhaps in some modern ones, the father controlled the marriage of his daughters, either with or without their consent. Although some see difficulty in it, in my judgment, the fact that Paul is here addressing the father-daughter relationship can admit of little or no doubt. The alternatives to this either do not fit the context or else violate other Scriptures. **think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin**, — Thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter (NASV). If the father is convinced that his behavior is disgraceful in failing to permit the marriage of his daughter (perhaps to protect her from the added burdens at that time of distress) and is doing her an injustice or subjecting her to dangerous sexual temptations, he should let her marry. The hardships of marriage could not outweigh the risk of immorality. **if she pass the flower of her age**, — If she should be of full age (NASV) or if she has reached sexual maturity and her years of youth are passing. **and need so require**, — And if it must be so (NASV). If her need is such that she cannot contain (v. 9), such that it places her in danger of immorality, and she desires to marry. **let him do what he will, he sinneth not**: — He will not sin if he proceeds to do his duty by giving her in marriage and thereby fill her needs. **let them marry**. — Let them (the plural is used here because it takes two to marry) form a union in purity: for it is better to marry than to burn with desire (v. 9). Thus neither the one who marries (v. 28) nor the one (father) who gives her in marriage does wrong.

7:37 **Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart**, — He is firm in his determination to protect his daughter from the additional hardships

that would be imposed upon her by marriage in that time of distress. He is thus thinking of her welfare rather than his own — he is more concerned about her than he is the added inconvenience and expense of keeping her in his own household. **having no necessity**, — Being under no constraint (NASV). His daughter, unlike the one in v. 36, is able to contain, having no desire or need to marry, and this leaves him free of any constraint to make his decision. In other words, his decision is not rendered because of needs that would force him to act contrary to his judgment. **but hath power over his own will**, — He is free to choose. The decision is not forced upon him by the sexual needs of his daughter, that is, he decides himself what is best for her and he can make the decision in keeping with his own judgment rather than being forced to it by the circumstances of her need or the danger of subjecting her to temptation. **and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin**, — He has made the decision to keep his daughter free from the marriage bond. **doeth well**. — Because he has acted proper toward his daughter, his decision is an excellent one and will prove advantageous under the circumstances.

7:38 **So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well**; — And so the man who gives his daughter in marriage does what is right (Williams). The father of v. 36 (see note there) makes an excellent decision in giving his daughter in marriage (the expression “giveth her in marriage” refers to the action of a father, not to that of a bridegroom) because her need outweighs the burden of taking on marital responsibility. **but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better**. — The father of v. 37 (see note there) makes a more excellent decision because she has no pressing need to marry and he can therefore prevent her from having to bear the additional burdens of the time.

THE REMARRIAGE OF WIDOWS

7:39-40 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

7:39 **The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth**; — The marital bond remains in effect as long as her husband lives and she is thus not free to marry again. Marriage is a lifelong contract. “By the law” is omitted by later translations on textual grounds, but it is found in Rom. 7:1-4. **but if her husband be dead**, — If he dies that changes the whole situation. Death ends the marital bond. **she is at liberty to be married to whom she will**; — Her marital obligations are as if they had never been. She is therefore free to form another union. And unlike the virgins (vv. 36-38), and probably unlike her first marriage, she could make her own choice as to whom she would marry. And because it is by her own choice, she is responsible for her actions. This means that in marrying again she must not forget the fact that she is a Christian . . . she is in union with Christ. This concept is important in considering properly the modifying phrase which follows. **only in the Lord**. — Only in

a Christian way (Williams). This usually means one who is in union with Christ (Jn. 14:20; 2 Cor. 5:17), one who is in covenant relationship with Him (cf. Rom. 8:1; Col. 2:3-11), or one who has died to self and lives for Christ (Gal. 2:20). Hence, a Christian. The problem here is not with the meaning of the phrase itself but who or what it modifies. There are two possible views: (1) Some understand it to modify the man whom she is marrying — that is, he must be a Christian. (2) Others understand it as a modifier of the verb “to be married,” in which case it may mean that she must marry in a manner consistent with her relationship with Christ. In other words, she must marry as a Christian (she must not cease following Christ in order to marry). The first view seems to be the more natural one (it is the concept one ordinarily gets upon first reading the verse), but further consideration soon reveals the difficulty in practicing it universally. For example, on the mission field Christians are often so few and so far apart that any available Christian man suitable for a Christian widow might not be found for hundreds of miles (maybe not until another country or continent) and the chances of them meeting are remote indeed. Yet the widow, for purity’s sake, may have a pressing need to marry (v. 9). I knew of one such widow. After she had married a non-Christian (who by her influence later became a strong Christian leader) she said, “There were no Christian men available and I decided that if marrying a non-Christian was wrong, I would rather be lost for marrying than for lusting.” Of course apparent impracticalities do not change what the verse teaches, but they do weigh heavily against one interpretation if there is another that appears to be just as reasonable. And in this case, I believe the second view offers us, not just a reasonable alternative, but a more reasonable and harmonious one. The context is concerned with the responsibilities of marriage in distressful times, not with the mate with whom one might choose to share those times. It stands to reason then that Paul means that the widow (or any other Christian who must make the choice for himself) must marry as a Christian, recognizing that she is in union with Christ, that she belongs to the Lord, and that all her actions must reflect this fact. This does not deny that such actions might require her to marry only a Christian, but (if the second view is the correct one, and it seems to me that it is) the Lord has not bound that upon her as an unvariable law.

7:40 **But she** — The widow of v. 39. **is happier** — More blessed. **if she so abide**, — If she stays as she is (Beck) or remains single. **after my judgment**: — His judgment (see v. 25), as often expressed in this chapter, that under the circumstances faced by the Christians at that time (v. 26), it was better to be domestically unattached (cf. vv. 32-34) than to have the additional responsibilities of a family. While this judgment was delivered by inspiration (14:37) and one would be better off to abide by it in times of distress, it was not bound on anyone as absolute law and in all probability was meant only to those who had the gift of God to contain sexual urges (cf. vv. 7-9; 1 Tm. 5:11-14). To marry or to remain unfettered, for them, was not a choice between right and wrong but between what was better and what was best under the circum-

stances. **and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.** — A mild expression of the fact that he spoke (or wrote) under the directions of the HS (2 Pt. 1:20-21; 2 Tm. 3:16-17). What he has said is exceedingly higher than mere human opinion.

1 CORINTHIANS 8

THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS

8:1-3 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

8:1 **Now as touching things offered unto idols,** — Things which had been a sacrificial offering to what the heathen considered deities but what Paul here calls idols. Paul goes to another question the Corinthians had asked him. While we do not have the question, it may have been something to the effect, “On what occasions may meats sacrificed to idols be eaten and on what occasions is it prohibited?” Or maybe, “In view of the apostolic injunction, ‘abstain from things offered to idols’ (Acts 15:29), is it sinful to eat meats which have been so offered if one has no knowledge of it (cf. vv. 4-7) or if it is purchased in the open market (10:25) or if eaten at a feast or in the home of a friend (10:27)?” The question was certainly a vital one for them, even though it has little relevance for us today (except for the principles involved). There were public festivals in which the eating of meats which had served as sacrifice to idols was a part. And besides this, the parts left over from the sacrifice (which was the greater part), when not fully eaten by the worshippers, made its way into homes and to the market. It was therefore imperative for them to know whether the meat was polluted *per se* by having been used as a sacrifice. It was not. Thus the apostolic injunction prohibited the eating of things sacrificed to idols only when the eating honored the idol or recognized it as an object worthy of worship, which, when so recognized, Paul also prohibits (10:28). The meat *per se* does not carry with it the pollution of idols. **we know that we all have knowledge.** — We are aware that all have come to this knowledge. Every Christian has learned that an idol is nothing (v. 4) — that it has no power, offers no blessings, and deserves no honor. It seems that the Corinthians may have been saying, “An idol is nothing — that we all know. Thus it can be no harm for one with this knowledge to eat to it. Since it is nothing it can mean nothing to eat a sacrificial offering to it.” But if so, they were wrong (when eaten in the sense prohibited by the apostolic injunction). This may explain the next clause, which is admittedly a difficult transition of thought. **Knowledge puffeth up,** — Makes one arrogant, self-conceited, full of airs, as a balloon. Such knowledge puts one in danger of over-inflating his ego and causes him to trust in his own

understanding (Prv. 3:5). He becomes a know-it-all (one of the hardest persons in the world to endure). While a Christian should have knowledge (knowledge of God and His will), it should humble him rather than puff him up (4:7). **but charity edifieth.** — That is, love builds up. Love which humbles (the love of God in one's heart that makes him concerned with the welfare of his brethren) is more vital than a knowledge which puffs up (knowledge that exalts itself to such a high plane that it can ridicule the ignorance of others and eat sacrificed things at the expense of their conscience) (cf. 10:28-31).

8:2 **And if any man think that he knoweth any thing,** — If any is presumptuous enough to think he has (probably from his own resources and understanding) already acquired all the knowledge he needs (a full and complete knowledge), if he thinks he continues to know enough and has no need to learn more, on anything (the context puts this in the setting of things pertaining to sacrifices offered to idols). **he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.** — He still has something to learn (Beck). His knowledge (probably because of its source) is deficient. It seems that some of the Corinthians thought that because of their knowledge that an idol is nothing, they could eat meats sacrificed to idols without doing harm to their faith in Christ, and probably even if it violated the conscience of a weak brother (v. 9). Paul's answer is both yes and no. Yes, they could eat such meats providing it was served in a home or bought in the market (thus not associated with idol worship and did not lead others astray). No, if the meat was being eaten in honor or recognition (worship) of idols. The meat *per se* was not polluted by having been offered. The wrong or right then would have to be determined on the grounds of the purpose for or the circumstances under which it was eaten.

8:3 **But if any man love God,** — If his affection for God is permeated with the wisdom that is from above (Jas. 3:17). A love for God, a reverent respect for creative powers — that is a recognition of the Creator/creature relationship — is the foundation of all proper and useful learning (Ps. 111:10; Prv. 1:7; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26; 15:33). **the same** — The one who loves God. **is known of him.** — Is known by him (ASV). God knows those who are His (2 Tm. 2:19). This is more than just knowing God. I was in the state of Georgia in a meeting during the time Jimmy Carter was President. While visiting in the home of a family who were members of the church, the teenage son proudly showed me his scrapbook. One of his most prized possessions was a handwritten note from the President, thanking him for some service rendered. Now millions of teenagers knew Jimmy Carter (at least at a distance), but here was one known by him. This gave him a distinction that only a few enjoyed. But it should be far more meaningful for us, if we love God, to know that God knows us — knows our hearts, our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

8:4-6 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there

be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, — See note on v. 1. we know that an idol is nothing in the world, — We all know that no idol has any real existence (Goodspeed). It is a non-entity, having no power, no life, no being beyond the dead material from which it is made. That is, there is no deity in all the universe that is represented by the image. The image is there but the god it represents is nothing but the imagination of man. Thus the image represents nothing, a lie (Jer. 10:14). Idolatry is the folly of follies. Or as Isaiah says, “is profitable for nothing” (Is. 44:10). He goes on to ridicule it by saying a smith fashions the images with a hammer and a carpenter with rule, line, plane, and compass makes them after the figure of a man. He cuts down a cedar, cypress, or oak and burns part of it to warm himself and to cook his meals and uses the remainder to make a god, before whom he bows in worship and prays for deliverance (Is. 44:12-17). This adoration is rendered to nothing but the stock of a tree (Is. 44:19), and thus turns the glory that belongs to God to a corruptible image (Rom. 1:22-25). He who worships (or recognizes) idols must abandon both revelation and reason. **and that there is none other God but one. —** And that there is no God but one (NASV). That one God is the creator God, the one who made heaven and earth and all things therein (Acts 17:24) — the maker of the material from which the idols are made! God is one (Dt. 6:4; Is. 44:6, 8) and He will not share His glory with another (much less a non-entity): for everything else that is was made by His hands. It is the creature, and the creature can never equal the Creator.

8:5 For though there be that are called gods, — For even if there are so-called gods (NASV). The best way to understand this is as a concession (though not true, as seen from v. 4) for argument’s sake. Thus, even if there are gods so-called. **whether in heaven or in earth, —** Whether the so-called god dwells in heaven (as the major deities, such as Jupiter and Mercury) or on earth (as the lesser deities of land, sea, forest). However the distinction might be between the image (which was present, on earth) and the deity it was supposed to represent (which dwelled in heaven or elsewhere). **(as there be gods many, and lords many,)** — Indeed, there were many from the heathen perspective, but Paul concedes this, not because it is true, but to make the point that even if it were true, for Christians there is only one God and one Lord (v. 6).

8:6 But to us — Yet for us (NIV). Christians, those who had renounced idols and were following the risen Christ. To them — **there is but one God, —** The divine source of all things. Even if there were many gods and many lords (which in reality there were not, but he had granted this for argument’s sake in v. 5), to Christians there is only *one*. He is the living God who made heaven and

earth and all things therein. **the Father**, — Jehovah, the true deity from which all things come. **of whom are all things**, — Who is the source of all things (Williams). All things, both visible and invisible, both in heaven and in earth (Gn. 1:1), have their origin in Him. **and we in him**; — And we exist for Him (NASV). We were made for Him, for His glory and possession, **and one Lord Jesus Christ**, — The virgin-born Son of God (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18-25), our Lord (Acts 2:36) and Savior (Mt. 1:21). While Paul granted for the sake of argument that there were lords many (products of man's imagination and erroneously served by him), there is only one true Lord to whom Christians owe allegiance. He is Lord (on His part) by right of both creation and redemption; He is Lord (on our part) by submission and obedience. **by whom are all things**, — Through whom everything was made (Williams). He was the active agent in creation (Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3). **and we by him**. — And through whom we exist (RSV). It is through Him that we have both our being and our redemption (cf. Rom. 11:36).

EATING WITH A WEAK CONSCIENCE

8:7-8 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

8:7 **Howbeit** — However (NASV). **there is not in every man that knowledge**: — The knowledge that there is but one God and one Lord and that idols have no real existence — that they are nothing (v. 4). It seems that some of the pagan converts still had a superstitious fear of idols, even though they acknowledged that to Christians there was but one God. That fear was a hangover from the past (just as some Christians today have superstitious fears of black cats, the number 13, and scores of other things). **for some** — Not all by any means. These were exceptions to the general rule stated in v. 1. **with conscience of the idol** — Through being long accustomed to idols (Goodspeed). Because of long practice, they had been unable to completely rid themselves of their past association with and fear of idols. This problem can be illustrated by a fear of a nephew of mine. Before he became a Christian he had a great fear of ghosts. I taught him that his fear was unfounded. He made good progress in Christian growth, but one day a year or so after he became a Christian, he expressed fear again of ghosts. I said to him, "There are no such things as ghosts in the sense that you fear them." He replied, "I know that, but I am afraid of them anyway." **unto this hour** — Unto the present or until now. **eat it as a thing offered unto an idol**; — Eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol (NASV). In their own minds they saw it as a sacrifice recognizing the idol as a god (who in reality did not exist). **and their conscience being weak** — Not being enlightened with a full knowledge. **is defiled**. — Corrupted or violated. They see the meat as being sacrificed to idols, they believe that it is

wrong to eat such, but they eat it anyway. They thus violate their conscience. He who does a thing believing it is wrong, though the thing itself may not be wrong *per se*, is condemned (Rom. 14:23).

8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: — It will not recommend or bring us nearer to Him, that is, it does not affect our standing with Him. Food is not the basis upon which one is accepted or rejected by God — it is not the means by which one's standing with Him is determined (Rom. 14:17). **for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.** — We lose nothing by not eating and gain nothing by eating (Beck). Neither the eating of meat nor the lack of it makes one more or less spiritual. Food is for the benefit of the body (6:13), not for one's spiritual growth. Thus eating meat (food) is immaterial as far as our relationship with God is concerned — neither eating nor not eating brings us into favor or disfavor with Him. The eating of meat is therefore an indifferent matter (for a lengthy discussion of the principle pertaining to indifferent matters, see Rom. 14). While I think I have here given the sense of the v., it may be that Paul said this for the benefit of the weak brother who may have thought he was compelled to eat the meat (in violation of his conscience) in order to be socially accepted and because to refuse on the grounds of a weak conscience might limit the liberty of the strong. At any rate, his point is that one is not worse for not eating nor is he better for eating. Eating or not eating are not services rendered to God; hence, they do not affect one's relationship with Him.

LIBERTY AND THE WEAK BROTHER

8:9-13 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

8:9 But take heed — Be careful (NIV). While one's relationship to God is not affected (v. 8) by eating or not eating meat, his relationship with his brethren may be. One must live in such a way as to edify, not destroy, other children of God. Or as John Donne put it, "No man is an island, entire of itself." **lest by any means this liberty of your's** — That this right of yours (Goodspeed). The liberty to eat meat which had been offered to idols (when the eating did not honor or recognize the false deity involved). In Christ, Christians have liberty from the law (Gal. 5:1-4), from human righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4), but especially from sin (Rom. 6:7). But here Paul has in mind liberty in indifferent matters (as in Rom. 14). But even in that we must recognize that liberty is always from sin, never liberty to sin. No one should be guilty of trying to justify indulgence in wrongdoing or a departure from Scriptural authority with the cry of liberty. Where there is liberty (in the sense here used) there is a

choice, but there is never a choice with a Christian when right and wrong are involved. When a choice is involved (in indifferent matters) it may be more prudent to forego than to practice. **become a stumblingblock** — A means of hindrance or a cause to sin. The Christian had a right to eat meats offered to idols, but if his eating it led a weak brother to sin, to violate his conscience (that is to eat with a superstitious regard for idols, knowing that such was wrong, v. 7), he should, out of love and respect for him, refrain from eating. His brother's soul should mean more to him than the eating of meat (v. 13). **to them that are weak.** — Those who, for a lack of knowledge, have scruples about eating.

8:10 **For if any man** — Anyone with a weak conscience (v. 9). **see thee which hast knowledge** — A person of enlightened mind (Moffett). The knowledge that an idol is nothing and that there is but one God and one Lord (vv. 4-6). **sit at meat in the idol's temple,** — Eating in the banqueting hall of the house of idols. The weak does not have the full knowledge to distinguish between eating meats offered to idols (with no regard whatsoever for the idol) and in eating meat in worship to the idols. They are called weak because they have not been enlightened enough to make this distinction. Thus when they eat meat offered to idols (and consequently when they see the strong eating meat in the halls of idols they assume the same is true of them) they are worshipping (or recognizing) the idol. And they had knowledge enough to know that this was wrong (Acts 15:28-29). In short, when the weak sees the strong eating in the idol's temple, he will assume that the strong is eating it in recognition of the idol (because he is eating it in the idol's temple). This would not be the case but the weak brother would not have the knowledge to judge otherwise. Paul is here concerned with what the action of the strong might do to the weak, but in such instances the strong is not without danger, as will be seen in 10:14-22. **shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat** — He will be built up or encouraged to eat in recognition (at least to some degree, v. 7) of idols and contrary to his conscience. **those things which are offered to idols;** — The weak are led to eat in violation of their conscience. The action of the strong (in doing what he may have the liberty to do) may lead the weak to follow his example and do that which will destroy him. For this reason (and others) no Christian should ever indulge in anything that might cause onlookers to conclude that he is engaged in sin.

8:11 **And through thy knowledge** — The truth about both God and idols (vv. 4-6) that enabled them to eat meats (even in the banqueting hall of the idol's house) sacrificed to idols without recognizing idols as an object of veneration. They were eating meat as meat and not as an act of worship (or service) to the gods. The former was permissible (under certain conditions); the latter was prohibited. This distinction was made by those with knowledge (it was not made by the weak) then and it must be made by us in numerous things now, such as washing hands, pots, and pans (Mk. 7:1-7), the observing of holidays, such as the sabbath with the early Jewish Christians and Christmas

among us (Gal. 4:10-11), and circumcision. The early Jewish Christians obviously continued to keep the sabbath, which was permissible just so long as they attached no religious significance to it (Rom. 14:5-6). One may be circumcised today for health or other reasons, but when it is done as a religious exercise it is an abandonment of the Christian system (Gal. 5:3-4). Strong Christians can make this distinction; weak Christians cannot always do so. **shall the weak brother perish**, — He is destroyed spiritually. He is led by the example of the one with knowledge (certainly a sorry use of superior knowledge) to eat meats offered to idols. But since the weak cannot make the distinction between eating and worshipping, he is thus led to eat as a religious service (worship) to idols. In this he sins. And sin produces death (Rom. 6:23). Thus by the knowledge of the strong the weak is led to the destruction of his soul's salvation. Those who believe and teach, contrary to truth, that it is impossible for a child of God to so sin as to be lost have a headache with this v. Paul's thoughts are: Christ died to save the weak. But when the strong influences the weak to violate his conscience he sins and thus destroys the very thing for which Christ died — the effects of the death of Christ are no longer his and as a result his right standing with God is destroyed. Thus the weak may be lost (perish) because of a bad example of the strong. **for whom Christ died?** — Christ died for the weak as well as the strong. The strong therefore should never act in such a way as to lead the weak to annul the death of Christ in their behalf.

8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, — When by your example (of eating meats sacrificed to idols in the idol's temple) you lead brethren with a weak conscience to eat contrary to what they believe is right and thus cause them to sin, you sin against them. Rather than using your knowledge to help guide and save them through loving concern, you will be using it to destroy them. **and wound their weak conscience**, — When you lead them to violate their conscience — to eat when they believe it is wrong to eat (Rom. 14:23) — you give their conscience a beating. **ye sin against Christ**. — Christ died to save them from sin (v. 11). But you, by your example, are leading them to invalidate the death of Christ in their behalf. In doing so, you sin against them. But this is not the full extent of the sin: any sin against a brother is also a sin against Christ (Mt. 25:40; Acts 9:5).

8:13 Wherefore, — Therefore (NASV) or for the reason given in vv. 9-12. **if meat make my brother to offend**, — To stumble, fall, or sin. The weak stumbles or falls into sin because he yields to the temptation to follow the example of the strong by eating sacrificed meats contrary to his conscience (vv. 10-11). The eating of meat is not wrong *per se*, but the weak could not make the distinction between eating as a social or nutritional act and as an act of worship (or recognition) of the idol to which it had been sacrificed. There was a distinction but his lack of knowledge prevented him from seeing and practicing it. **I will eat no flesh while the world standeth**, — I will never, no never, eat meat again (Williams). Paul's concern for his brethren was so great, his attitude so right, that he would rather give up meat (or anything else in this

category) for the whole of his life (not just on a single occasion) than to see a weak brother perish. This should be the attitude of every Christian, both then and now. **lest I make my brother to offend.** — Lest a weak brother be led into sin and thus destroyed by the exercise of liberty. This established a great principle, namely, that a strong Christian should do nothing (in the sphere of liberty) that would lead his weaker brethren to fall into sin. The principle has as wide an application in the modern world as it did in the ancient.

1 CORINTHIANS 9

This chapter may have reference to and be an illustration of the principle stated in 8:13. If so, Paul shows that he has, as a way of life, surrendered many liberties, such as eating and drinking (v. 4), marriage (v. 5), the right of support (vv. 6-7), and independent living (vv. 20-22) for the gospel's sake (v. 23). But it seems more likely to me that he introduces a new subject (although not totally unrelated to the discussion of chapter 8), namely, the right of a worker in spiritual matters (whether it be apostle or preacher) to be supported in material things.

PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

9:1-3 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

9:1 This verse is made up of four rhetorical questions, each demanding an affirmative answer. **Am I not an apostle?** — Yes. He had opened the letter with the claim that he was a called apostle (1:1) writing to called saints (1:2). While his apostleship had evidently been questioned, and while he was not one of the original 12, he had been divinely called (Acts 9:15-17, 27; 22:14-15; 2 Cor. 12:12), or as he put it, “as of one born out of due season” (15:8). **am I not free?** — Yes. Free as opposed to slavery. As a free man he had the right to demand wages. But he was also free from sin and thus free to preach the gospel to others at his own expense if he so desired. This was a matter of personal choice. While he could rightly lay claim to support from the church, he also had the liberty to earn his livelihood by working with his own hands. **have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?** — Yes. To be an apostle and a witness of the resurrection it was necessary for him to have seen the Lord after He arose from the dead (15:8; Acts 1:22). Paul may have seen Jesus while He lived in the flesh and walked among men, but if so, this has no reference to such. This means that he had seen the risen Christ. It thus has reference to the Damascus road experience (Acts 9:22, 26) and perhaps to subsequent appearances. **are not ye my work in the Lord?** — Yes. The fact that they were Christians was the result of his work. That is, they were the spiritual workmanship of his apostolic commission. He had preached to them (Acts 18) the gospel he had re-

ceived from the Lord (11:23). They had been converted by his preaching. This meant that if he were a false apostle then they were false Christians. The truth of the message they had believed and obeyed depended upon the genuineness of his apostleship.

9:2 **If I be not an apostle unto others**, — If I am not an apostle to other people (Goodspeed). He was an apostle, and how others felt about it did not change the fact. But there were those who did not recognize his apostleship. His thought is that even if others did not recognize him as an apostle, the Corinthians should. **yet doubtless I am to you**: — I certainly am to you (Williams). There was no logical way they could question his apostleship and still maintain the genuineness of their Christian faith. **for the seal of mine apostleship** — You are my certificate of apostleship (BV). They were living proof, authentication, of his apostolic preaching, just as circumcision was the seal of Abraham's faith (Rom. 4:11). He did the work of an apostle among them (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Rom. 15:18-19). As a consequence they were in Christ through obedience to his message. This means essentially the same as them being his work in the Lord (v. 1). **are ye in the Lord**. — His apostleship was the means by which they were permitted to hear, believe, and obey the truth — that is, their being in the Lord, their spiritual standing before Him, depended upon Paul's apostolic commission.

9:3 **Mine answer to them that do examine me** — My defense to those who examine me (NASV). This is the argument by which he vindicated himself before those who sat in judgment of his apostleship. That is, he pointed to the church as his proof (vv. 1-2). If it was a true church then he was truly an apostle. Their spirituality was derived from and depended upon his apostolic office. **is this**, — The argument which precedes or that which follows. It may refer to either one. The KJV ties it to what follows. But it seems more likely to me that it ties to vv. 1-2, as Beck translates it, "That's how I defend myself toward those who examine me."

PAUL'S RIGHTS

9:4-6 Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

9:4 **Have we not power to eat and to drink?** — The first of three questions in this section which, as rendered by the KJV, demand an affirmative response. However, they may be translated (as Lenski does) so as to require a negative answer. But regardless of how they are worded, the point is clear that the Corinthians must concede that Paul had a lawful right to eat and drink, to lead about a wife, and to forbear working. To eat and drink here is not the food of chapter 8, but rather the right to have his livelihood supplied by the church or those who benefited from his preaching — the right to live at the church's expense (vv. 7-14). It seems that the objectors had argued that Paul could not be

an apostle because he did not take support as did other apostles.

9:5 Have we not power — Do not we have the right (BV). **to lead about** — To take along (NASV). He not only had the right to support for himself, it was a right to sufficient support for a wife and family who might accompany him in his work. **a sister**, — A believer; a Christian. **a wife**, — Wife is in apposition to sister, hence, a believer who is a wife. This establishes the fact beyond question that an apostle, or any other worker in the church, had a divine right to marry and a divine obligation to supply the needs of his family. One may choose not to exercise this right, as did Paul, but it is presumption of the highest sort for others, whether it be man or church, to bind celibacy on an apostle, preacher, missionary, or anyone else. It is one thing for one to choose the single life (cf. chapter 7), but something entirely different for man or church to bind it on him as a human law necessary to be obeyed in order to please God. One of the marks of apostasy is forbidding of marriage (1 Tm. 4:1-3). I doubt that Paul meant to say that an apostle (and consequently anyone else who spends his time in service to the church) would not have a right to take along a wife who was an unbeliever, providing he had married her before he became an apostle. It seems to me that an unbeliever might receive indirect support through her husband, who is supported by the church, but she could not be supported directly in the work (which she would not be involved in anyway). But surely no apostle, preacher, missionary, or others who devote their full time to the Lord's work would consider marrying an unbeliever or a non-Christian. Paul's point is simply that he had the right to take a believing wife with him with the full expectation that she would be supported by what he received from the church, since she would be a partner in the work. **as well as other apostles**, — Other apostles were supported by the church who had wives. **and as the brethren of the Lord**, — The four fleshly brothers (actually half-brothers) of Jesus (Mt. 13:55-56). At first they did not believe in Him (Jn. 7:5), but now they were active leaders in the church (15:7; Gal. 1:19). **and Cephas?** — Peter. But why single out Peter? Perhaps the HS looked down through time and saw the human and false system of Roman Catholicism which claims Peter as its first pope and yet denies marriage to all its clergy, including the pope. He made certain that none could deny that Peter was married. He had both a wife and a mother-in-law during the time of Christ (Mt. 8:14-15; Mk. 1:29-31). Here he is still leading her about. Thus Peter could not be a pope now and he certainly was not one then.

9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, — Or is it Barnabas and I alone (Williams)? That is, were Paul and Barnabas the only ones who, as Robertson (WP) puts it, "Do not have . . . the right not . . . to do manual labor." **have not we power to forbear working?** — A right to refrain from working (NASV). To rephrase the question to conform with the previous ones (vv. 4-5): Do we, Barnabas and I, not have the right to forbear or refrain from working? Yes. They, as fully devoted workers, did have that right. Because they had chosen to earn their own livelihood (Acts 18:3), because they exercised a right that was theirs

(vv. 4-5 and the notes there), did not in any way argue against Paul's apostleship. He had a right to be supported by the church, but he had opted to forego that right and to exercise another right — the right to support himself. This whole section (vv. 4-6) strongly implies that the other apostles were being fully supported by the church.

A WORKER'S RIGHT TO SUPPORT

9:7-14 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

9:7 This v. contains three more rhetorical questions, each demanding the answer, none. **Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?** — That is, who serves in the armed forces of his country at his own expense? None. **who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?** — Who dresses and keeps a vineyard without eating of its fruit? None. **or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?** — Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk (NIV)? None. No soldier serves without pay. No farmer grows a crop without eating from it, either directly or by exchange. A shepherd does not tend the flock without partaking of the product of the flock. The workman is worthy of his hire (Lk. 10:7; 1 Tm. 5:8). If a job done is not worth the workman's compensation, it is a job not worth doing. But preaching the gospel is the most vital, the most important, work in the world. No one should therefore conclude that a preacher worthy of his vocation, who devotes himself to the upbuilding of God's kingdom, should not be supported by the church.

9:8 **Say I these things as a man?** — Am I stating only a human rule (Beck)? Do I have no higher authority for saying this than my own judgment? No. This concept (the support of a preacher) has its origin with God and His divine law (v. 9). **or saith not the law the same also?** — The law says it — that is, the principle is found in the law of Moses (v. 9). This may imply that some Jewish Christians were objecting to the support of workers from the church treasury.

9:9 **For it is written in the law of Moses,** — Dt. 25:4; cf. 1 Tm. 5:18 where the same passage is applied to the support of elders who rule well. **Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.** — Oxen were used in various ways to tread or thresh out the grain, so that this expression undoubtedly became a picturesque proverb. Because the ox toiled

hour after hour in the threshing process, it would be brutal to muzzle him and thus prevent him from eating of the product as he worked. Thomson observed when he wrote his book, "The command of Moses not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn is literally obeyed to this day by most farmers, and you often see the oxen eating from the floor as they go round. There are niggardly peasants, however, who do muzzle the ox — enough to show the need of the command; and Paul intimates that there were some such in the Church in his day" (*The Land and the Book*, Vol. 1, pp. 153-154). This principle was taught to me as a boy. My dad was a tenant farmer. Our only means of livelihood was our share of the crops (which at times were extremely small) and a small amount derived from work on days when we were not tending the crops. Some of those working on the same farm would muzzle the horses to prevent them from eating the young tender corn. But Dad rarely did. And he quoted this v. as his reason for not doing so. **Doth God take care for oxen?** — Is God thinking in terms of oxen alone? Did He speak this through Moses for the benefit of oxen alone or was it given for man's benefit also? Of course, the principle involved was for man as well as for beast.

9:10 **Or saith he it altogether for our sakes?** — Does he not speak entirely for our sake? (RSV). What was the real reason for this law? Was it for the oxen alone or was it chiefly for man's benefit? Obviously for man as well as for the oxen. We can therefore look for the principle involved and apply it to man. If an oxen is not to be banned from eating from its labor, how much more a worker in spiritual things? **For our sakes, no doubt, this is written:** — That is, the principle underlying the law is there mainly for our benefit. **that he that ploweth should plow in hope;** — He ought to plow in the hope of partaking of the fruit of his labor. Who would plow if there was no hope of reaping? **and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.** — And the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crop (NASV). As with planting, one must reap in hope of receiving from the product of his work. It is no different with apostles and preachers: they sow spiritual seed and it is natural, right, and Scriptural for them to live from the service they render (v. 11). While one has a personal right to forego this right, as Paul did, I doubt that the church, under ordinary circumstances, has a right to withhold his salary without his consent. If a man works for the church, the church is obligated to share its material things with him. But, of course, no one who does not work should be paid (2 Thes. 3:10).

9:11 **If we have sown unto you spiritual things,** — That is, things pertaining to the Spirit. He had preached the gospel to them (sown the spiritual seed, the word of God, Lk. 8:11) and thus enabled them to reap spiritual rewards, the salvation of their souls (cf. 6:9-11). **is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?** — Earthly or material things. The contrast is not between spiritual and sinful things but between the spiritual (which Paul had sown) and the material (support which he had a right to reap). Both reason and Scripture (vv. 7-10) taught that devoted workers had a right to receive

material support from those who benefited spiritually from their sowing — from those who received the blessings of salvation as a result of their work. This was God's will then; it is no different now.

9:12 **If others be partakers of this power over you,** — If others who have a lesser claim than Paul exercise this right of support. **are not we rather?** — Do not we yet more (ASV)? That is, do we not have a stronger claim on this right than they (cf. v. 2)? **Nevertheless we have not used this power;** — Paul had exercised his right not to be supported by the church. **but suffer all things,** — We keep on bearing everything (Williams). He bore the loss of not exercising his right plus the burden of supplying his own needs. **lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.** — Rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ (RSV). Rather than taking the support to which he was entitled and thus lay himself open to the charge of being a mercenary, a charge which would place a hindrance in the path of preaching the gospel, he had foregone his right to receive from them. In this, his motives were admirable (cf. v. 18) and the work he did was unsurpassed. Every preacher should mold his attitude after him. However, we should not use him as an example to keep from sustaining preachers who spend their time in promoting spiritual things. If a preacher wishes to support himself, that is his choice, and it is commendable, providing it does not hinder him in the work of reaching the lost. But his choice should by no means establish a precedent for all preachers to follow. Were this the case, preachers would deprive the churches from the great blessing of fellowship with them in the Lord's work. When Ed Sewell was planning to go to Ecuador as the first missionary from churches of Christ from North America, he approached the church for which I was preaching and asked for financial help. I laid the plea before the leaders with my recommendation. They decided, however, to use the resources of the church closer to home. He raised the support from elsewhere and went on his journey. In a short while he had established 50 or 60 churches and baptized hundreds of people. I often reminded the church that we lost our chance to have fellowship in that great work and that others would receive the rewards that could have been ours. Every church should be, needs to be, and must be, if it pleases God, engaged in the support of preaching the gospel to the lost world. It is the right of the preacher (who does the work) to receive support; it is the obligation of the church to supply it.

9:13 **Do ye not know** — This introduces something they should know; it is public knowledge. **that they which minister about holy things** — Those (the priest and Levites) who worked in the temple under the OT system. **live of the things of the temple?** — Eat the food of the temple (NASV). The Lord made provisions for those (and their families) who devoted their full time to service in the temple to eat of the things offered (Nm. 18:8-32; Dt. 18:1-2). **and they which wait at the altar** — The priests who were constantly attending the altar service. That is, those who were always there to make the sacrificial offerings. **are partakers with the altar?** — Share in the altar gifts (BV). Only a part of the sacrifice was burned; the remainder of it went to the

priest and Levites for their support, to provide them food for themselves and their families (Nm. 18:8-32; Dt. 18:1-2). Paul had shown that a soldier, farmer, and shepherd (v. 7) all lived from the product of their work. He now shows that, under the OT administration, those devoted to religious work also lived by the service they rendered. With all these illustrations before his readers, he is ready to state his indisputable conclusion (v. 14).

9:14 **Even so** — In the same way (RSV) or by the same rule. The same principle by which the priest ate from the gifts of the altar (v. 13), ministers of the gospel are to receive their livelihood from those who benefit from the preaching (the church). **hath the Lord ordained** — Ordered (Beck), directed (BV), appointed (MacKnight), or commanded (NIV). Christ Himself appointed this as a principle that applied to His disciples when He sent them out on the limited commission (Mt. 10:9-14; Lk. 10:5-10). No one who has submitted himself to the Lordship of Jesus could deny a principle taught by Him. Thus for Christians what follows is absolutely certain: **that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.** — That is, wages should be supplied to them (by the church) just as wages are supplied to workers in other occupations by those who benefit from their labor (cf. Gal. 6:6).

9:7-14 Additional note: McGarvey and Pendleton see this section as comprising six arguments why ministers should be supported by the church. They are: (1) Wages for services is the rule of all employment (v. 7). (2) The law of Moses allowed wages for work (vv. 8-10). (3) The law of exchange demands an equivalent for value received (v. 11). (4) The concessions which they had made in supporting others with inferior claims debarred them from denying apostolic claims (v. 12). (5) Priests, whose office, like the apostolic, is purely sacred, are universally maintained by sharing in the sacrifice which they offer (v. 13). (6) Christ Himself ordained that ministers should be supported by those whom they serve (v. 14).

A WORKER'S RIGHT TO FOREGO SUPPORT

9:15-18 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

9:15 **But I** — He speaks now of himself alone. **have used none of these things:** — Never used any of these rights (Williams). That is, he had not taken the assistance that would have supplied him with the necessary things of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter (see v. 12). **neither have I written these things,** The arguments in vv. 1-14 proving that the church was under obligation to support workers in the kingdom, including himself (had he not chosen to

forego it). **that it should be so done unto me:** — This was not written in an effort to raise support for himself. It would have been easy for his enemies to use this to impugn his pure motives by saying that it was a strong hint for them to take up his financial support. (How many preachers have felt the force of this as they have taught the church its duty along these lines?) But not so. He was simply setting forth the truth on the matter and he would still forego his rights. **for it were better for me to die,** — Death was preferable to the loss of his right of choice. (In the Greek the sentence is broken off here unfinished, which has led some to connect it to that which precedes rather than that which follows. If this is correct, it means that he would rather die (for lack of assistance) than to write for his own benefit. Goodspeed brings this out by rendering it, "And I am not writing this that I may become an illustration of this; I had rather die than do that." **than that any man should make my glorying void.** — Than let anyone deprive me of this, my source of pride (Moffett). The source or grounds of his glorying was that he had preached the gospel without charge (v. 18). He would rather die than to have the grounds of this honor taken away.

9:16 **For** — This connects what follows to v. 15. **though I preach the gospel,** — If I preach the gospel (ASV) as others do, receiving financial support for that service. While many others understand this differently, it seems to me that this best fits the context as well as Paul's overall purpose. **I have nothing to glory of:** — If he had taken support for his preaching, as others had, he would have lost his grounds of glorying (see v. 15), a thing that was dearer to him than life itself. **for necessity is laid upon me;** — He did not preach for money, that is, for the financial benefits he had a right to receive, but because of an internal compulsion (cf. Acts 26:16-19; Rom. 1:14-16). This necessity should be pressed upon every preacher who occupies the pulpit. A man who will not preach without the assurance of financial remuneration is not fit to preach with it. God's messenger must be so pressed upon him that he will preach when he is not paid as well as when he is . . . and if necessary he will pay to preach. This does not mean that preachers should not be paid. Indeed not: for one would have to deny this whole chapter to deny them that right. But it does mean that their motives should be higher than the material things they have a right to expect from their work. **yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!** — Woe unto him if he did not preach . . . and he could preach no message with heaven's approval but the gospel, the glad tidings of a risen Savior (2:1-2; 15:1-4). What he is saying here is that he is constrained (both by his commission and his devotion to it) to preach the gospel and heaven's curse, as well as that of his own conscience, will rest upon him if he does not.

9:17 **For if I do this thing willingly,** — For if I do this of my own will (RSV). That is, if he had relinquished financial support voluntarily and thus accepted freely the hardships imposed thereby. In my judgment, this has no reference to preaching *per se* (as many commentators think) but rather to the motives back of surrendering his right to assistance. He surrendered that of his

own will. **I have a reward:** — I have my pay (Goodspeed). His reward for preaching the truth without charge was the grounds of his glory (v. 15), which was very dear to him and a great source of personal pride. Service pays its own rewards, and there are compensations worth far more than money. **but if against my will,** — But if compulsory (BV). If the hardships imposed upon him by his choice had been forced upon him: **a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.** — I have a stewardship intrusted to me (ASV). If he had surrendered his support involuntarily — done it because duty demanded it — he was still under obligation to discharge the trust committed to him as an apostle of Christ. Or as Beck renders it, “But if I don’t want to do it, I still have this work intrusted to me.” So regardless of his motive for foregoing his support, whether voluntary or compulsory, his obligation to preach remained the same.

9:18 **What is my reward then?** — Having surrendered his right to support, what did he receive as compensation? **Verily that,** — Just this (RSV). **when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge,** — Preach the glad tidings of salvation without cost to those who heard it. The right to forego support was the source of his personal pride (v. 15), and this conclusion (a conclusion stating, in my judgment, precisely what the whole section, vv. 16-18, is teaching) makes it all but certain that my exposition of vv. 16-17, admittedly difficult passages, is the correct one, even though v. 17 is incomplete in most texts of the original. **that I abuse not my power in the gospel.** — That is, he refrained from (at least as far as the Corinthians were concerned) taking advantage of his right to be supported by the church. While no one should use Paul’s example to insist that preachers today forego their right to be supported, many who serve churches need to ask themselves if they are abusing (taking more than full advantage) this God-given right. We fear that many do by draining the brethren for every penny they can wring out of them, by earning large sums on the side, by demanding luxuries beyond reason, etc. It seems that some are more interested in salary than in opportunities to preach the soul-saving truth of the gospel. This is exactly opposite the disposition of the apostle, whose greatest concern was to reach the lost, and in order not to hinder his progress in preaching he was willing to forego all financial dues. Today it is different. The greatest concern of many modern preachers is that they fall short in nothing, as far as salary and benefits are concerned. They are willing to forego preaching to the lost in order to guarantee their creature comforts.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

9:19-23 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

9:19 **For though I be free from all men,** — He was not dependent upon anyone for his financial subsistence and no one could, therefore, control him. But this is not the whole story: **yet have I made myself servant unto all,** — I have enslaved myself to all (BV). This was a voluntary act on his part, not something that had been forced upon him (cf. Mk. 10:43-45). He had brought himself under bondage to preach the gospel to all, both high and low, bond and free, Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 1:14). And in doing so, he conformed (when he could do so without violating or compromising the truth) to them in their social customs, peculiar characteristics, and personal sentiments (vv. 20-22). His point is that he is bound to none as a result of financial support, but he is in voluntary bondage (a slave) to all by his indebtedness to preach glad tidings to them. **that I might gain the more.** — He became one with them in their customs, characteristics, and sentiments, thereby gaining their sympathy and confidence, that their hearts might be more readily receptive to the gospel he preached. Or as Vincent (WS) quotes Edwards as saying, “He refuses payment in money that he might make the greater gain in souls.” That is, he became a slave to all that he might convert more than he could otherwise convert.

9:20 **And unto the Jews I became as a Jew,** — The first of four examples of how he became all things to all men (v. 22). He was himself a Jew (Acts 22:3; 26:5; Gal. 2:15; Phil. 3:3-6), but he had renounced the Jews’ religion for Christianity (Gal. 1:13-16; Acts 9:2-18). What he here says is that when he was among the Jews he followed their fashions, habits, and customs insofar as it involved indifferent matters. As examples, when among them he would not eat meat prohibited by the law (cf. 8:13); he circumcised Timothy so as not to offend them (Acts 16:3), and performed purifying rites in the temple (Acts 21:18-32). However, he could do this only as social or national customs, not as divine law. And when the two were confused, he drew the line, as in the case of Titus, whom he refused to circumcise because to do so would have been to compromise with those who were trying to bind the law on Christians (Gal. 2:2-5). Or as Lipscomb and Shepherd correctly observes: “Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess, he circumcised, because it was regarded as a concession. Titus he refused to circumcise, because it was demanded as a matter of obedience to the Mosaic law.” There were many things Paul could do as social customs (e.g., washing the hands before eating, Mt. 15:2-9) or national law (e.g., observing the passover, Acts 20:16) that he could not do as a religious service to God. When Hudson Taylor, the world renowned missionary, went to China, he soon decided, as a matter of expediency in reaching the Chinese, to abandon his western style of dress. He thus cut his hair in their style, darkened it, put on satin shoes, and adopted the loose garments of their choosing as his wardrobe. His son and daughter-in-law, in writing his biography says, “Everything opened up after that in a new way.” He had become all things to them that he might win the more (v. 19). Paul could clearly distinguish between that which was custom and that which was rendered as a divine service to God;

many moderns, including many Christians, cannot. **that I might gain the Jews;** — He did not agitate their prejudices so as to close their minds against the truth of the gospel. **to them that are under the law,** — The law of Moses. The second of four illustrations of how he became all things to all men. Although the law had been abolished as a religious code (2 Cor. 3:16-18; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:13-16), it still served as a civil law to the Christian Jews living in their homeland, and the non-Christians still considered it the law of both God and the land. Those who lived elsewhere were not under the law in any sense (although unbelieving Jews still considered it the law of God for them). **as under the law,** — When he was in Palestine he kept the law as a citizen of that country would keep it. Note: some texts add here: “Not being myself under the law” (ASV). That is, he was not bound by its religious codes. He did not live as under the law because the law was bound on him by God but as a voluntary act in concession to those who did live under it. **that I might gain them that are under the law;** — His stated purpose again: he did not needlessly offend or antagonize them.

9:21 **To those that are without law,** — The third illustration of how he became all things to all men. Those without law are the Gentiles (Rom. 2:14), and he may include the Jews who are citizens of other countries who are not under the Mosaic law as a civil code — no one, Jew or Gentile, is under the law religiously. **as without law,** — Without the law of Moses. That is, he did not observe it as a civil code when he was among the Gentiles. **(being not without law to God,** — He was not lawless. The law of Moses is not the only law God ever had. His moral law is always in effect and he revealed His will (His law to them) to Adam, Noah, and Abraham long before the law of Moses was given. **but under the law to Christ,)** — The new covenant law (Heb. 8:6-13). While we ordinarily have little or no problem in seeing the law of Christ (the gospel or NT system) in contradistinction to the law of Moses (the OT system), the religious world around us cannot or does not make this distinction, and even those of us who do are as likely as not to see both systems as law systems, only the new as a superior one. Many deal with this dilemma by denying that the gospel is a law. But this will not do in view of Paul’s plain statement here and elsewhere (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2). The gospel is a law — it commands, prohibits, promises blessings, and imposes penalties. Those who violate it sin (1 Jn. 3:4). We thus need to ask, “In what sense is the OT a system of law while the NT is a system of grace (Jn. 1:17) when both are laws?” One way to illustrate this is by the means of justification. The OT is a system of law *per se*, a system by which no one can be justified (Rom. 3:20); the NT is a system of grace, that is, it offers justification by means other than by law keeping *per se*. One can be justified by law only by never violating it or by paying the penalty in full. But no responsible person can live without violating the law. All have sinned (Rom. 3:9, 23; 5:12). Thus all must pay the penalty. But the penalty is death, eternal death. No one can therefore pay the penalty and live. Thus it is impossible for one to be justified under a system of law. But the gospel offers a

third means of justification, namely, the death of a substitute. Under the gospel all still sin, the penalty of sin is still death, and the penalty must be paid. But it is paid by another, the death of Christ on the cross. By this means the gospel offers forgiveness or justification without the violator personally paying the penalty (this the law could not do *per se*). The penalty is paid by the death of the only begotten Son of God. He died in the sinner's stead. So when one sins under the gospel he has a propitiation for his sins (1 Jn. 2:2). He can live because the price of sin, the penalty of death, has been paid by another, Jesus Christ the Lord. One appropriates that death to himself by obedience to the gospel (Rom. 6:16-18; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pt. 1:22). Thus under the NT system one cannot be justified without obeying the gospel (God's will or law for man in the Christian age). While it is true that we are not justified by obedience *per se*, there can be no justification without obedience. A failure to obey is to disobey. And certainly no law (not even the law of Christ) can view one justified who stands in open rebellion to it. Such is unthinkable. The death of Christ is the cause of justification; obedience is the means of it. Both are necessary. And one is not efficacious without the other. Thus the difference in the OT law and the NT law is the difference in having no means of pardon and in having the demands of law fully satisfied in the penalty being paid by another. **that I might gain them that are without law.** — His purpose: that he might give them no occasion to close their minds against his message.

9:22 **To the weak** — To the overscrupulous (Williams). For example, the Jews who had become Christians, no longer bound by the law, but whose conscience still restricted them from eating meats prohibited by the law (see Rom. 14 and my notes there) and those discussed in chapter 8 who could not eat meats sacrificed to idols, even when bought in the open market. This is the fourth and final illustration as to how he became all things to all men. **became I as weak,** — Among the weak, he became as overscrupulous himself. As in the case of meats, he would not eat out of respect for the conscience of those who could not eat (8:13). **that I might gain the weak:** — That he might gain them from their weak condition and put no stumbling block (cf. 10:32) in their path of growth and acceptable service. **I am made all things to all men,** — As the four illustrations just given (vv. 20-22) demonstrates. See note on v. 19. **that I might by all means save some.** — See note on v. 19. His greatest desire was to win souls for the Lord. This meant more to him than to exercise his liberty in the trifling concessions he made in order to assure the gospel-free course to their hearts and thus to reach his ultimate goal of gaining them for Christ.

9:23 **And this I do for the gospel's sake,** — I do it all for the sake of the gospel (RSV). He had surrendered his personal liberty in many things, had become all things to all men (v. 22), that the gospel might have free course. It was more important to him for the gospel to be preached than for his self-interest to be maintained. He lived for Christ (Gal. 2:20) and that meant his whole being was devoted to the proclamation of the divine message, God's

power to save (Rom. 1:16). **that I might be partaker thereof with you.** — So that I may share in its blessings along with the rest (Goodspeed). He did all that he did, not only to save others, but also to save himself and to secure the blessings of the gospel in his own behalf along with others. That is, he did so in order to become a joint partaker with them in the gospel's reward, salvation both now and in eternity (cf. Phil. 2:12).

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

9:24 **Know ye not** — See note on v. 13. **that they which run in a race run all,** — That in a race the runners all run (Williams). As he does here, Paul often uses the Greek games as a metaphor for the Christian life (vv. 26-27; 15:32; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tm. 2:5; 4:7-8). All Greeks were familiar with these games and nearly every city had its own racecourse or stadium. Besides the lesser ones, there were four great games: (1) The pythian at Delphic, celebrated every four years; (2) the Isthmain, at Corinth every two years; (3) the Nemean in Argolis, every three or five years; and the most famous of all, (4) the Olympic, which were held in Olympia of Elis every four years. Paul is probably thinking here of the Isthmain since it was celebrated at the Isthmus of Corinth. Everyone who entered the races entered to exert his whole being to win. **but one receiveth the prize?** — Although everyone gave it his best shot, only one could win. The prize was not money, but honor. In the Isthmain games the winner received only a wreath of pine leaves, but that wreath symbolized the great honor bestowed upon him by his nation, city, and family. The prize was to be crowned victor. **So run,** — Like them (Beck). As they run the physical races, so must we as Christians run the spiritual, exerting every effort to faithfully cross the finish line (cf. 2 Tm. 4:6-8; Heb. 12:1-2). **that ye may obtain.** — That you may take the prize, which is eternal life, the incorruptible crown (1 Pt. 1:4; Phil. 3:14). In the games only one could win, but in the Christian race everyone wins who finishes the course.

9:25 **And every man that striveth for the mastery** — But whoever enters the contest (BV) or competes in the games. **is temperate in all things.** — Exerciseth self-control (ASV) or practices self-restraint (Moffett). The contestants in the games spent ten months in rigid and strict training and during that period scrupulously denied themselves of any indulgence that might lessen their chances of winning. **Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown;** — A wreath of leaves that soon withered away and even the glory it represented soon faded. **but we an incorruptible.** — Our race is for an eternal crown that never withers — a crown of righteousness (2 Tm. 4:8), of life

(Jas. 1:12; Rv. 1:10), and of glory (1 Pt. 5:4). The crown is not just for one, the first to cross the finish line, but for all who fight the good fight (1 Tm. 6:12), keep the faith, and finish the course (2 Tm. 4:7-8). The argument here is from the less to the greater: since they undergo excessive physical and mental discipline and long months of self-denial and training for a temporal crown, how much more we should be willing to endure for the eternal. It should be noted here that we are now in the race; the crown remains yet to be won. The focus here is on the dedication and discipline it takes to persevere unto the end (Rv. 2:10). Those who think the crown is received at the time the Christian race begins and can never be lost (sometimes called eternal security) take no account of athletic contest and thus miss Paul's point absolutely. If Christians do not strive for the mastery (that is, run the race to its final end), they cannot be crowned victors. The crown is reserved (1 Pt. 1:4) for those who finish the race. It is therefore ruinous, consequence of eternal magnitude, for Christians to be soft (unable to endure hardships) and self-indulgent (slaves to desire, appetite, and habit).

9:26 **I** — He changes from Christians in general (v. 25) to his own personal race and battle. **therefore so run, not as uncertainly;** — Not aimlessly, but with a straight course toward the goal (eternal life). That is, he runs with complete certainty, full exertion, and absolute purpose. He knows his goal and he runs straight for it. **so fight I,** — That is the way I box (Williams). The metaphor is now changed from the runner to the pugilist. **not as one that beateth the air:** — He did not fight as an unskilled boxer whose blows missed the opponent and struck nothing but the air. He made every blow count. He was engaged in the fight to win, and one cannot win in the pugilistic game without delivering telling blows to the opposition.

9:27 **But I keep under my body,** — No, I maul and master my body (Moffett). The figure is not changed from v. 26, as the KJV implies. He is still the boxer and his body is his antagonist. Vincent (WS) says the word (from which "keep under" comes) means, "To strike under the eye; to give one a black eye." Thus his own body is the object of the beating he administers — he mauls it until the victory is his. We are not to understand that Paul literally beat his body but rather that he is using a strong metaphor to show how he kept it in subjection to his will (cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5). **and bring it into subjection:** — And bring it into bondage (ASV) or subdue it (RSV). That is, he did battle with it until it was brought under his control — until he is its master and the contest is won. **lest that by any means,** — So that (BV). See v. 22. **when I have preached to others,** — His fear was that after he had been the herald of eternal salvation to others, he himself would be rejected. Was his fear vain? Or was it possible for him to fail to reach the goal and thus lose the crown? The whole section (vv. 24-27) shows that to win the prize one must cross the finish line, and the finish line is not crossed until one runs faithfully to the end (cf. 2 Pt. 1:5-11). Paul knew, and all others should know, that a Christian may fall short of the final goal . . . and thus lose his soul. **I myself should be a castaway.**

— I myself may become disapproved (Young's). That is, that he himself should be rejected or judged unqualified to receive the prize (eternal life). Barnes says it well: "The simple idea of Paul is, that he was afraid that he should be disapproved, rejected, cast off; that it would appear, after all, that he had no religion, and would then be cast away as unfit to enter into heaven." Precisely. Anyone who explains this otherwise must ignore the context and distort the truth.

1 CORINTHIANS 10

ISRAEL'S FAILURE

10:1-5 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

10:1 **Moreover, brethren,** — For (ASV). He had just shown them (9:25-27) the necessity of bringing the body into subjection in order to win the ultimate prize (eternal life). His aim now is to show how the Israelites failed, even with all their advantages, to reach their goal because they did not restrain themselves from evil. In short, he uses the failure of the Israelites as an example of how one may fall short of winning the prize or be a castaway. **I would not that ye should be ignorant,** — That is, he wanted them to know not so much the bare facts of Israel's history but the spiritual significance of the facts for Christians in their race for life. **how that all** — They were all blessed (all is used five times in the first 4 vv.) in contrast with nearly all (many) who were overthrown in v. 5 — all were blessed but most perished before reaching the land of Canaan. **our fathers** — The forefathers of the Jewish people. And since Israel was the nation through whom the Redeemer came, they were the spiritual forefathers of all who are heirs of the promise (Gal. 3:26-29) — that is, forefathers in faith and covenant relationship. **were under the cloud,** — The divine cloud that stood between them and the Egyptians, covered them, and hid them as they passed through the sea (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19-20). It signifies the divine presence and protection (Ex. 14:24). **and all passed through the sea;** — The Red Sea, which stood between their bondage in Egypt and their freedom in the wilderness. To pass through the sea meant salvation from the pursuing Egyptians (Ex. 14:13, 21-30).

10:2 **And were all baptized** — That is, they were buried or hid (immersed) by the cloud over them and the water of the sea around them (cf. Ex. 14:29; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). **unto Moses** — Into Moses (RSV), as followers of Moses (Williams), were united with Moses (Beck). When they passed through the sea, leaving the servitude of Egypt, Moses became their acknowledged leader and by being in union with him, God was to control their lives through him. Consider the analogy between their baptism and ours: (1) They were baptized into Moses; we are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). (2) They

were baptized in the cloud and the sea; we are baptized in water (Acts 8:35-39; 10:47-48). (3) Their baptism marked the end of their servitude to Egypt and the beginning of their freedom in the wilderness; our baptism marks the end of our servitude to sin and the beginning of freedom in Christ (Rom. 6:1-4; Acts 2:38; 22:16). (4) They came up out of their baptism into the wilderness — their state of freedom from Egyptian bondage; we arise from our baptism into the church — the state of our freedom from the bondage of sin (Rom. 6:4). (5) Their baptism delivered them from the kingdom of Egypt; our baptism delivers us from the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13; 2:11-12). (6) Baptism stood between them and salvation from the Egyptians (Ex. 14:13); baptism now stands between the sinner and salvation (Mk. 16:16; 1 Pt. 3:21), remission of sins (Acts 2:38), washing away of sins (Acts 22:16), getting into Christ (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27), getting into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3), resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6:4), obedience to a command of Christ (Acts 10:47-48), and being in the one body (12:13). (7) When they came forth from baptism they partook of supernatural food (vv. 3-4); when we come forth from our watery grave we eat the supernatural food of God's word (Heb. 5:12-15; 1 Pt. 2:1-2). **in the cloud and in the sea;** — See note on v. 1.

10:3 **And did all eat the same spiritual meat;** — The food, the manna, they ate in the wilderness was supernaturally supplied (Ex. 16:12-22) and it continued until they crossed the Jordan and possessed the promised land (Jos. 5:12). It is called spiritual because it came directly from God. This is typical of Christ coming as the bread of God which supplies every spiritual need of man (Jn. 6:31-35). Most commentators see the food here and the drink of v. 4 as typical of the Lord's Supper. But in my judgment that limits and strains the analogy. A few of the analogous points in the incidents here cited are: Pharaoh as a type of Satan (the god of this world), Egypt a type of the world or sin, Moses a type of Christ, the Red Sea a type of NT baptism, the wilderness a type of the church (or the Christian life), the crossing of Jordan a type of death, and Canaan a type of heaven. Thus I believe the food and drink are a type of all the spiritual needs of the Christian life — the needs supplied to us by Christ through the gospel (2 Tm. 3:16-17; 2 Pt. 1:3-4). This of course would include the Lord's Supper, but the type is not limited to that.

10:4 **And did all drink the same spiritual drink:** — They drank the water that was miraculously supplied them, as in Horeb after Rephidim (Ex. 17:1-7) and Kadesh (Nm. 20:1-12) and probably by the digging of the well at Beer (Nm. 21:16-18). See note on v. 3. But their blessings consisted in more than the literal water: **for they drank of that spiritual Rock** — That is, they continued to drink from the spiritual rock throughout their whole wilderness journey. It seems to me that the thought changes here from the spiritual drink, the supernaturally supplied water, to the spiritual rock, the supernatural source from which the water came. **that followed them:** — Not the literal rock (as a foolish tradition of the Jews claimed) but the rock of their salvation, the source of all their blessings. **and that Rock was Christ.** — That

source was Christ, who supplied their needs in or by the Spirit just as He had preached in Spirit to the people before the flood (1 Pt. 3:18-21). The point here is that Christ was the source of all spiritual blessings to them just as He is to us (Eph. 1:3).

10:5 **But with many of them** — With most of them (ASV). The many is in contrast with all in vv. 1-4. All were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses, all ate the spiritual food, and all drunk of the spiritual rock, but most (actually all but two, Joshua and Caleb) who had partaken of these remarkable blessings did not remain in obedience and thus fell in the wilderness. Only those faithful to the end cross the finish line. **God was not well pleased:** — Their refusal to trust God to deliver into their hands the land which He had promised them disappointed and displeased Him. **for they were overthrown in the wilderness.** — They fell during their wilderness wandering, their bodies were spread out over the desert, not having reached the ultimate goal, entrance into the promised land (Nm. 14:20-30; 26:64-65; Heb. 3:14-19). This proves beyond any doubt that one who starts the Christian race may fall by the wayside without having attained the victor's crown: for this is the very point this incident in Israel's history was introduced to illustrate (cf. 9:24-27).

WARNINGS FROM ISRAEL'S FAILURE

10:6-10 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

10:6 **Now these things** — The things recorded in Israel's history, but in context their failures as here pointed out by Paul and the judgment of God inflicted upon them because of their departure from His way. **were our examples,** — Not examples for us to follow but examples to warn us of the consequences of running in the way of the world. They are grave reminders that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). **to the intent we should not lust after evil things,** — That is, they warn us not to be carried away by the many temptations which confront us to do evil. They fell short of their goal (v. 5) because they followed their lustful desires. So shall we if we serve sin rather than righteousness (Rom. 6:1-18). **as they also lusted.** — For an example, see Nm. 11:4-34. Lust is a strong desire, especially for that which is forbidden or evil. They lusted when they longed to return to the flesh pots of Egypt (Ex. 16:3), which indicates that they were not satisfied with the provisions God had made for them. The point here is that if we fall into the same trap of lusting for worldly things then we shall suffer the same fate.

10:7 **Neither be ye idolaters,** — Idolatry is the recognition or worship of idols, either as deity or as the representation of deity. Both aspects are pro-

hibited by both the first and the second commands (Ex. 20:3-6). Robertson (WP) observes that this literally means “Stop becoming idolaters, implying that some of them had already begun to be.” While we are not likely to erect an idol and worship it in the same sense as the ancients did, we are still faced with the problem. When Paul defined covetousness as idolatry (Col. 3:5), he was in essence saying that an idol is anything that replaces God as the ruler of one’s life, whether it be self, money, power, honor, or a religious organization. God is our maker and we are His by right of creation. We owe our allegiance to Him alone. When we permit anything to replace God, as with covetousness, we become idolaters in the sense of removing Him from His rightful place and exalting something else to His throne. Materialism may well be the idol that tempts us most. **as were some of them;** — The worship of the golden calf was what Paul had in view here (Ex. 32:1-9). **as it is written,** — In Ex. 32:6. **The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.** — That is, they ate the sacrificial offering in a festival to the golden calf and after the festivities they rose up to dance and sing in its honor (Ex. 32:18-19). This almost certainly implies licentious conduct or moral debauchery: for Moses said that the people were naked or were running wild in their unbridled shame (Ex. 32:25).

10:8 **Neither let us commit fornication,** — Fornication is a general term covering all forms of illicit sexual activity — it is sexual immorality (NIV), lewdness (BV), or whoredom (MacKnight). The Corinthians clearly understood the close connection between idolatry and fornication because of the practice at the temple of Aphrodite, where it is said that 1000 beautiful prostitutes plied their trade as a part of worship. **as some of them committed,** — As is recorded in Nm. 25:1-6. The fornication committed there was in conjunction with idol worship (Nm. 25:1-2). **and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.** — Moses said 24,000 died in the plague (Nm. 25:9). Obviously there is an apparent discrepancy here, but I do not believe that it is borne out under sincere and honest examination — it is apparent only. But nonetheless this has been and continues to be a perplexity to commentators. Typical of some who make no effort to explain it are: Lipscomb and Shepherd, when Lipscomb simply states, “Why this discrepancy I am unable to explain” (Lipscomb believed and loved the Bible and approached it with as great honesty as anyone I have ever studied; why he chose not to offer some possible solution I am unable to explain). Vincent (WS) says, “A plain discrepancy. . . . It may have been a lapse of memory.” But if this is the case, how could one defend Paul’s inspiration (cf. 14:37; Eph. 3:1-7; 2 Tm. 3:16-17)? How could one reply to the liberals charge (as given in *The Interpreter’s Bible*) that this “is fatal to any theory of verbal infallibility”? The HS was given to the apostles to bring all things to their memory (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). Had Vincent suffered a lapse of memory concerning inspiration? F.W. Farrar (in *The Pulpit Commentary*) says, “We cannot give any account of the discrepancy, which is, however, unimportant.” The figures themselves may be unimportant, but whether Paul made a mistake in citing them, and thus contradicting Moses, is of vital importance to

the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. If Paul made a mistake here, then we would have no reason not to question him everywhere. I believe, however, even though there is a variation in the accounts, that both Paul and Moses are right. Whether I can ever harmonize them to everyone's satisfaction is another question altogether, one that may not be of grave importance. I believe that ultimately God is the author of both statements, and that from His perspective there is absolute harmony. My perspective may be too limited to see the whole picture. To my mind there are two reasonable solutions known (there are others but they seem highly improbable to me): (1) Moses gives, without specifying a time limit, the total number who perished in the whole incident, which may have covered several days; Paul gives the number that fell in one day. (2) There is a possibility that both authors (both under the guidance of the HS) rounded out the number. Let us suppose that the actual number was 23,500. Moses could have rounded it out at 24,000 and Paul at 23,000. This view is strengthened by the fact that it is highly unlikely that exactly 24,000 fell in the whole incident and that exactly 23,000 fell in one day. Whether either of these is the true explanation or not we may never know this side of eternity, but they do show that a solution is possible. Of the two views, the first carries more weight to my mind. One warning: we must not get so bogged down with what appears to be a discrepancy that we miss Paul's point, namely, the danger of falling into sin.

10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, — Neither let us make trial of the Lord (ASV). That is, by the attitude of ingratitude, a failure to accept Him and the provisions He has made for us, and thus to try His patience and provoke His displeasure. **as some of them also tempted,** — As some of them provoked the Lord's displeasure by speaking against Him and loathing the manna He sent them from heaven (Nm. 21:4-5). **and were destroyed of serpents.** — Fiery serpents, by which "much people of Israel died" (Nm. 21:6). When the people saw what they had done, they repented and Moses made a brazen serpent and hung it on a pole so that they could look upon it and live (Nm. 21:7-9). The warning here is for us to learn not to put the Lord to the test by being dissatisfied with His provisions (for our salvation) and by murmuring (evilly speaking against) His revealed will. To turn away from Christ and His gospel (to idols or any sinful practice) would be for us worse than the Israelites turning against Moses. God is good in all of His ways (Ps. 100:5; 145:9) and we should be eternally grateful to Him for what He has done, what He is now doing, and what He will yet do for us. Our attitude, if grateful, will be expressed by thanksgiving; if ungrateful, by complaining or speaking evil of the Lord and His ways.

10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, — While there are several incidents of grumbling, complaining, dissatisfaction, and rebellion of Israel during her wilderness wandering, Paul seems to have in mind the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, in which 250 died (Num. 16:1-35), and the 14,700 who died in a plague brought upon those who complained about their death (Nm. 16:46-50). (Nm. 14:1-4, 27 records another case

of murmuring.) All their muttering and complaining indicates their discontent and ingratitude. Complaining and gratitude seldom come from the same heart. **and were destroyed of the destroyer.** — Probably has reference to the angel of Ex. 12:23. At any rate, after the death of those attached to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, a plague began among the people, killing 14,700 (Nm. 16:49) before Aaron ran in among them to make atonement. As he stood between the living and the dead with his censer, the destruction was stopped (Nm. 16:46-48). But the destroyer had destroyed 14,700. The warning is that as the Israelites suffered the punishment due their sins, so will we if we follow their pattern of behavior (cf. vv. 11-12).

TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL

10:11-12 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

10:11 **Now all these things** — All the things that are cited from the history of Isreal (vv. 1-10). **happened unto them for ensamples:** — Happened unto them by way of example (ASV). They occurred and were recorded to provide us with a warning, an object lesson, not to fall into the same unbelief and disobedience (cf. 6; Rom. 15:4). **and they are written for our admonition,** — They are written down for the purpose of instructing us (Williams). They are there for our warning (v. 6), to teach us not to follow Israel's example of lust, idolatry, fornication, testing the Lord, and murmuring (vv. 6-10) — they admonish us to learn the deadly nature of sin by example rather than by experience. **upon whom** — Specifically Christians living in the early days of the church but in principle all who live during the final age, from Pentecost to the second coming. **the ends of the world are come.** — In whose days the ages have reached their climax (Goodspeed). That is, the ages or dispensations have reached their ultimate goal, their consummation, in the Christian system. All previous dispensations (the patriarchal and Mosaical) were designed to bring men to the grand climax that became a reality in Christ and the Christian system. The Christian age is thus the final age or dispensation — it is the end of the ages. Thus in Christ and His kingdom we have come to the last age of the world. Christianity is God's final, complete and perfect system. There is no age yet to come after it. After it, eternity! This puts the finality of the gospel beyond question. Some have misinterpreted the passage to teach the immediate second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Beck translates it: "Who are living when the world is coming to an end." BV renders it: "To whom the end of the age is imminent." This misses Paul's point completely. His design is to show that we, who are living in the last age, the one to which all the others were designed to bring us (cf. Gal. 3:19-25), should learn from previous dispensations the basis upon which God deals with His chosen people, in the final age as well as the former ones.

10:12 **Wherefore** — The conclusion that is reached in view of what has been said (9:24-10:11). **let him that thinketh he standeth** — Let him who is confident that he stands firm, that he is secure in his relationship with God, that apostasy cannot happen to him, that he is too spiritually strong to be caught in the web of sin as were the Israelites, become aware of the danger that confronts him. It is good to have confidence, and woe is the man who does not, but an overconfidence, especially when it is connected with the false concept concerning an unbreakable relationship with God, may lead one to ignore danger signals and thus result in open sin and a severing from the moors of safety. **take heed** — Beware (BV) or be careful (Beck). That is, take extreme care. **lest he fall.** — Lest he fall into sin and apostasy, as did the Israelites (vv. 6-10), which resulted in physical death, and as a consequence bring upon himself separation from God or spiritual death (Is. 59:1-2). As certain as Israel (or at least some of them) fell out of favor with God and perished, so is the possibility of our fall from His favor to eternal destruction (2 Pt. 2:20-22). If it is impossible for one to fall, as the popular theory of eternal security says, then Paul's warning is absurd and this whole section (9:24-10:12) is pointless. But worse still, it would have been dishonesty on Paul's part if he sent out danger signals when there was no danger present — if he cried, "Wolf, wolf" when there was no wolf. To prove that one can and may fall is the whole point of citing these incidents from Israel's history.

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

10:13 **There hath no temptation** — The word tempt has two basic meanings throughout the Bible: (1) A trial or test to prove one's metal, faith, or steadfastness. Job is an example of this meaning. (2) To tempt — to entice to sin (Jas. 1:12-15). Sin in its fundamental nature is the improper use of created things (see 6:12 and my note there). In this sense temptation is Satan's inducement to use God-given things for ungodly purposes — uses other than the creative purpose. **taken you** — Overtaken (NASV), laid hold on (BV), waylaid (Moffett), or seized. **but such as is common to man:** — But such as man can bear (ASV). Temptations are the common lot of humanity, but none of them are of such nature as to go beyond man's ability to overcome them. One may succumb to temptation, and thus fall as in v. 12, but if so, it is by choice rather than by necessity. **but God is faithful,** — God is reliable (BV) and you can trust Him for the two following things: (1) **who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;** — That is, He will not permit a temptation to overtake you that is beyond your ability to bear. Temptations are tempered to the strength of each individual. (2) **but will with the temptation also make a way of escape,** — All temptations come with a built-in

escape route — that is, a means of escape is always a part of the temptation. God knows how to deliver His people (2 Pt. 2:9). Satan is the author of all inducements to evil, but God does not permit him to so entrap man that he has no choice but to sin. **that ye may be able to bear it.** — That you may bear up under it (Williams), overcome it, conquer it, and escape without sin by the means provided by God. Temptation *per se* is not sin; yielding to it (not taking the escape route) is.

IDOLATRY AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

10:14-22 **Wherefore**, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

10:14 **Wherefore**, — Therefore (RSV). What had been said of the Israelites, how many of their sins were connected to or grew out of idolatry, should be enough to warn them of the danger confronting them (specifically, in context, the danger of eating meats offered to idols). **my dearly beloved**, — An endearing appeal, one that shows his deep affections for his brethren in Christ. **flee from idolatry.** — Keep on running from idolatry (Williams). That is, keep on shunning all appearance of and connection with idol worship. One does not play with fire lest he be burned; just so, one does not dally with temptation (the Corinthians obviously had a weakness toward idol worship) lest he fall into sin.

10:15 **I speak as to wise men**; — I appeal to your intelligence (BV). I see no irony or sarcasm here, as some do, but simply an appeal to sensible men who could use their own power of reason on the subject matter he is now to present (vv. 16-33). **judge ye what I say.** — Weigh my words for yourselves (Moffett). That is, as sensible men you can weigh the evidence and arrive at proper conclusions for yourself.

10:16 **The cup of blessing** — The fruit of the vine which is used in partaking of the Lord's Supper (11:25; Mt. 26:27-28). No one should have any problem understanding that the cup stands for (by the figure of speech known as metonymy) the contents, not the literal cup. **which we bless**, — For which we give thanks (11:24-25) and ask God's blessings on both it and us that the purpose He had in view for it might be attained. In thanksgiving we are expressing gratitude to God for providing the means of redemption through the shed blood of Christ, of which the cup is a symbolic reminder (11:25). **is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?** — A rhetorical question demanding an affirmative answer. It is a participation (a sharing, a partnership, a fellowship) in the sacrificial death of Christ. That is, it connects one with Christ

(Him as the giver and us as the receivers of the benefits) in His suffering and death. How could one thus participate in the blood of Christ (probably meaning the purpose for which the blood was shed) without being one with Him — without joining Him and all others who partake in aim and purpose? One could not. Just so, one could not eat in the temple of idols (with those who were worshipping idols) without connecting himself with them and the idolaters in aim and purpose. **The bread which we break,** — The loaf broken in the Lord's Supper (11:24; Mt. 26:26). The broken bread connects one with the Lord's body which was sacrificed on the cross (v. 17). **is it not the communion of the body of Christ?** — Same as the statement relating to the blood. Fellowship or communion, as in this v., is joint participation in such a manner as for those involved to become one in aim and action. Thus one cannot partake of (have fellowship with) the table of the Lord and the table of the devil at the same time (v. 21) — that is, one cannot be joined to both in aim and purpose. One cannot serve two masters (Mt. 6:24).

10:17 This v. presents some translation difficulties, as can be verified by comparing the KJV and ASV with other translations. Does Paul say that we are one bread, one body, or does he say that because we partake of the one bread we are therefore one body? It seems to me that his aim is to demonstrate the unity of the body by the unity of the bread — that is, all are one body because they partake of the one bread. His argument is (or so it seems to me) that if we are one because we eat of the same (one) loaf, then it follows with all the force of reason that they would be one with idolaters if they ate with them at the table of devils (v. 20-21). They were wise enough (v. 15) to reach this conclusion for themselves. — **For we being many are one bread, and one body:** Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body (NASV). Although members are numerous, when they eat the same bread (the loaf of v. 16) they are sharing together in the one body, the body of Christ, the church (12:17-27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). — **for we are all partakers of that one bread.** The reason they are one body is because they share in the one loaf — that is, they participate in the meaning and purpose of the death of Christ, of which the communion is a memorial. Paul's point seems to be that since sharing together at the Lord's Table made them one body (a thing that would obviously be admitted by their own wisdom, v. 15), it would logically follow that sharing in the worship of idols would make them one with idolaters.

10:18 **Behold Israel after the flesh:** — Consider (in order to confirm what was said in v. 17) an analogy here between Israel after the flesh, national Israel, and spiritual Israel, the church (Gal. 6:16). **are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?** — Are not those who eat the sacrifices in spiritual fellowship with the altar (Williams). All the priests in Israel whose right it was to eat the sacrificial offerings. He had previously used this (9:13) to prove the right of a preacher to receive support from the church. His point here is to show that when they ate of the sacrifice they were in com-

munion, fellowship, or partnership with the altar — that is, they became one with it in sacrifice and purpose. The altar and the worshiper became one in this act. Just so, when one eats the sacrificial offerings in worship to an idol, he becomes one with it. His point has now been proven by the Lord's Supper in the NT system (vv. 16-17) and the altar service of the OT.

10:19 **What say I then?** — What do I mean then (NASV)? **that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?** — Had he meant by the illustrations (vv. 17-18) that in eating meats in worship to the idols they became one with them that the idol was a reality and that the sacrifice was polluted *per se*? Indeed not. The idol was still nothing (8:4). He had denied their very existence (8:4-6) as gods and he is certainly not to be understood as now recognizing them as real entities. Thus the worship of idols is prohibited by reasons other than upon the grounds of their reality and the eating of the sacrificial meat on grounds other than it being polluted as food (cf. vv. 20-21).

10:20 **But I say,** — No (RSV). He was not saying that the idol was a real entity and that meats offered to an idol were polluted *per se* (v. 19), but he was saying: **that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God:** — Probably referring to Dt. 32:17. When the pagans offered a sacrifice, they did it as an act of worship to the idol and this was in effect worship of the devil and his host (demons). Thus all idol worship is ultimately devil worship. There are only two spiritual realms, that pertaining to God (Col. 1:13) and that over which Satan rules (Eph. 6:12). To worship anything other than God is to remove worship from its true realm and object and render it in the realm of evil. All worship directed to idols may therefore ultimately and specifically be called worship of the devil. But here the worship is indirectly rendered to him through his messengers. Hence it is called sacrifice to demons, the forces of spiritual wickedness under Satan's control. **and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.** — It is always contrary to the will of God for His people to be in union (fellowship or partnership) with devils, and their eating the sacrifice with idolaters (in the context of worship or service) would make them one with both the idol and the idolaters in both principle and practice (cf. vv. 16-18), even though the Christian's intention was only to eat the meat as food, not to worship or serve the idol. This shows that, while one's intentions must be right for his worship to be right, it is not necessary for one's intentions to be wrong for his worship to be wrong. True worship must have the right object, the right spirit or motive, and the right acts, that is, it must be directed by truth (Jn. 4:23-24). Wrong motives plus the right acts or the right motives plus the wrong acts equal vain worship (cf. Mt. 15:9). True worship consists of the right motives and the right acts directed toward the right object. This is a vital lesson that all men should learn.

10:21 **Ye cannot** — Not a literal or physical impossibility but a forbidden thing by its very nature. Its force is that it is impossible to continue oneness

with the Lord while sharing in the sacrifice of idols. Robertson (WP) says that it is "morally impossible." **drink the cup of the Lord**, — Eat the Lord's Supper and thus become one with the Lord and His saints (vv. 16-17). **and the cup of devils**: — You cannot join in the worship of idols, and thus be one with them and the powers of evil, and still maintain your unity with Christ and His body. **ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils**. — That is, you cannot continue to be in harmony with both. One must make a choice as to whom he will serve (cf. Jos. 24:15; Mt. 16:24). No man can serve two masters (Mt. 6:24) — that is, no man can worship both God and the devil.

10:22 **Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?** — What! do we intend to rouse the Lord's jealousy (Moffett)? The Lord had warned Israel, when He prohibited the making and worshiping of images, that He was a jealous God (Ex. 20:4-5). His glory was not to be shared with another, especially a nonentity (1 Chr. 29:11; Mt. 6:13). While it was not the intentions of the Corinthians to incite the jealousy of God, this they certainly would do were they to eat at the table of devils (v. 21), and in doing so would call down His wrath upon themselves (cf. Dt. 32:21). **are we stronger than he?** — By no means! If then He is the stronger, and we the weaker, we would be foolish indeed to provoke Him and thus to bring upon ourselves the consequences of His wrath.

10:16-22 Additional note: In chapter 8 Paul permits the eating of meats sacrificed to idols; here and in Acts 15:29 such is prohibited. Did Paul contradict himself? Indeed not! How then do we harmonize the two accounts? Simply by observing the purpose of each section. In chapter 8, His purpose was to show that meat *per se* was not polluted by being offered in sacrifice to idols. It could be eaten as food without scruples just so long as there was no recognition of or worship to idols involved. Here his purpose is to show that if they eat the meat along with those who are doing so as an act of worship (even though as Christians they knew the idol was nothing) they became one with both the idol and the idol worshiper. This no Christian could rightly do. Thus the eating of meats sacrificed to idols was acceptable as long as it was consumed as food, received with thanksgiving (vv. 23-26; 1 Tm. 4:3-4), and was not eaten in the context of worship to idols (v. 27). It was prohibited when eaten as a sacrifice to the idol — that is, eaten in the context of recognition of or worship to the idol.

ALL THINGS ARE THE LORD'S

10:23-26 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

10:23 **All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me**, — Repeats what was said in 6:12. See notes there. God made everything for a purpose and everything is right when it

serves the purpose for which it was made. The context here is concerned with the eating of meats offered to idols, and since meat was made for the stomach (6:13), the eating of meat (when not improperly used, as in sacrifice to idols) is right and acceptable. It is wrong only when eaten contrary to its creative purpose. **but all things edify not.** — But not everything is constructive (BV). While it is lawful to eat meat (that is its creative design), the eating of it does not always build up — in fact it may tear down (8:10-12). When the eating is not constructive, it is better to forego it (forego a lawful thing) than to destroy a weak brother — it is better to surrender one's rights in lawful but indifferent things than to fail to promote spiritual growth in the body of Christ or in any of its members. Thus even our liberty must be used to the glory of God and the upbuilding of brethren.

10:24 **Let no man seek his own,** — Let no one be so concerned with his own interest, profit, or advantage that he destroys his neighbor in the pursuit of his liberty. Since this is in the context of eating meats offered to idols, it means that no one should insist on practicing his liberties in situations where it would have an ill effect on his neighbor's spiritual welfare — that is, not being done for the glory of God and the edification of his neighbor (cf. Rom. 15:2-3). **but every man another's wealth.** — But each his neighbor's good (ASV). In practicing his liberties, one should not have a selfish attitude. He should be more concerned with another's good (that which will profit him or be to his advantage in edification) than with his own pleasure. Or as Robertson (WP) puts it, "This is loving your neighbor as yourself by preferring your neighbor's welfare to your own (Phil. 2:4)." When the heart of the matter is reached, there is no higher way to serve oneself than to do that which glorifies God and edifies His people.

10:25 **Whatsoever is sold in the shambles,** — Whatever is sold in the meat market (RSV). **that eat,** — Eat without troubling your conscience. The offering of meat to an idol does not change its quality or render it unusable as food. Meat bought in the marketplace has no further connection with idols or idolaters. The wrong is not in eating the meat (see note on v. 19) but in eating it in such a way as to recognize idols or become one with the idolaters in the act (vv. 16-18). **asking no question** — As to whether the meat had been offered as a sacrifice to idols or not. **for conscience sake:** — Since the meat was not polluted (even if it should have been the leftover remains of a sacrifice), the eating of it should not be a question of conscientious scruples — it should in no way violate the conscience when eaten. There was therefore no need for scruples and thus no need to trace the history of the meat or to investigate its background.

10:26 **For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.** — The earth and all its contents belong to the Lord (Moffett). Quoted from Ps. 24:1. The earth (and in fact the whole universe) and every material thing in it is the Lord's by virtue of creation and maintenance, and this includes the meats offered to idols. The meat, since it was not eaten in honor to the idol, could be

received with thanksgiving (1 Tm. 4:4). The Lord made everything (Gn. 1:1). It is therefore His (6:20; Dt. 10:14; Ps. 50:10-12; Hg. 2:8; Ez. 18:4). But He has entrusted the earth and its contents into our care, making us His stewards — stewards who must give an account of their stewardship. We may freely use everything for its creative purpose (3:21-23), which is to use it to His glory — that is, we must use it according to His will. The creative purpose of meat is for food (6:13). But God made nothing with which to honor idols.

WHEN TO REFUSE SACRIFICIAL MEAT

10:27-30 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

10:27 **If any of them that believe not** — The unbelieving pagans or idolaters. This shows that a Christian is not required to break all social ties with those of the world, providing his association with them does not connect him with sin or in some way violate a principle of the Christian system. **bid** — Invite. **you to a feast**, — If he invites you to eat with him. It seems certain in view of what he said in 8:10 that Paul here means a private meal in the home and not a public banquet in the idol's temple. In the temple the meal would have been presumed by Christians (or at least many of them) to be in honor of the idol. And because of this presumption (even when the one eating in the temple knew better), eating in the idol's temple was off limits for the Christian (8:10-12). **and ye be disposed to go**; — And you wish to go (Goodspeed). That is, if it is your desire to accept his invitation. **whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake**. — See note on v. 25.

10:28 **But if any man say unto you**, — It seems obvious that Paul means anyone who believed that it was wrong to eat meats sacrificed to idols — that is, this person must have believed that in some respect the eating of the sacrifice connected the eater with the worship of idols. Hence, I conclude that he was a weak brother. (It could have been, however, a pagan who would erroneously reason, "You Christians say that idols are nothing, and yet here you are eating meat sacrificed to our deities, the very eating of which is in full recognition of them as real entities." This would not, of course, be true of an informed Christian. But how one could eat a sacrificed meat only as food, with no connotations of worship attached, would be even harder to explain to a pagan than it was to a weak Christian.) **This is offered in sacrifice unto idols**, — This has been offered in sacrifice (ASV). While the eating of the meat was not wrong *per se*, there are three situations covered by Paul in which it becomes wrong: (1) When it is being done in the context of worship (vv. 16-18); (2) when it is a violation of conscience (8:7); (3) when eating leads a weak brother to sin (8:13). Since the eating is here prohibited, one of these three situations must ob-

tain. I think (while the other two are not totally absent) the context leaves no doubt but that it is the third. **eat not for his sake that shewed it**, — Let it alone, on account of the man who told you (Goodspeed). That is, refrain from eating out of consideration for the one who warned you that it was sacrifice meat. **and for conscience sake**: — The conscience of him who pointed this out (v. 29), not that of the eater. **for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof**: — Omitted by most modern translations for lack of sufficient textual support. It may have been inserted from v. 26 (see notes there) by an early copiest.

10:29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: — I mean his conscience, not yours (Williams). This has reference to vv. 27-28 where one has been invited to a feast and while eating the meat is informed by a weak brother that it has been sacrificed to idols. The guest has no scruples about eating it (he was eating what was set before him with no questions asked), but he was to refrain from further eating out of respect for the weak brother's conscience (v. 28). **for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?** — Why is my freedom judged by another's conscience (NASV)? One's liberty should not be judged (that is, the practice of his liberty should not be condemned) by another man's conscience, but it often is (and it will continue to be so as long as there are weak Christians), but I doubt that Paul is here defending his freedom, as many commentators think. It seems to me that he raises a rhetorical question (and another one in v. 30) but leaves his readers to supply the answer from v. 31. Why should his actions be regulated by another's conscience? Because his highest desire was to glorify God — to use his liberty for God's glory rather than to satisfy personal appetites. To use his freedom in such a way as to violate the conscience of another would not be to God's glory.

10:30 For if I by grace be a partaker, — If I partake with thankfulness (ASV). While visiting in homes for a meal, I am often asked by the host to "say grace for the food." What he means is to give thanks for it. This is Paul's meaning. He is expressing the manner by which he (substituting himself for the guest at a feast who is informed that the meat he is eating has been sacrificed to idols, vv. 28-29) received the meat, namely, with gratitude to God (cf. Rom. 14:6). He is recognizing God, not idols, as the source of all things. **why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?** — Why should I let myself be denounced for eating what I thank God for (Beck)? This is a second rhetorical question, requiring the same answer as the first (see note on v. 29). While the meat was holy (because it had been received with thanksgiving, 1 Tm. 4:4), he could not eat it to the glory of God (v. 31) because of what this exercise of liberty would do to his weak brother.

DO ALL FOR GOD'S GLORY

10:31-33 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

10:31 **Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, —** This is the conclusion toward which he has been building. Every action, whether it is to eat, drink, work, play, serve, worship, communicate, or study is to be an act that glorifies God. The whole of life must be devoted to doing His will. Although the guest of this context (vv. 28-30) had the liberty to eat what was set before him and the weak did not have the right to force the conviction of his conscience upon another (Rom. 14), he could not exercise his liberty to the glory of God after the weak brother informed him that the meat had been a sacrificial offering to idols. To eat it with the knowledge he now had would violate the weak brother's conscience. This he could not do and still honor God in the eating. He thus refrained, not because of his own conscience but because of the conscience of the weak brother. It was the right thing to do in this situation. **do all to the glory of God.** — God is glorified when man does right; He is dishonored when he does wrong. This can be illustrated by two sons. Each was about 23 years old. One was a thief; the other a deputy sheriff. The thief was caught; the deputy was among the law enforcement officers who apprehended him with a vast amount of stolen goods. The thief was arrested and put in prison; the deputy was honored (the sheriff said he was the greatest asset that had ever happened to the sheriff's department in that county). Now the parents became indirectly involved. Those of the thief were covered with hurt and shame; those of the deputy with pride and honor. The thief had done wrong and brought shame and sorrow to his parents; the deputy had done right and brought honor and delight to his. (I can personally testify as to the honor brought to the parents of the deputy, for he was my son.) So it is with God and His people. When they follow the principle of doing all things to His glory they bring honor to Him and to His cause. This means that they must do right, fill their creative purpose, in all things. Because man is a creature of God, his supreme duty is to live for God (Eccl. 12:13). This is his fundamental reason for being. To fail to fill the purpose for which one is made is to dishonor God by violating a trust, by dethroning Him (to replace God with self as the ruler of his life), by despising Scriptural morality and ethics, and by polluting the holy. We are the Lord's (Rom. 14:7-9) and everything we do must be done for Him, for His glory, either directly or indirectly (1 Pt. 4:11).

10:32 **Give none offence,** — That is, give offence to no one, believer or unbeliever. Or to say it another way, do not put an occasion of stumbling (in indifferent matters) in anyone's path over which he may trip and fall into sin. We are to try to save people from sin, not cause them to fall into it. **neither to the Jews,** — The Jews in general, not believing Jews, since they are given as an additional class in the church of God, which would embrace all believers, both Jews and Greeks. **nor to the Gentiles,** — Greeks or all unbelieving non-Jews. **nor to the church of God:** — Members collectively or individually. Paul means by this term all the people of God (1 Tm. 3:15; Jn. 3:5; Gal. 3:26-27). God has no adopted (that is, born-again) children outside His family and His family, in the NT sense, is the church. The modern religious world does not mean by

the church what Paul meant. They use a Bible term, but use it to describe something (denominationalism or a fragment of it) that is unknown to the Scriptures. But if they spoke as the oracles of God (1 Pt. 4:11), that is, call Bible things by Bible names, they would speak themselves out of existence. The Bible knows absolutely nothing of a Christian outside the church or a church that is not made up of all Christians.

10:33 **Even as I please all men in all things**, — He himself is an example for them to follow in giving no offence (v. 32; 9:19-23). He freely sacrificed his own liberties for the benefit of others. This v. is concerned only with indifferent things. When it came to the gospel message which he proclaimed, he could not and would not bend to the right or to the left for any man, not even for another apostle or those who seemed to be pillars in the church (Gal. 1:10; 2:5-16). **not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many**, — See v. 24 and the note there. **that they may be saved**. — So that he might be an instrument in their salvation rather than in their condemnation.

1 CORINTHIANS 11

IMITATORS OF CHRIST

11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

11:1 **Be ye followers of me,** — Be ye imitators of me (ASV). Or as Moffett renders it, “Copy me.” This obviously connects to the closing words of the previous chapter rather than to the opening of this. The instructions are to follow Paul’s example of doing all things to the glory of God (9:31), which in this case resulted in surrendering his liberty (in indifferent things) for the good of others. What he did (cf. 9:19-23) they were to do. **even as I also am of Christ.** — As I am following Christ (Goodspeed) or as I copy Christ (Moffett). No man, in and of himself, not even an apostle, is to be the copy from which we are to pattern our faith and practice. Christ alone is our example in this (1 Pt. 2:21). But we may copy any man, apostle or otherwise, insofar as he copies Christ. Paul’s point is not “imitate me as the pattern,” but imitate me as I imitate Christ (cf. Phil. 2:5-11). It is God’s eternal will, predetermined from the beginning, that we be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-30). But in order to be so conformed, we must deny self (that is, step out of self and let Christ step in and take control), take up our cross, and follow Him (Mt. 16:24; Rom. 15:3; 2 Cor. 8:9).

HEADSHIP

11:2-3 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

11:2 **Now I praise you, brethren,** — Paul here begins a new section of his epistle (which extends through 14:40) by commending the Corinthian Christians for two things: remembering him and standing fast in the tradition (teaching) which he had delivered to them. Contrast this with v. 17 where he praises them not because they were abusing the Lord’s Supper. **that ye remember me in all things,** — For always remembering me (Williams). They had not forgotten his labor among them (Acts 18:1-18) nor the instructions he had given them. And because they remembered him in this manner they sought his help in finding solutions to their problems. **and keep the or-**

dinances, — And hold fast the traditions (ASV). They were standing firmly in the divine message (the fundamental teaching of the gospel) which he had delivered to them under the power and inspiration of the HS (14:37; Eph. 3:1-7). This could not mean that they had perfectly kept the teaching (e.g., vv. 17-34) but that they had done so generally and held it in high regards as the expressed will of God. Thus tradition here has absolutely nothing to do with the concept of tradition (in contrast to the written word) passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, which later became so vital to the existence of Catholicism. The later use of all such traditions were human efforts to justify that for which there was no divine revelation. It was the following of human rather than divine authority in religious matters, a thing prohibited everywhere in the Scriptures. Paul has reference to the divine teaching delivered by Spirit guided men, first orally and then in the written word. The teaching (ordinances or traditions) comes to us now in the NT Scriptures . . . and from no other source. **as I delivered them to you.** — Just as I passed them on to you (NIV). They had (in general) been faithful to the body of teaching which had been delivered to him (v. 23) and which he had in turn transmitted to them (cf. 2 Thes. 3:6-14). That which he had delivered to them was the unchangable word of God, which he preached everywhere and at all times (9:16; Gal. 1:6-12; 2 Tm. 4:2).

11:3 **But I would have you know**, — But I want you to understand (Goodspeed). A proper understanding of the contents of this v. is imperative to a proper understanding of this whole section (11:2-14:40), especially vv. 4-16, because it involves the understanding of the relationship of Christ to God, of man to Christ, and of woman to man. **that the head** — Head means the one above, authority, ruler, or governor, but here it undoubtedly has specific reference to one's God-given role or position over another. No body or system (not even Christianity) can function properly without the principle of authority and subordination. The principle in practice is not a system of superiors and inferiors but rather of authority and submission. **of every man is Christ**; — Christ is the head of every man (Moffett). In God's divine scheme the role of Christ is that of authority over the man. In matters of religion He has all authority (Mt. 28:18-20), judicial, legislative, and executive. No man, regardless of how high or powerful or how much authority he may presume for himself, can replace Christ in God's order of things. Man must forever remain in a subordinate position to Christ — that is, no one can rightly presume the place of Christ over man. **and the head of the woman is the man**; — Man's role is over the woman; she is to be in subjection to him (Eph. 5:22-24; 2 Tm. 2:11-12; 1 Pt. 3:1-6). Just as man can never presume the role of Christ, woman can never presume to herself the role of man. She may find herself in a situation where she will have to serve in the place of a man, at least to some degree (e.g., a widow with young children may have to act as both father and mother, but in doing so, she is not acting as a man over the man), but her role does not thrust her into a position where she is over the man. Man's role is over

the woman (and this seems to be especially true in the public worship assemblies, cf. 14:34-35). This does not mean that she is inferior to man; it means that she is subordinate to him — that she can never assume the role of man over man. Let me illustrate: the role of a father (though not in view here) is over his children. If a father dies (or for some other reason is absent from the home) a mature child might fill the role of a father over the remainder of the family. But he could never rightly fill the role of a father over the father. Only the father can fill that role. But this does not mean the son is inferior to the father (in fact, he may be superior in many ways, such as mentally, educationally, socially, etc.). It simply means that God has placed him in a subordinate position as the son. But even further, while he is always subordinate as a son, there are times when a father may find himself in a subordinate position to his son. My son is a deputy sheriff. He is always and under all circumstances in subjection to me as a father. But if there arose a situation where I was involved with the law and he was assigned to my case, I would then be in subordination to him as a law enforcement officer. Without being commissioned, I can never, even as a father, presume authority over him in this role. Nor can he, without a commission from heaven, ever presume the role of a father over me. In this sphere we must always be father and son, him being subordinate to me. So it is with the woman. She can never presume man's role over the man. This may be true everywhere and at all times, but Paul's point in this section seems to be limited to the public assemblies of the church. Of course this is not to say that the principle does not apply elsewhere (for in some cases it must), but in this context Paul seems to have in view the public gatherings of the church. Furthermore, this certainly does not mean that Christ is not the head of the woman also. He is (Eph. 1:22-23). Paul's point here is with headship (role) in the divine scheme, God over Christ, Christ over man, man over the woman. **and the head of Christ is God.** — The Father's role is over the Son. That is, Christ, in His role as Son, is subordinate to the Father (Jn. 14:28; Heb. 5:8-9). This subordination is not in His essence — in that He is co-equal with God (Jn. 1:1-3; Phil. 2:5-11), but in His role as Son (8:6; 15:27-28). His subordination as a Son does not mean that He is subordinate in all respects. But in the Father/Son relationship, how could it be otherwise?

WOMEN'S SUBJECTION

11:4-16 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

11:4-16 There are many views and many variations in each of them of this difficult section. To go to commentators seeking help on it is usually a shattering experience. One comes away from them with his head spinning as from riding a merry-go-round. And what I say may simply add more fuel to the already overheated controversy. Certainly I know in advance that I cannot satisfy everyone, and in places may not be able to satisfy myself. I believe the basic lesson to be learned is that of women's subjection (recognizing her role under man) to the man (v. 3). In Corinth that subjection was symbolized by long hair and a veil.

Paul clearly has in view two coverings, one artificial (the veil) and the other natural (the hair). Both were of grave significance in that city at that time. The prostitutes had thrown off their outer covering and cut their hair (and in some cases shaved their heads) until both had become the symbol of sexual looseness, prostitution, or independence from any man (that is, the unveiled and short-haired woman was saying that she was free, tied to no man, and thus available for immoral purposes). Or as DeHoff puts it, "The unveiled woman was the careless woman, the immoral woman; the veiled woman was the careful wife or mother who was concerned about her reputation."

It must be remembered that Corinth was a city of prostitution. It was even practiced as a part of the worship in the temple of idols, and hundreds of beautiful young women paraded its spacious corridors day and night peddling their wares, their trademark being unveiled faces and short hair or shaven heads. A custom had therefore grown up from this practice that forced decent women (those who recognized their role as being under the man) to wear veils (face coverings) and long hair. Paul is here not binding the custom, but regulating it when and where it is in force (as he does the holy kiss; see my note on Rom. 16:16). The principle of subjection is bound, but not the custom. The custom was already being practiced and he simply regulates it. Customs can and do change, but principles do not. And to regulate a custom bearing upon a principle neither binds the custom nor changes the principle.

In this section, the principle is subjection or subordination; the custom (by which one showed that she recognized the principle) was long hair and the veil. For the Christian woman to cut her hair and throw off her veil in Corinth would have been an advertisement of immorality. But even further, it would have, in addition to causing her to appear as a prostitute, identified (at least in the minds of some) the worship of God with paganism. From the appearance of unveiled women in the public worship the uninformed could have concluded that immoral sexual conduct was as much a part of the Christian system as it was idolatry. While this conclusion would have been an absolute error, it would have been wrong for Christian women to leave such impressions when it could have been prevented.

There seems to have been at least three reasons why it was necessary for the Corinthian women to have long hair and remain veiled in public: (1) Modesty. This was the adorning characteristic of women (both then and now). They

were to be modest and discreet in appearance, in apparel, in disposition, and in demeanor (cf. 1 Tm. 2:9-11; Ti. 2:3-5; 1 Pt. 3:1-6; Eph. 5:22-24). For a woman to appear in Corinth uncovered was considered immodest. (2) Submission or subordination (showing the recognition of the headship of man). I have already observed that this is the principle of this section. The veil had come to symbolize subjection. That is obviously why it was mandated at Corinth. An unveiled woman was one who had renounced the principle of subordination and presumed a role equal to or superior to man. (3) Immorality. As I have already said, short hair and the unveiled face was a symbol of an immoral life. No Christian woman had a divine right to leave that impression on others, even if it meant that she must surrender her personal liberty in such matters and thus be bound by a local custom.

Thus as I see it, this section deals with a local custom (widespread then, but is rarely known now), one that was bound on Christian women because of the implications when it was discarded. While the principle of subjection is bound for all time, the custom was never meant for other people in other places who might practice the principle apart from the custom. The principle remains the same for us today but the custom has changed. It is not now immodest for a woman to appear in public unveiled; nor does headwear (I have never seen a woman veiled in the sense the Corinthians were) have any symbolism of subjection; and certainly there is now no connotation of immorality attached to an unveiled woman. While women still must recognize that their role is under the man, the veil is no longer a symbol of that recognition. The custom has changed.

11:4 **Every man** — Any man (RSV). **praying** — Addressing God in a public place (cf. 1 Tm. 2:1-8). **or prophesying**, — Communicating the divine will by inspiration. A prophet is one who receives God's word and speaks for Him. Prophecy is the word spoken by a prophet. While in apostolic times (before the miraculous ceased) one might be both a prophet and a preacher, the two functions are distinct. While both are proclaimers of revelation, the prophet receives his message directly from God; the preacher proclaims the message received and delivered by the prophet. The prophet was the one through whom God spoke — that is, revealed His will; the preacher is the one who carries that revealed will to the masses. The prophet was always inspired; the preacher proclaimed the inspired message. Prophecy was always miraculous (12:10); preaching was not. Prophecy would cease (it would pass away with the miraculous) (13:8-9); preaching would remain (2 Tm. 2:2; 4:2). To call a modern preacher a prophet (after prophecy has ceased) would be to confuse Biblical terms — confuse the miraculous with the natural. **having his head covered**, — Having a veil on his head. This means, according to Vincent (WS), "Having something hanging down from his head." Hence a head piece that extends down over the face. The head covering was a sign of subordination (in this context, to man). Man was not, however, subordinate to man, as was the woman, but to Christ alone. **dishonoureth his head**. — Brings shame or disgrace to

Christ, who is his head (v. 3). Because of the symbolic meaning of the covering, if a man covered his head it would mean that he did not recognize his own headship or role over the woman. And not to recognize his role would dishonor Christ. Hence man could not veil his head while praying or prophesying (and this would be true of any act of public worship), but this does not prohibit him from doing so at other times.

11:5 **But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth** — See note on v. 4. Whatever may be concluded from this, Paul is not here approving what he elsewhere prohibits (14:34-35; 1 Tm. 2:11-12). Thus the meaning must be any woman praying or prophesying within the limitations placed upon her. There were certainly circumstances under which a woman could teach (Acts 18:24-26; Ti. 2:3-5), pray (Mt. 15:22-28; Acts 16:13), and prophesy (Acts 2:17; 21:8-9), but such was always done with the recognition of her role of subordination. She could neither teach nor usurp authority over the man (1 Tm. 2:11-12), that is teach or usurp authority in such a way as to replace man in God's divine order (v. 3). There is a strong implication here that under whatever conditions the woman could pray she could also prophesy. Would it also follow that when she could not prophesy she could not openly pray or lead men in prayer? At any rate, when she prayed and prophesied her activities did not violate the restrictions under which she was elsewhere placed. **with her head uncovered** — Unveiled, the opposite of man (v. 4). **dishonoureth her head:** — She shames the role of man by appearing immodest, insubordinate, or immoral. **for that is even all one** — Because of custom, it has the same symbolic significance. **as if she were shaven.** — That is, if the woman throws aside her outer veil, she might as well go all the way and shave her head. Both acts were considered a sign of disgrace or immorality.

11:6 **For if the woman be not covered,** — If a woman will not veil herself (Moffett). **let her also be shorn:** — then she should cut off her hair (RSV). If she was going to violate the custom why compromise at the halfway point? Why not go all the way and cut the hair too? **but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven,** — If custom dictated that it was a disgrace for a woman to cut her hair short or to shave her head (and custom did so dictate in Corinth) then women were not at liberty to discard custom and thus bring reproach upon themselves, upon their head (man), and upon the church. **let her be covered.** — Let her wear a veil (Williams). Paul's point is that to appear unveiled had as serious symbolic significance as short hair or shaved heads. For Christian women to appear pure, to display recognition of their role of subordination, they had no choice but to be veiled, both by the artificial and the natural coverings. Custom did not permit them to dispense with either. But if they were to cast off the former, they might as well practice the latter also.

11:7 **For a man indeed ought not to cover his head,** — See note on v. 4. **forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God:** — God's glory is for man to fill the role in life for which he was made, and that role places him (in rank) under Christ and over the woman. When man fills his role, he reflects

God's glory. But to appear in public worship (pray or prophesy) with his head covered (probably either with long hair or a veil, since both are under consideration in the context), would, because of the custom, signify the abandonment of that role. **but the woman is the glory of the man.** — Woman glorifies man (her head) by filling her creative role as help meet (Gn. 2:18). In her proper role, she reflects the glory of man. The covering (both the hair and the headwear) signified her recognition and acceptance of her role.

11:8-9 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. — For man did not originate from the woman, but woman did from the man (Williams). God made man from the dust of the ground (Gn. 2:7) but He made woman from the rib of man (Gn. 2:21-24). Hence man was the source from which God made the woman. **Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.** — Man was formed first (1 Tm. 2:13) and God saw that it was not good for him to be alone (Gn. 2:18). He therefore made woman as the help meet of man. Paul's point (limited by the context to the proper roles of both male and female) seems to be that man was created for God; woman was created for man. This is concerned with more than the order of creation (although there is significance in the order, 1 Tm. 2:13), it is the creative purpose. God made man for His own glory (v. 7; Rv. 4:11). He made woman for the glory of man. This is not to say that woman is not also a glory to God. She is (as is all of creation when it serves its creative purpose). But she is a glory to God only when she fills her divine role, which involves her subjection to man.

11:10 For this cause — For the creative purpose as stated in vv. 8-9. **ought the woman to have power on her head** — To have a sign of authority on her head (ASV). That is, she ought to have on her head that which gives her the authority to pray and prophesy (see v. 5), or (my view) she ought to have on her head the symbol of man's authority over her. This gives two possible senses the expression may have. The former seems to be more in harmony with the meaning of the word authority (which no where else means a covering) but the latter with the context. And since context governs the meaning of words, rather than *vice versa*, I conclude that the latter is the correct view. While woman must always show her subjection to man (the principle which is here bound), the custom of showing it by a head covering has long ceased in most countries. I once had a preacher friend (in later years he ceased this practice) who insisted that his wife wear a hat or a small headpiece in worship. He was under the impression that this custom was still bound and that a small hat (often all but hidden by the hair) would meet the demands of the veil. But he was wrong on both counts. Paul never intended to bind the custom, only the principle; and by no stretch of the imagination could a small hat substitute for the ancient veil, which covered the whole head and face. In fact, the veil was probably designed more to cover the face than the head, since the hair covered the head (see v. 15). It seems that the uncovered face may have had the same sexual connotation then as the uncovered breast does now. Thus to be un-

covered in public was an act of immodesty. It should be understood by all that Christianity does not bind custom because they change, and sometimes radically so. For example, in the time of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, it was customary for a harlot (or prostitute) to appear veiled. When Tamar wanted to entice Judah (to remind him that he had not kept his word to give her Shelah as her husband, as the law provided), she covered (veiled) herself and sat in an open place. This was a sign to Judah that she was for sale sexually (Gn. 38:14-16). The purpose of the covering then may have been to conceal the identity of the woman from the man with whom she committed fornication. At any rate, the identity of Tamar was not known to Judah until her pregnancy was revealed to him (Gn. 38:16, 24-26). Had this custom prevailed in any country or city where Christianity had established a beachhead, then Christian women would have been prohibited from wearing a veil, not because the wearing of the veil itself was wrong but because of what it signified. This would have been the exact opposite of the custom in Corinth. There the lewd women were uncovered; the pure covered. Paul instructs them to remain covered, not because there is virtue in a veil *per se*, but because of the connotation custom dictated, namely, to be uncovered meant the advertisement of one's availability sexually.

because of the angels. — A most difficult expression to explain, as is evidenced by the varied views given by the commentators (some learned, some foolish, and some both). It appears that the Corinthians may have had some knowledge or concept (known to them but unknown to us) that made it unnecessary for Paul to elaborate upon its significance. But in the absence of that elaboration our present knowledge is extremely limited. Our understanding of it will be colored by whether we see them as earthly or heavenly beings and whether, if heavenly, they are the good or bad angels. While there is some reason to conclude that they are messengers of the church and thus earthly beings, in all likelihood heavenly beings are meant. And a probable meaning is that woman should cover her head (show subjection) out of respect for the good angels who continue to serve their creative role (in contrast to the wicked ones who fell by abandoning theirs, 2 Pt. 2:4; Jude 6). That is, the good angels fill their role by continuing in subjection to God (they did not rebel and thus set the right example). Thus woman, out of regard for them, should display their subjection by having on their head the sign which showed the authority of man over her. If this is not the meaning, then I must confess, along with Barnes, "I do not know what it means."

11:11-12 **Nevertheless** — To prevent man from thinking too highly of himself because of his role over woman, Paul calls attention to another point of view. While woman is subordinate in her role, she is not inferior in God's creative design or appointment. **neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man,** — They are interdependent. Neither is complete (in the reproduction process) without the other. **in the Lord.** — In the sphere of the Lord, that is, in His appointment and in His total scheme of things. While each has his independent role, they complement each

other. This interdependence can best be illustrated by the process of reproduction. In the beginning the woman was taken out of man, but since then all men have come by the woman (by the process of birth). No human being, since Adam and Eve, has ever existed without both a father and a mother (in the case of Christ, He had a heavenly Father and an earthly mother, Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18-23). The BV brings this out forcefully: "In the Lord there is no woman without a man, nor a man without a woman." **For as the woman is of the man,** — See v. 8. **even so is the man also by the woman;** — So man is now born of woman (RSV). Without the woman there would be no reproduction of man (Jb. 14:1). **but all things of God.** — They all have their origin from God (BV), in His creative act and divine plan (Gn. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Heb. 3:4). In God's plan of reproduction the male and female are interdependent and equally involved. Neither can continue to exist without the other.

11:13 **Judge in yourselves:** — Judge for yourselves (NIV). Proper public attire was determined for them by custom, and they were wise enough to make the judgment for themselves. **is it comely** — Seemly (ASV), proper (RSV), becoming (BV), fitting, or in keeping with the established custom. **that a woman pray unto God uncovered?** — For an unveiled woman to pray to God (Moffett)? To them the question would require a negative reply. Because of the custom, it was not proper for women to publicly worship unveiled. But of course when the custom changed the answer changed also.

11:14 **Doth not even nature itself teach you,** — Crucial to a proper understanding of this v. is a proper definition of "nature" as here used. Does it mean that which is innately built into the constitution of man by birth — that is, the law of creation? Alford and many others think so, and it certainly does have that meaning elsewhere (e.g., Gal. 2:15). Or does the word mean a sense of propriety formed by custom, habit, or experience? It seems to me that the context mandates this meaning. If so, then it is not innate but acquired nature. As an example, only a short while ago I was in a funeral. As we traveled from the chapel (where the funeral was conducted) to the cemetery, we passed several busy intersections, at which the sheriff's department had placed deputies to direct traffic. As we passed, each one removed his hat and stood at attention. In our society, does not nature (custom or habit) itself teach a man to remove his hat out of respect for the dead? Indeed it does. And that seems to be precisely the way Paul uses the word here. **that, if a man have long hair,** — Does not your sense of propriety (developed by long years of habit and experience and because of the custom which makes long hair a symbol of subjection to man) teach you that **it is a shame unto him?** — That it is degrading for a man to wear long hair (Williams). The prevailing custom made it so. Paul, because of their training and experience with the custom, appeals to their own judgment in this matter. While many commentators explain this in such a way as to bind short hair for men and long hair for women today, the length of the hair is no more bound by this v. on all societies than is the wearing of the artificial veil by women. I believe that God meant for the sexes to always have distinguishing

characteristics, and in most societies one of these is short hair for the man and long hair for the women. Christians should not disregard this custom without sufficient reason. In one decade in my lifetime (the late 1960's and early 1970's) there was a youth rebellion against what they termed "the establishment" — the home, the church, the government, the police department, etc. Those in rebellion had two distinct marks, namely, shabby dress and long hair (on the male). As the movement spread, nearly all young males let their hair grow long, not out of rebellion but because they liked the style. Eventually long hair became an acceptable style, but when it did it lost its symbolism of rebellion. Now (in the mid-1980's) nearly all young males have gone back to the old style of short hair. When it was a mark of rebellion, I advised youth to keep their hair cut (admittedly though very few listened) because of what long hair symbolized, but when it became an accepted style my argument was all but weightless (even though in my own heart I still attach a degree of shame to a male with long hair, and I suspect that this is the sentiments of the vast majority in nearly all modern cultures). In my judgment to try to bind the length of hair, whether long or short, on all societies today (beyond the binding nature of custom itself) as a religious act (an act necessary to please God) would be to confuse custom with what the law of creation demands. All such interpretations are the results of a futile effort to read into this passage our own cultural preference.

11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: — What is a dishonor to man (long hair, v. 14) is a glory to woman. Since long hair was a glory to woman, we must conclude that short hair (that which characterized the man) would be a shame to her (see note on v. 14). It was a shame because it signified immorality and, more to the point here, deprived her of her natural covering. **for her hair is given her for a covering.** — It is granted her as a natural covering in addition to but not under all circumstances a substitute for the artificial covering of vv. 5-7, 10. Robertson (WP) says the word for covering here is "Old word from *periballo*, to fling around, as a mantle (Heb. 1:12) or covering or veil as here. It is not in the place of a veil, but answering to . . . as a permanent endowment. . . ." Paul's point may well be that if a woman should be caught, for one reason or another, in public without her veil, her long hair could be used to wrap around and cover her face as a veil. The hair covered her head; the veil was designed to cover the face. But just in case no veil was accessible, the hair could serve as a temporary covering — that is, she could fling it around from the back of her head (where it naturally hung down) and use it to cover her face. If this is the point, and I believe it is, then it settles the argument as to how long long hair should be. It should be long enough to wrap around and cover the face.

11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, — If any man is disposed to argue about it or to raise objections on the grounds that Christianity does not bind custom and to thus force men to wear short hair and women long hair and a veil would severely limit or destroy altogether their freedom in Christ. **we have no such custom,** — No such custom as recklessly throwing

aside the established customs of a city or country. There are some customs which have little or no significance. They may be ignored with no reflections on a divine principle. But in the case of the hair and veil in Corinth, the custom involved the principle, and thus to cast aside the custom symbolized the rejection of the principle. The practice of the principle was, therefore, inevitably linked with the keeping of the custom. To abandon the custom, in their case, would have been to deny the principle and that would have brought reproach on both the woman and the church. Christian liberty cannot be so abused with impunity. **neither the churches of God.** — The churches made up of the people of God. Paul knew no church which had the custom of abandoning the customs of the community in which it met, especially when the custom involved a principle. The custom of observing customs which involved principles was the established practice of all the churches known by Paul. It was not just something he was binding on the Corinthians alone.

ABUSE PERTAINING TO THE LORD'S SUPPER REBUKED

11:17-22 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

11:17 **Now in this that I declare unto you** — But in giving you this charge (ASV). In the instructions he is now to give them pertaining to their abuse of the Lord's Supper. Seemingly they had substituted a common meal for the memorial communion. And to make matters worse, they had excluded some who were hungry from the meal (v. 21). **I praise you not,** — That is, he could not approve or commend their actions. In v. 2 he had highly praised them for following the truth he had delivered to them. Here the opposite is true. He has blame, not praise, for them because they had perverted their assemblies into factories of division rather than periods to bind themselves together in unity. **that ye come together** — The early church had a regular meeting time — the first day of the week (16:1-2; Acts 20:7). The divine purpose of the assembly was to worship God and edify one another (Acts 2:41; Heb. 10:25). But they had so perverted the purpose that they were coming together **not for the better, but for the worse.** — They were doing more harm than good. Coming together for better would edify and build up the body, binding it together in love and fellowship; instead they were coming together for worse, that is, harming the cause by forming cliques and thus causing division and strife. What they were doing was the reverse of what they should have been doing.

11:18 **For first of all**, — The first thing to be called to their attention that caused their assemblies to be more harmful than helpful. While no second point is identified by Paul, it is probably the abuse of spiritual gifts, the discussion of which starts in 12:1. **when ye come together in the church**, — When you meet as a congregation (Goodspeed). That is, when they assembled to worship and edify. **I hear that there be divisions among you**; — This may have reference to the type of division discussed in 1:10-17, but more likely (based on the context) the dividing into small groups (cliques) to eat the meal they had confused with and substituted for the Lord's Supper. And seemingly when the groups so separated they excluded all those not approved by the group for the meal (vv. 19-21). The rich were thus feasting while the poor were starving. The division had thus not resulted in the establishment of new churches but was of a partisan nature. **and I partly believe it**. — And to some extent I believe it (BV). He believed part, not all, of what he had heard. The extent of their clique meetings may have been exaggerated by those reporting it (cf. 1:11) but Paul was certain that the report was rooted in fact.

11:19 **For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you**. — I am torn between two interpretations: first, the usual one, which says the meaning is that the nature of the world, and men who follow their worldly nature rather than the revealed will of God, makes it certain that there will ever be factions and parties in the church. Such heresies, of course, are wrong (Gal. 5:20). Nevertheless churches will always be faced with them. But because this is necessarily the case, it does not follow that we must be partisans. Heresies can serve a useful purpose, namely, to manifest the approved. Or as Beck says, "To clearly show which of you can stand the test." Second, the context seems (at least to my mind) to favor another view, namely, that Paul (evidently, though not stated) had been told that they were defending their exclusive groups or clique meetings (v. 18) on the grounds that the ones approved (by the group) could be easily identified — that is, there must be division so that each group can know its own. The divisions of v. 18 and the heresies here refer to the same thing, that is, their class meetings. This way the rich would not be identified with the poor, nor the poor with the rich. If this is the case, then they were using the basic defense of all party divisions. They were fencing some in while fencing all others out. This is precisely what modern denominationalism does with its human creeds, names, doctrines, and organizations. While this seems to me to be the correct meaning, there is nothing in the v. to indicate that it is a statement of their defense (as related to Paul by others) rather than Paul's own statement.

11:20 **When ye come together therefore into one place**, — When you assemble for the same purpose. The primary purpose in the assembly was to worship God and build each other up in the faith. But when they divided (vv. 18-19) into exclusive groups (for a common meal which they evidently considered the Lord's Supper) they defeated both the purpose of the assembly and

the design of the Lord's Supper. **this is not to eat the Lord's supper.** — You do not come to eat the Lord's Supper (BV). That is, the character and circumstance of their meeting made it impossible for them to eat the Lord's memorial supper. Two Christian duties are in view here: (1) Saints are to assemble themselves together (Heb. 10:25); (2) When they assemble on the first day of the week they are to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). The problem with them was that they were assembling (in exclusive groups) and they were breaking bread (in a common meal), but their assembly was not the one body and their eating was not the Lord's Supper. Paul's point is that the manner and character of their coming together made it impossible for them to properly observe the Lord's Supper.

11:21 **For** — Connects the following with v. 20, showing why what they were doing made it impossible for them to be eating the Lord's Supper — it was their supper, not the Lord's. **in eating every one taketh before other his own supper:** — In eating each one goes ahead with his own meal (RSV). Those not approved by a group (v. 19) were excluded from eating, either by the rich eating beforehand (and thus leaving nothing for the poor) or by eliminating the poor by exclusion. Their meetings were supposed to be for the purpose of taking the communion, which would bind them together as one (10:16-17), but instead they were having feasts for their exclusive groups. **and one is hungry, and another is drunken.** — So that this one stays hungry and that one imbibes too freely (BV). This expresses two extremes — one is empty while the other is filled to overflow. While Paul's rebuke would condemn rather than approve such use of strong drink, I doubt that he means to say that one is hungry and the other is intoxicated (although the word can certainly mean that, e.g., Mt. 24:49; Acts 2:15). He is contrasting two opposite states. The opposite of hunger is not intoxication but gluttony. Thus (or so it seems to me) some were left without food while others were filled to satiety.

11:22 **What?** — What! (Moffett). An exclamation designed to shock them into attention. **have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?** — Have you not proper places to pursue your social functions? The problem was not their eating and drinking, but with their corrupting the public worship into private social feasts. Paul is not condemning their eating together, not even eating together in the same place they met to worship. His point is that they were substituting their private meetings for the public assembly, that is, replacing the Lord's Supper with a common meal. They were thus corrupting (and replacing) the worship assembly with their exclusive meetings. To keep from confusing their own meetings (to eat a common meal) with the meetings of the church (to eat the Lord's Supper) they should eat their meals at home. The private house is set in contrast with the assembly, not with the church building. One might eat at the church building without disrupting the assembly, but he should not disrupt the assembly in order to eat at the church building. **or despise ye the church of God,** — Or is it your design to set at naught the assembly and destroy its divine purpose? The church here does not mean the meeting place

(the Bible nowhere calls a material building the church) but the assembly of God's people. The contrast is thus not in eating in the church building or at their houses, but in substituting that which should be done elsewhere for the public assembly — perverting the worship into private festivals. **and shame them that have not?** — And humiliate the poor, who are excluded from your feasts. Men often have their social clubs, and practice social snobbery in them, but such exclusiveness has absolutely no place in the worship of God. In the church of Christ all are equal — no inferiors or superiors; no rich or poor; nor learned or illiterate; no male or female (Gal. 3:26-29). All are one in Christ. Jesus said, "All ye are brethren" (Mt. 23:8). Paul added, "There is no respect of person with God" (Rom. 2:11). The Corinthians were ignoring this divine principle. **What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.** — Should I commend your conduct or approve your actions? Absolutely not. See v. 17.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

11:23-34 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

11:23 **For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,** — What he had received from the Lord he had delivered to them. This, while limited by the context to the subject matter at hand, namely, the Lord's Supper, states the work of apostles and other inspired men — to receive from the Lord His divine will and deliver that revealed will to man. It would have been possible for Paul to have received this information from the Lord in one of three ways: (1) By oral tradition (word of mouth) or from uninspired writers, the HS selecting for him that which was true and rejecting all else; (2) he could have been told this by inspired eye witnesses or learned it from inspired documents (Mt., Mk, or Lk., if either of them had been written by this time); or (3) by divine revelation (2 Cor. 12:1-7; Eph. 3:1-7). Here he seems to specify the third, that is, immediate revelation communicated to him personally. He had first delivered the message to them orally but now he is passing it on to them in written form. Today we have only the written word (cf. 2 Pt. 2:19-21). **That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed** — The very night in which Judas betrayed Him into the hands of His

enemies (Mt. 26:23-50) to be subjected to a mock trial and sentenced to a cruel death, He was instituting this memorial which would bind His followers together as one (10:16-17) and keep His memory alive as long as the world stands. **took bread:** — Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19. Since at this time Jesus was observing the Jewish Passover with His disciple, the bread was undoubtedly unleavened. Nothing else would have been available to them because no leaven was permitted during the feast (Ex. 12:15, 19; 13:7). In my judgment, this is reason enough to use only unleavened bread today. The bread is symbolically the body of Christ (v. 24).

11:24 And when he had given thanks, — Blessed it (Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22) or recognized God as its giver. Matthew and Mark say that He blessed it while Luke (22:19) and Paul say that He gave thanks. The expressions are thus used interchangeably. **he brake it,** — He broke the bread. This may mean that Jesus Himself partook of the bread (breaking bread equals eating) but more likely that He broke it in view of distributing it to all of them. **and said, Take, eat:** — Eat it as representing His sacrificed body. **this** — The bread which He had broken and was now giving them to eat. **is my body,** — This signifies my body and the cause for which it is sacrificed. Paul obviously meant this to be taken as a figure of speech. The bread symbolized or represented the body of Christ. Such usage is common throughout the Bible. For example, 10:4 says “that Rock was Christ.” Who could possibly understand that to mean that Christ was literally the rock? In Gal. 4:24 it is said of Sarah and Hagar, “These are two covenants.” They were not literally two covenants but they did represent the old and the new in the allegory. Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (Jn. 15:5). Did He mean that He was a literal vine and that His disciples were literal branches? No reasonable person could so conclude. Just so, no one would have ever understood “this is my body” to be the literal body of Christ had it not been for the foolish and humanly invented doctrine of transubstantiation. **which is broken for you:** — Which is for you (ASV). The word broken is in the Textus Receptus (the text upon which the KJV is based) but the evidence is against it being from Paul’s hand. As the sentence stands, it leaves something to be supplied, but I think it best to let inspiration itself settle the matter. Luke says, “This is my body which is given for you” (Lk. 22:19). The point is that Jesus gave His body as a sacrifice for His people — He died on their behalf (Is. 53:5-6). **this do in remembrance of me.** — Do this to remember Me (Beck). The fundamental purpose of the communion is a memorial of Christ’s sacrificial death for sins. As long as it is properly taken, Christians can never forget the necessity of His death in the scheme of human redemption — that it is absolutely indispensable to our salvation, past, present, and future. Thus to do this in His memory is to refresh our minds as to the purpose for which He died.

11:25 After the same manner — In the same way in which He had taken the bread (vv. 23-24). **also he took the cup,** — The fruit of the vine (Mk. 14:25), which had to be contained in a cup. They were to drink the fruit of

the vine which was contained in the cup, not the literal cup itself. While the word wine in the Bible means fruit of the vine (the context determines whether it is fermented or unfermented), it is interesting to note that no writer of the Bible ever used the word wine in conjunction with the Lord's Supper. It is always the fruit of the vine. Is there significance in this? Could it be that the Lord and His apostles purposely made this distinction to avoid the use of an intoxicant in that which commemorates His death? I know of no positive way to prove it, but the evidence is sufficient to my own mind so that I personally do not wish to use fermented wine on the Lord's table, especially the modern distilled kind. **when he had supped,** — After supper (ASV). After they had eaten the feast. This distinguishes between the eating of the feast and the institution of the Lord's Supper. They were not the same. Nor was the feast engaged in by some of the Corinthians the communion. The conclusion: the Lord's Supper is not a common meal. **saying, This cup is the new testament** — This cup is the new covenant (ASV). That is, the cup represents the new covenant, which was foretold by the prophets (Jer. 31:31-34) and fulfilled in the Christian system (Heb. 8:6-13). **in my blood:** — The covenant sealed with His blood (Heb. 9:22-26) or as Matthew expresses it, "This is my blood of the covenant" (Mt. 26:28, ASV). Cf. Ex. 24:8. **this do ye,** — Drink the cup. **as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.** — Whenever you drink it (NIV). The frequency is not stated here. But the early church met on the first day of the week, each week, every week (16:1-2), to break bread (Acts 20:7). This establishes a precedent for us — the early church showed us by example how often we should partake. Why not do it as they did? Surely it is not too much for us to remember the death of our Lord weekly.

11:26 **For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,** — Every time you take the Lord's Supper. See v. 25 for the note on frequency. **ye do shew the Lord's death** — You proclaim His death (Goodspeed) or openly publish it (MacKnight). You proclaim to yourself and to all others His death and its purpose. He gave His body and shed His blood to atone for man's sins. We must never forget this fact. Although as Christians we are redeemed sinners, sinners who have been washed in the blood (Rv. 1:5), we have not reached moral perfection (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). Every minute of every hour we stand in need of the cleansing power of the blood (1 Jn. 1:7) to keep on washing our sins away. This we proclaim (and renew the memory in our hearts) each time we take the communion. **till he come.** — Until His second coming (Heb. 9:28). This shows that He was not building a passing memorial, one that would perish with time, but one that would stand proclaiming His death until the end of the world.

11:27 **Wherefore** — Therefore (RSV). It follows from the design of the Lord's Supper as a memorial of the death of Christ and as a constant proclamation of its purpose (v. 26). **whosoever** — Anyone, regardless of who he is or where he may be. **shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord,** — Anyone who takes the communion. **unworthily,** — In an unworthy manner (ASV). The point is not that one must be worthy to take it, but that those who

do must do so in a manner befitting the body and blood of the Lord. Because it memorializes the death of Christ, it is a solemn occasion. To turn it into a social festivity, as the Corinthians had done (vv. 20-22), was to profane the holy — that is, observe it in a way not fitting the occasion (cf. v. 29). **shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** — Guilty of sinning against the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. A frivolous observance of the Lord's Supper is a sin against the very thing that makes salvation possible. Thus to desecrate it is to profane the divine purpose of the sacrificed body and shed blood. This is equivalent to crucifying Christ afresh, to putting Him to open shame, to trampling underfoot the Son of God, to counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and to doing despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 6:6; 10:29). The death of Christ is no light matter in the scheme of human redemption — in fact, it is the foundation upon which everything else is built, and the memorial of that death must be fitting to its proclamation and purpose.

11:28 **But let a man examine himself,** — Let him prove himself (by putting himself to the test) that he has the proper attitude toward the body and blood of Christ, and that his manner of partaking is suitable to the solemnity and purpose of the occasion. Had the Corinthians done this, they never would have turned it into a feast for their exclusive groups (vv. 17-22). While in my judgment this is the primary thrust of the v., one may conclude from it that each one is to examine himself, not another. The communion is for all saints, and it is not the function of the church or individual Christians to either include or exclude — that is, it is not our duty to examine others before partaking ourselves. **and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.** — After one has examined himself, and ascertained that his attitude and actions are such as to properly proclaim the death of Christ (v. 26), let him partake of the bread and cup, which equals eating the Lord's Supper.

11:29 **For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily,** — He who eats and drinks without properly discerning the body (unworthily should probably be dropped from the text because it is not supported by the best manuscripts). **eateth and drinketh damnation to himself,** — Eats and drinks to his own condemnation (BV) or eats and drinks judgment on himself (NIV). To neglect or abuse the Lord's Supper puts one's faith in jeopardy — that is, it incurs judgment, probably such as is seen in v. 30. **not discerning the Lord's body.** — If he discerns not the body (ASV). The Corinthians were guilty of not distinguishing the Lord's Supper from a common meal. Thus they were not discerning the purpose of the sacrificed body. Because of this, what they were doing was not eating the Lord's Supper (v. 20), but engaging in a feast for themselves. Does the body here mean the church (as in 12:12-13; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) or the sacrificed body of Christ? Standing alone, the former would be easier to explain (it would mean taking the communion without regard to or respect for the church and its unity, as appears to be the case in vv. 19-22), but in context I do not see how it can be understood in any sense but the latter. In vv. 25 and 27 it is His sacrificed body which is in view, and, in the absence of

some reason to think that Paul changed the way he was using the word when he reaches this point, it seems highly unlikely that it has a different meaning here.

11:30 For this cause — Because they had desecrated the Lord's Supper by not discerning the body (v. 29). **many are weak and sickly among you,** — That is, they were languishing with spiritual infirmities (cf. the lukewarm, Rv. 3:15-16, and those who had left their first love, Rv. 2:4). Because they had failed to discern the body (to properly remember the sacrificial death of Christ and its necessity in their salvation) they had grown negligent and lost interest in the higher values of life and eternity. Many today are in the same condition. They are jeopardizing their souls by neglecting the communion or by taking it in a flippant manner. But it is highly unlikely that this could ever happen as long as the bread is broken in a proper way — as long as one calls to memory week after week the fact that Jesus died to make his salvation possible. Surely one who recognizes this (as everyone should in this memorial) he can never turn back to the beggarly elements of sin (cf. Heb. 6:1-6; 10:26-29). **and many sleep.** — And a number even dead (Moffett). This is undoubtedly spiritual death. Many commentators (and all who do not believe that it is possible for a Christian to die spiritually) see this as physical sickness and death, that is, people literally getting sick and dying as a result of abusing the Lord's Supper. But this is hardly conceivable. The penalty of sin is not physical death though that may be a consequence, but spiritual (Rom. 6:23). Thus Paul's point is that by abusing the communion many of them had suffered a decline in spiritual health (3 Jn. 2) and a number had completely fallen away — they had turned back and again polluted their souls with unpardoned sins.

11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, — But if we discern ourselves (ASV). That is, if we examine ourselves carefully and critically, with a view to recognizing our failures (to observe the communion in a proper manner), it will lead us to correct our shortcomings and motivate us into proper conduct (cf. v. 28; 2 Cor. 13:5). With proper conduct on our part, God will not condemn us. **we should not be judged.** — We will not be condemned by God's judgment as weak, sickly, and dead (v. 30). The thought seems to be that if we would be more discerning ourselves then God would not be placed in the position of condemning us by disapproving our actions. Moffett renders it, "If we only judged our own lives truly, we would not come under the Lord's judgment." This has no reference to the general judgment in the last day, but to the present situation at Corinth.

11:32 But when we are judged, — But since we do bring down upon us this judgment (Williams). The judgment that is pronounced by God upon our shortcomings. That is, when we do violate His will and suffer the consequences of it (as in v. 30), the Lord has a higher aim in it all than condemnation *per se*. **we are chastened of the Lord,** — We are corrected or disciplined by the Lord. The aim of His judgment is to bring us to repentance and thus to a correction of our practices. **that we should not be condemned with the world.** — Not lost along with the wicked and unbelieving in that final day of judgment.

What a marvelous concept there is here! Is Paul not saying that if one is weak, sickly, or dead in the faith that he should recognize his condition as a disciplinary action (judgment) brought upon him by God for his abuse and neglect of the Lord's Supper with the purpose in view of awakening him to the danger of his way, to bring him to repentance and correction, and thus to prevent his soul from being lost eternally? But how many members of the body of Christ who are now living in this weak, sickly, and dead state recognize it as a disciplinary measure with the aim of preventing their eternal destruction, which is sure if they do not heed the warning and make the necessary corrections? What a fearful thing it is to trifle with the faith and treat the holy as profane, to have tasted the good word of God and the power of the world to come and then turn away from that which is high and holy to again become entangled in the wickedness of the world (Heb. 6:1-6; 2 Pt. 2:20-22). May we learn to so conduct ourselves that God will deliver us from such a chastisement; if we do not, may the eyes of our understanding be opened so we can see that the consequences are the divine judgment brought upon us for our sins for the purpose of warning us to escape the wrath to come. May we be able to see that it is far, far better to be judged now (with an opportunity to repent) than on that day when all decisions are final and forever.

11:33 **Wherefore, my brethren,** — So then, my brethren (RSV). The conclusion is that you should take the Supper in such a manner so as not to bring upon you the judgment of God (vv. 30-32). **when ye come together to eat,** — When you meet to take the Lord's Supper. **tarry one for another.** — Wait for one another (Williams). They had desecrated the Lord's Supper by confusing it with a common meal and they had abused the meal by forming themselves into exclusive groups (v. 21), thus eliminating some who were hungry. But from the Lord's table no Christian can properly be excluded. All, rich and poor, slave and free, learned and illiterate, male and female, are to meet on a common level, no one before or above another. All have been redeemed by the same blood. All are brethren (Mt. 23:8). All are one (10:16-17). All distinctions, racial, social, mental, and physical, are obliterated and all the redeemed stand as the united body of the exalted Son of God (Mk. 16:20; Phil. 2:5-11). Another point: it seems to me that this offers a strong implication that the communion belongs to the assembly. Brethren are to take it together (that is the significance of "wait for one another"). If for some reason one cannot assemble with the saints, it seems to me that he is excused from breaking bread. There is something vital missing when the communion is separated either from the Lord's day or from the Lord's assembly. I would not go so far as to say that it is wrong to carry it to the sick and infirm, but it does seem to me that if they are excused from the assembly, then they are on the same grounds excused from the communion.

11:34 **And if any man hunger,** — The Lord's Supper is not a feast to satisfy physical hunger: it is a memorial of the body and the blood. **let him eat at home;** — The issue as to where to eat is not between the home and the

church building (the place where they met for worship) but between the home and the worship assembly. The assembly is not designed for festivities, but for worship. Taking the Lord's Supper is worship and it belongs to the assembly; eating a common meal is not worship: it thus belongs to the home. See note on v. 22. **that ye come not together unto condemnation.** — So that your meetings may not bring down a judgment upon you (Goodspeed). A proper observance of the Lord's Supper would prevent the visitation of God's judgment upon them (cf. vv. 29-32 and the notes). **And the rest** — Detailed matters pertaining to the Lord's Supper not covered here. **will I set in order** — Give proper instruction or command concerning. **when I come.** — When he could again visit the church and preach the gospel in Corinth.

1 CORINTHIANS 12

IGNORANCE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

12:1-3 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

12:1 **Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren,** — Miraculous, supernatural, or extraordinary endowments, nine of which are listed in vv. 8-10. They are called spiritual because they are the extraordinary work of the Spirit. Evidently the Corinthians had asked Paul some questions concerning supernatural gifts, which they seemed to desire above the more practical aspects of Christianity. This section (chapters 12-14) contains his replies. In chapter 12, he gives their source and function, in 13, their duration, in 14, their regulation or proper use. **I would not have you ignorant** — Neither uninformed nor misinformed. While Paul's instructions are relatively simple, there are few subjects in which the modern religious world is more in the dark. There are many reasons for this misinformation, but most of them stem from a failure to Scripturally answer two basic questions: (1) What are spiritual gifts? They are miraculous gifts given to the apostles and others in the early church which were exercised until the revelation was completed (13:8-10). The miraculous should not be confused with the natural nor should the extraordinary measure of the Spirit be confused with the ordinary. A miracle is God working directly — God acting without the laws of nature to produce an observable effect in the natural realm. Nature is God working indirectly or through His established laws or system. Thus a miracle is a direct act of God — God working other than by His natural means or through His laws. The miraculous gifts were thus gifts conferred upon some in the early church enabling them to do that which could not be done apart from the direct power of God acting through them. These gifts enabled some to speak a language they had never studied or learned, interpret languages they did not speak, to heal the sick, etc. (vv. 8-10). Such gifts were peculiar to the apostolic age and were never meant to be a permanent part of the church (13:8-10). No man, therefore, should expect to receive them today. (2) What was the purpose of miraculous gifts? Primarily the purpose can be summed up in three words, reveal, confirm, and deliver — that is, to reveal the truth, confirm the truth, and deliver the truth (Jn. 16:13; Heb. 2:1-4; Jude 3). They were not given for the benefit of the receiver *per se* (as those who claim

them today think and teach). They were given by the Spirit for the profit of the whole church (v. 7). While more than the apostles possessed spiritual gifts in apostolic times, none but the apostles had the power to impart them to another (Acts 8:17-19; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tm. 1:6). This is why the Spirit's reception has often been divided into the primary (that given to the apostles directly by Christ), the secondary (that given by the laying on of apostolic hands), and the ordinary (that given to every obedient believer at baptism, Acts 2:38). Most of the gifts in this section pertain to the secondary measure, the gifts which were imparted only by the hands of an apostle. But regardless of the gift or who possessed it, its purpose was to aid in the revelation, confirmation, and deliverance of the truth. Once that truth was revealed, confirmed, and delivered (in the written word) the miraculous ended. God now works through His revealed laws. For this reason, if one either claims spiritual gifts today, or claims that they belong to Christians now just as they did then, he misses Paul's point absolutely and falls into the very state of ignorance that he wrote this section to prevent.

12:2 **Ye know that ye were Gentiles,** — You know that when you were heathen (RSV). **carried away unto these dumb idols,** — That is, when they were practicing paganism, they were led to worship idols which could not speak or reveal their will (Ps. 115:4-7). Man made them and man had to speak for them. But not so with the God of heaven. He had spoken (Heb. 1:1-4) through Christ and His apostles, and the miracles they had seen (the spiritual gifts exercised) confirmed that it was the word of the Lord. **even as ye were led.** — Howsoever ye might be led (ASV). They had been led (as a prisoner is led) into idol worship, not because idols were entities, not because reason so dictated, and certainly not because the idols had revealed their will, but by habit, impulse, passions, fancy, or priest. Or another way to say it: they were not led by revelation (as with Christians) but by happenstance, not to the living God, but to silent (dead) deities.

12:3 **Wherefore I give you to understand,** — Therefore I make known to you (NASV), that is, he informs them so that they will not be ignorant (v. 1) as pertaining to the test by which they could tell one who had spiritual gifts from those who only claimed to have them (cf. 1 Jn. 4:2-3). **that no man speaking by the Spirit of God** — No man who has a gift of the Spirit to speak for God, to infallibly receive and deliver by inspiration the will of God; to speak under the power, influence, and direction of the Spirit. **calleth Jesus accursed:** — Saith, Jesus is anathema (ASV). This may have been done by the heathen priest who claimed to be speaking for the gods. Practically it amounts to denouncing Him as an imposter, denying His deity, that He was Son, Savior, Lord, Priest, and King, and blaspheming His name as a deceiver, thus one abandoned beyond all hope or worth and cursed with eternal infamy. **and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.** — The exact opposite of the previous statement. No man can affirm that Jesus is Son, Savior, Lord, Priest, and King, that is, do so by inspiration, except by the

power vouchsafed to Him by the HS. While this is primarily concerned with the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit (the manner by which revelation is made known), the principle is true also in the Spirit's indirect work today. The only way one can possibly know of Jesus and thus be able to call Him Lord is by the revelation delivered to him by the Spirit. In short, we can call Jesus Lord only by the revelation delivered to us in the written word. Without that we would know nothing of Him (nothing of His virgin birth, His perfect life, His vicarious death, or His glorious resurrection) that is essential to our salvation. We believe in Christ as the Son of God, not because of what we have learned from secular history, but by what the HS has revealed to us in the divine word. All true and essential knowledge of Christ comes to us through revelation — that is, through the HS.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ENUMERATED

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

12:4 **Now there are diversities of gifts,** — Different miraculous gifts given to different people (vv. 8-10). Not everyone in the early church received a gift, and probably few if any had all the gifts and likely most who received them (by the laying on of apostolic hands) had only one. They were distributed by the Spirit in such a way as to profit the whole church (v. 7) rather than just the receiving individual *per se*. **but the same Spirit.** — The gifts were different but they were all given by the HS. The contrast is between the variety of gifts and the one source from which they come — the Spirit, the Lord (v. 5), and God (v. 6). So all who spoke in tongues, or healed, or prophesied, or interpreted tongues, etc., did so by the supernatural gift, power, and influence of the Spirit.

12:5 **And there are differences of administrations,** — Distinctive ministries (BV). That is, a variety of services to be performed by means of the different gifts (v. 28). Just as each member of the human body has its peculiar function and each member of the body of Christ serves a divine purpose, so it was with spiritual gifts and those who possessed them. **but the same Lord.** — The Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the gifts were made possible and for whom the services are administered.

12:6 **And there are diversities of operations,** — There are different kinds of working (NIV) or a variety of effects as a result of the spiritual gifts. This may have reference to the effects on the individuals possessing the gifts, but more likely the effects produced by the gifts (cf. Heb. 2:1-4). **but it is the same God which worketh all in all.** — All the gifts are from the one God,

the ultimate source of all power, spiritual or otherwise. No one reading vv. 4-6 should fail to see that Paul by design weaves together the divine trinity in the giving, service, and effects of the gifts, leaving no doubt but that he was a trinitarian. In v. 4, the Spirit bestows the gifts; in v. 5, the gifts are used in the service of Christ the Son; and in v. 6, they are all the work (accomplishment) of God the Father. Thus we see the HS as the supplier, the Son as the one served, and the Father as the source.

12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit — The exercise of spiritual gifts. Some see this as the Spirit making Himself known through His work; others see it as the manifestation of the works of the Spirit — that which the Spirit makes known. I cannot say positively which Paul may have had in mind, but that should not hinder us from understanding the thrust of the passage because both are true (I do not say that Paul had both in mind here): the gifts manifest both the Spirit and the Spirit's work. I lean toward the latter being the true sense. **is given to every man** — This must be understood in a limited sense. The gifts were not given to all men, both pagan and Christian. Nor were they given to all Christians. Paul is discussing those who possess spiritual gifts, and that is the total number the context has in view. Thus the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one who has a gift for the profit of the whole church. **to profit withal.** — For the common good (RSV). That is, for the good of all (the whole church) and not just for the good of the receiver *per se*. While there can be no question but that the one who received the gift benefited from it to some extent, that benefit was not the primary purpose for which it was given. Except by serendipity, the gifts did not change one's free will; they did not change his attitude; they did not give him a better understanding; they did not remove desires or temptations to sin; they did not make one stronger in the faith (faith is an exercise of the human will, not the exercise of the HS upon the human spirit); they did not make one less forgetful; they did not make one successful and happy. The gifts were always under the control of the receiver and not the other way around (14:32). One could neglect a gift or fail to use it for its intended purpose (1 Tm. 4:14). Their primary purpose was to reveal, confirm, and deliver the truth. To go beyond this in applying the manifestations of the Spirit (spiritual gifts) is to miss what the Scriptures teach, here and everywhere.

12:8-10 While these vv. give a list of nine spiritual gifts, the list was not meant to be exhaustive (cf. vv. 28-30). With the current information available to us, it is all but impossible to ascertain precisely in what all the gifts consisted — their extent and limitations. But this should not disturb us, since it is not necessary for us to know anyway. The gifts belonged to the apostolic age and ceased when it ended. No man today, regardless of his claims or what others may think, possesses any of them (13:8-10). Thus we are not required to make a practical application of each one. It is enough, therefore, to know that each one had its origin with God, was given by the HS, and was used in the service of Christ (vv. 4-6). And besides this, Paul's point is not so much to enumerate the

gifts as it is to illustrate the fact that they are the work of the Spirit for the benefit of the whole body, the church.

12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit — One gift is given by the Spirit to one and another gift is given to another. All do not receive all the gifts nor do all receive the same gift. **the word of wisdom;** — The utterance (RSV) or message (BV) of wisdom. The best that I can determine this has reference to the gift by which one could receive and deliver the wisdom which is from above (Jas. 3:14-18). Goodspeed translates it, "The power to speak wisely," that is, the power to speak by revelation or inspiration. Peter said that Paul taught according to the wisdom given to him (2 Pt. 3:15) and Paul himself claimed to teach with all wisdom (Col. 1:28). I conclude then that the word of wisdom is that word (in the final analysis, the gospel) by which God's will is made known to man (under the direction of the HS). **to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;** — If it is correct to say that the word of wisdom is the power to receive and deliver revelation, then the word of knowledge is probably the power to retain in the memory the word of wisdom delivered. In this view the word of wisdom is the primary reception and delivery of saving truth, and the word of knowledge is the miraculous retention of that truth once it had been revealed. Such a gift would have been sorely needed in the early church because they did not have the complete NT to which they could go day by day and refresh their memory or against which they could test the truthfulness of anyone who claimed to be preaching the gospel. If I am correct here, the word of wisdom was received directly from God while the word of knowledge was received from the ones who spoke the word of wisdom. Both were miraculous but the former had to do with the original source and content while the latter with retaining and teaching the truth already revealed.

12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; — In the NT, faith may either be subjective (one's own belief or testimony, Jn. 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17), objective (the testimony itself, Jude 3), or miraculous (which manifest itself in the performance of miracles, Mt. 17:20; 21:21). Here Paul means miraculous faith — faith that enabled the receiver to exert supernatural power (cf. 13:2). Undoubtedly it had some visible results or function but exactly how it manifested itself (other than in the performance of miracles) to benefit the whole church I am unable to say. **to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;** — The power to restore the sick to health by the direct power of God, exercised frequently by Christ and His apostles (e.g., Mt. 8:16; Mk. 16:17-20; Acts 3:1-9; 14:8-10). The plural probably indicates the wide variety of diseases healed.

12:10 To another the working of miracles; — To another miraculous powers (BV). While all the gifts are miraculous in nature, Paul obviously had in mind some manifestation of supernatural power not covered by the other gifts. Miracles in the NT can be classed into five categories: power over (1) disease (Mt. 8:23), (2) nature (Mt. 8:26), (3) demons (Mt. 8:16), (4) material things (Mt. 14:9; 15:32), and death (Jn. 11:43-44; Acts 9:40-41). Since Paul had named heal-

ing (power over disease), it seems reasonable to conclude that he meant to include one or more of the remaining categories in this gift. **to another prophecy**; — Another can speak God's word (Beck). A prophet is God's spokesman. He receives the divine will directly and infallibly communicates it to man (see notes on 11:4; Rom. 12:6). **to another discerning of spirits**; — The power to discriminate between the Spirit and false spirits (Williams). Perhaps the exercise of this gift was twofold: (1) to distinguish by divine insight whether those who claimed to speak by inspiration were doing so or not. (2) To determine the kind of spirit (disposition) one was, regardless of his claims or action (e.g., Peter in Acts 5:1-11 and Paul in Acts 14:8-10). **to another divers kinds of tongues**; — Another can talk strange languages (Beck), that is, languages strange to him. Or as MacKnight translates it, "Foreign languages." I believe Barnes is precisely right in saying, "The power of speaking various languages." It was a gift that enabled one to speak in a language he had never learned or studied. Contrary to many modern interpreters, it was not an ecstatic utterance, wrought by a high emotional charge. Rather, it was a real language that could be understood by those who spoke it and could be interpreted or translated into another language by one with the gift of interpretation (or by one who knew both languages). The first occurrence of speaking in tongues was on the day of Pentecost and the Scriptures leave no room to doubt that it was a language understood by someone present. Observe that when the apostles spoke in other tongues the multitude was confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language (Acts 2:6). The men who spoke were all Galileans, yet every man heard them speak in his own tongue, wherein he was born (Acts 2:7-8). All the nations present on that day were amazed because they heard the apostles speak in their own tongue (Acts 2:9-13). Peter said that which was happening on Pentecost was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that both men and women would prophesy. For prophecy to fill its purpose (to reveal the will of God to man) it must be understood. Thus the gift of tongues on Pentecost was the gift to speak a language which was unknown to the speaker. Unless there were two gifts of tongues (one the gift of language and the other the gift of ecstatic utterance), which there was not, then every time the gift of tongues is mentioned in the NT it means the gift of language. **to another the interpretation of tongues**: — The gift to translate unknown languages into one that was understood by those to whom it was addressed. This also proves that it was a language: ecstatic utterances have no meaning and are thus not susceptible of interpretation.

12:11 **But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit**, — But all these effects are produced by one and the same Spirit (Moffett). The HS worked the various gifts in all who received them. See note on v. 4. **dividing to every man severally** — Distributing to each one individually (NASV) or separately. Every man is limited to the context to those who had received a gift. **as he will**. — The HS is not only the author of the various gifts, He also determines who will receive each gift for the good of the whole body (v. 7). The fact

is here stated; the method by which the distribution was made was through the apostles: for it was by the laying on of their hands that the Spirit imparted the gifts.

UNITY OF THE BODY

12:12-13 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

12:12 **For** — Connects what follows with the preceding discussion of spiritual gifts. Thus the unity of the one body with its many members illustrates how the various gifts were the work of the one Spirit. **as the body** — The human body. **is one**, — A single unit made up of many parts. **and hath many members**, — Such as eye, ear, hand, foot, etc., each having its own peculiar function within the body. **and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body**: — And though all the parts are many, they form one body (NIV). A single member does not constitute the body; nor can a group of members separate themselves from the body and still function for it. The body is formed by the unity of all the members. **so also is Christ**. — So also is the body of Christ, the church. As the human body is one but yet with many members, so also the church is a single unit formed by one head and many members. All the members constitute only one body. There is no function of a member outside or apart from the body. This the divided religious world needs to learn, and with that knowledge they need to banish from the earth, once and for all, every religious body, whether great or small, that differs from the one body, whether in organization, name, doctrine, or practice, revealed in the NT.

12:13 This v. has been a fertile field for those who consider the work of the HS as some kind of mysterious influence, especially those who have used it as a proof text pertaining to the baptism of the HS. With little or no consideration for the contextual impact, those who believe that the baptism of the Spirit is a perpetual blessing given (or at least potentially so) to all Christians use it in total disregard to the internal difficulties it presents to them. For example, they believe that Christians, those already in the body, should seek HS baptism. According to them, some receive it; some do not. Yet they quote this passage to prove that it is for all. But in doing so they overlook an obvious fact: the baptism of this v. is the means of entrance into the one body. It is not something that is sought or received by those already in the body. If this v. actually teaches HS baptism, no one is in the body who has not been so baptized. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." It is conclusive then that HS baptism is not meant. The passage teaches that one is baptized into the one body where he is made to drink of the Spirit — the baptism puts one into the one body and after he is the body he then drinks of the one Spirit. Only those in the body drink of the Spirit, and only the baptized (with the baptism of the great commission) are

in the body. But in addition to this, baptism in the Spirit could not be meant here because of its purpose. The baptism of this v. puts one into the body of Christ, that which the baptism in the HS was never designed to do. While there are cases of baptism in the HS recorded in the NT, nowhere is it said that it puts the receiver into Christ, which is the same as being baptized into the body. The baptism that puts one into Christ is water baptism (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 8:35-39). While the HS authorizes this baptism, He is neither the administrator nor the element. The purpose of water baptism and the purpose of HS baptism are entirely different.

12:13 **For by one Spirit** — By the teaching or authority of the HS. When one is taught by the Spirit (through the Spirit-inspired Scriptures) to be baptized in the name of Christ (Mt. 28:18-20), he is baptized by the Spirit, not in the sense that the Spirit is the administrator or the element, but as the one who has revealed (authorized or directed) the baptism. **are we all baptized** — Baptized in compliance with the Spirit's teaching (as stated in the great commission and practiced by the early church). The Spirit's teaching on baptism contains at least nine components: (1) It is a command given by Jesus Himself (Mk. 16:16; Acts 10:48) — HS baptism was not a command; it was a promise; (2) it is a command to believers in Christ as God's Son (Mk. 16:16; Acts 8:35-38); (3) it is a command to a penitent believer (Acts 2:38; 17:30); (4) it is a burial into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12); (5) it is a burial in water (Jn. 3:23; Acts 8:35-39; 10:47-48) — water, not the HS, is the element; (6) it is a command to be obeyed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the HS (Mt. 28:18-20) — it is in the name of the Spirit, not in the Spirit as the element; (7) it is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) — Few if any claims HS baptism is for the remission of sins; (8) it puts the penitent believer into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3) — that is, into His body; (9) from it, one arises to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4-5) — that is, baptism is the point where the new life begins. There can be no question then but that the baptism here is the baptism taught by the HS throughout the NT — the baptism of the great commission, the baptism in water, the only baptism ever authorized for all by the Father, Son, and HS. **into one body**, — Into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) or His church, which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). **whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free**; — All are brought into the one body by baptism. There are no exceptions — no national, racial, or class limitations. All who are in the one body (that is, all Christians) have been baptized by the Spirit's authority into the one body. There is no other way of entrance. Thus the number who have received this baptism is as extensive as the number in the body — there is no one in the body who has not been baptized into it. But no one should be so foolish as to claim that every Christian has been baptized in the HS. **and have been all** — All (not just a selected few) who have been baptized with the baptism taught by the HS. **made to drink into one Spirit**. — Made to drink of one Spirit (ASV). Everyone baptized into the one body drinks of (receives) the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11; Acts 2:38). Or as Vincent says, "The reference is to the reception of the

Spirit in baptism." This is just another way of saying that when one is in the body of Christ he has access to all the spiritual benefits provided by the Spirit in the scheme of human redemption. Thus rather than teaching HS baptism (the Spirit as the element), this v. actually teaches that those who are baptized (in water for the remission of their sins) receive the Spirit after they are baptized into the one body. (For a lengthy discussion of this v. see the chapter in my book *The Work of the Holy Spirit* entitled "The Spirit and Baptism Into One Body.")

FUNCTION OF THE BODY

12:14-26 For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

12:14 **For the body** — The human body, but by analogy the church (v. 27). **is not one member, but many.** — The body is a unit made up of many members, each filling the purpose for which it was made, but working in complete cooperation with the other members (vv. 15-16). So in the church, every member has a God-given function to perform but in cooperation with the function of the whole body. No member, however, either of the human body or of the church, can function apart from the body.

12:15-16 **If the foot** — One part of the body. **shall say, Because I am not the hand,** — Another part of the body. **I am not of the body;** — Separate from the body and thus not necessary to its function. **is it therefore not of the body?** — That does not make it any less a part of the body (Williams). Saying it does not change the fact nor does it relieve it from its proper function. "The body is not one member, but many" (v. 14). And each member is designed to serve its own peculiar function. **And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?** — The ear cannot see, but neither can the eye hear, but both seeing and hearing are vital to the body. The point is that each part of the body is a vital part of the whole. It is not another part and it cannot replace another part, but it has its own role in the body's service. So it is in the body of Christ. Each member serves the appointed function assigned to him by God (v. 18). Thus no member of the body should be envious of the service (in context, a spiritual gift or gifts) rendered by another member, nor should he seek the office or work

God has given to another. The whole body functions as a unit. Or as Willis observes: "For a deacon to complain that he is not an elder, for a teacher to complain that he is not a preacher, or for one who had the gift of healing to complain because he could not speak in tongues is no less absurd than for a foot to complain because it is not a hand."

12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? — If the whole body were an eye, how could we hear (Beck)? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? — A body composed of only one member could not function. One part of the body is not independent of other parts. The eye sees and the ear hears but they could not see and hear without the brain. The brain could not speak without the tongue. The foot could not walk without the leg. The point here is that every part of the body has its own vital function which the body depends upon. So it is in the church: every member has his own place in God's scheme of things, but in order to fill that place he must depend upon the remainder of the body working as a unit. For example, all are not evangelists, but the evangelists depend upon the church for their support; the evangelists may not add greatly to the local program of work, but the church depends upon them to carry the message of truth to places where Christ has not been named, to convert souls, and to start more churches. The church and the evangelists are interdependent, as are all members and functions of the body.

12:18 But now hath God — The Designer and Creator of the body (Gn. 1:26-28). **set the members every one of them in the body, —** He arranged the members in the body so that each could serve its creative purpose. **as it hath pleased him. —** Just as He saw fit (BV) or just as He wanted them to be (NIV). If the ear pleased God as a hearing instrument, why should it desire to be an eye? If one's function in the church pleases God, though lowly it may seem, why should he complain and why should he desire the work God has given to another? His own work is that for which the Lord saved him and added him to the church (cf. Acts 2:47).

12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? — The human body is an organism made up of numerous parts, each depending upon the others. There could thus be no body if there was only one part or function.

12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. — Here he reaches a climax in his emphasis. The subject matter is the human body, but by analogy it means the church. While there were many members, each had his God-given function (v. 18). There was only one church. That is the way it was then; that is the way it should be now. Sectarian division arose in the church soon after apostolic times and has grown increasingly worse with the passing centuries. It was neither born, grew, nor maintained by God's design or approval. It should therefore be abandoned and left to die. All God's people should stand together in one united body upon the basis of the Bible and the Bible alone; they should be one body, directed by one Spirit, having one hope,

serving one Lord, living by one faith, entering the body by one baptism, and glorifying one God (Eph. 4:4-6). The church can never be what Christ meant it to be until every member forms one united whole — until there is one body, one fold, one church, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. — Members of the body are interdependent, and in the final analysis one is as needful as the other. The body is a unit made up of many members (v. 20), and it would be absurd for one member to repudiate another as a part unneeded. So it is in the church, every member, regardless of how insignificant he may appear, is vital to the proper function of the body. It would therefore be absurd for one member to reject another as a useless appendage in the body of Christ. The church is not one member but many members perfectly joined together, each one working to benefit, not itself alone, but the whole body (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

12:22-23 Nay, much more — No, to the contrary. Rather than rejecting one another, all the parts of the body should be recognized for their contribution to the whole. **those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble,** — Weak or more delicate. This is the first of three classes of members listed that might be looked upon, if judged by appearance only, as unnecessary: (1) the more feeble; (2) the less honorable; and (3) the uncomely. I do not profess to know precisely which members Paul might have had in mind in each class, but undoubtedly they would include the weak or sickly, the mind (which must be protected by the skull cap), the heart (which is encased by the ribs), and the genitals (which cannot be publically exposed). **are necessary:** — Essential or indispensable to the function of the body. **And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour;** — Greater care is given to make them more presentable. Among other things, this may have reference to clothing the body. **and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.** — And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty (RSV). The point is that the most likely parts of the body to be rejected as unnecessary are the very ones on which the most care is bestowed and the ones without which the body cannot survive. Take for example the hand. How many times have you heard someone say, "I'm all thumbs," meaning that the thumb is always getting in the way? But the hand would be far less useful without the thumb. In fact, it is the most important part of the hand. (At this point, I tried to write without using the thumb. It was an experience! I could not even pick up the pen, and after using the thumb to help pick it up and place it between the fingers, I could not hold it, much less write.) So in the body of Christ, the most obscure member may be the one who keeps the church alive and active. The popular evangelist, the elder, the deacon, the song leader may receive more public praise, but back of them are scores of quiet Christians at work who go unobserved, but who are the light of the world and the salt of the earth — the very life of the church.

12:24 **For our comely parts have no need:** — While our presentable parts need no special treatment (NIV). The opposite of the uncomely parts (vv. 22-23). **but God hath tempered the body together,** — God has constructed (or blended together) the body so that all the members grow together, the honor of the comely depend upon them honoring and giving special treatment to the uncomely. **having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:** — Those parts, unlike the comely, which need special attention (see note on vv. 22-23), God has given the greater honor. While the greater honor probably refers to the special need that the less comely parts require, and while the eyes, nose, ears, and mouth need no such special attention (e.g., covering as does the genitals), God has given to the less comely greater honor. For example, the sex organs have the vital function of reproducing life itself.

12:25 **That there should be no schism in the body;** — God blended the body together so there would be no division or disharmony in it — so that every part is made for every other part. For this reason division in the human body is unthinkable. But is division in the body of Christ less incongruent? Division among Christians (into different sectarian bodies) is nothing short of mutiny against heaven. **but that the members should have the same care one for another.** — So that the parts of the body should be characterized by a mutual concern for each other. It is the will of God for this to be true in the church as well. Division was never a part of God's divine scheme for His people. Nor can indifference of one member toward another be justified.

12:26 **And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;** — God has tempered the body together into such a connective unit that one part cannot suffer without the other parts suffering along with it. I am writing this note in a motel room while away from home in a meeting. This morning I woke up at 4:00 a.m. with a kidney stone attack. But the kidney alone is far from being the only part of my body affected. My whole body is miserable with the pain. It is difficult for the mind to concentrate on anything but the pain; the ears have shut out other sounds that I would ordinarily hear; the eyes wander, making it all but impossible to read, even if the mind could concentrate; the tongue wants to do nothing but groan; the movement of the feet and legs are only to try to get in a less painful position. The whole body is in disarray because one member is suffering. **or one member be honoured,** — Healthy and filling its proper function; recognized for its achievement, such as the head crowned with glory or the intellect praised. **all the members rejoice with it.** — Every part shares in the happy experience. The point here is that when one member of the body of Christ suffers, all ought to suffer with him; when one is honored (with a spiritual gift) all should rejoice. No member should be envious of what God has given to another.

THE BODY IS THE CHURCH

12:27-31 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?

are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

12:27 Now ye — The Corinthian Christians, but in principle all Christians. **are the body of Christ**, — The church (Eph. 1:22-23). Paul thus makes application of the analogy he had given of the human body (vv. 12-26). Just as each part of the human body is an integral part of the whole, each member of the congregation at Corinth helped form the body of Christ in that community. **and members in particular**. — That is, each individual member has his God-given place in the body (vv. 18, 24) and in that place he serves his function. Members do not serve their function for their benefit alone, but for the benefit of the whole body. The work of each member is the work of the church through that member.

12:28 And God hath set some in the church, — In tempering the body together (v. 24) or by placing each member in it, God appointed each a particular function. The context is concerned with miraculous gifts, but by principle the same would be true after the miraculous ceased. **first apostles**, — First in order and in spiritual power. The apostles were chosen by Christ (Mt. 10:1-4) and commissioned by Him (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16) to be His ambassadors to the world (2 Cor. 5:19-21). He endowed them with power from on high (Lk. 24:49; Acts 2) to reveal (Jn. 16:13), confirm (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4), and deliver the truth (Jude 3), the divine plan to save. While they had power to confer on others certain miraculous gifts (Rom. 1:11), no one else received the power or the authority of an apostle. They were the first and the last of their order. (Paul's call and commission came later than the others, but he was an apostle nonetheless, 15:8-11). **secondarily prophets**, — Second prophets (NASV). Those who spoke for God (see note on v. 10). **thirdly teachers**, — Those who were miraculously endowed to teach, probably including those with the gift of knowledge (see note on v. 8). Teachers remain in the church today but here Paul has in view, not the teacher who uses his natural ability to learn and then to impart knowledge, but the one to whom God had divinely endowed with this gift. **after that** — Then (ASV). That is, in declining order. **miracles**, — A miracle is a direct act of God — an effect in the natural realm without the use of natural causes. When one was given the gift of miracles in apostolic times he was empowered to work wonders by the direct power of God exerted through him (cf. v. 10). **then gifts of healings**, — See note on v. 9. **helps**, — Helpers (Williams). This has reference to one empowered to assist others. Probably a similar if not identical work assigned to a deacon (1 Tm. 3:8-13; cf. Acts 6:1-6). **governments**, — Administrations (NASV). Directors, counselors, or advisers. Probably those who led the church (by miraculous endowment) until elders were developed and appointed. At any rate, their work seems to have been similar to if not identical with that of elders (see 1 Tm. 3:1-7; 1 Pt. 5:1-4). **diversities of tongues**. — The gift to speak in different languages (see note on v. 10).

12:29-30 These vv. are composed of seven rhetorical questions, each demanding a negative answer. **Are all apostles?** — No. **are all prophets?** — No. **are all teachers?** — No. **are all workers of miracles?** — No. **Have all the gifts of healing?** — No. **do all speak with tongues?** — No. **do all interpret?** — No. Each member has his own function in the body, and one should not be envious of the gift or gifts of another. Nor should one conclude that he is not needed because his is not the function of another — that is, the teacher should not conclude that because he is not an apostle he is therefore inferior and could easily be dispensed with. It takes all the members, each performing his own God-given function, to make up the body of Christ, the church.

12:31 **But covet earnestly** — But earnestly desire (NASV). This expression may be either indicative (and would thus translate, “Because you earnestly desire,” as in BV and MacKnight) or imperative (as in the KJV, ASV, NASV and others). The imperative rendering is more in harmony with the context. It was thus not wrong for them to have aspirations for spiritual gifts; it was wrong however for them to conclude that the gifts were primary and the most important aspect of Christianity. **the best gifts:** — The greater, higher, or more useful gifts of prophecy and teaching (cf. v. 28). But even if they desired, sought, and received the higher gifts, there was still something in Christianity far superior (something beyond comparison) to them, something available to everyone, not just to a selected few. **and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.** — A way that is far better than the highest or greatest gifts; it is the way of love (see chapter 13), the way par excellence.

1 CORINTHIANS 13

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

The more excellent way is the way of love, to which this chapter is devoted in its entirety. And not only is the way more excellent, the expression of it here is most excellent — the highest and grandest statement of Christian love ever spoken or written in human language. Here is seen the necessity of it (1-3), the meaning of it (4-7), and the duration of it (8-13). It is therefore obvious that if we are to understand this chapter we must have, at least to some degree, an adequate conception of NT love. To obtain this conception, perhaps it would help to look at the four Greek words for love (there are several other words that express various nuances of love but these are basic and are sufficient to illustrate the point): (1) *Storge*, or natural love, such as the love of family. It is natural for parents to love their children and for children to love their parents. While the word is not limited to family love, the love of family illustrates its nature. This word does not appear in the NT except in a negative form (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tm. 3:3), where it is translated “without natural affections.” (2) *Eros*. This is passionate, romantic, or sexual love. While the idea is not absent from the Bible, the word itself is not used by any inspired writer. (3) *Philia*. This may be described as friendship love, often love in which one is emotionally involved with the object and derives pleasure and delight from it. The word, in one form or another, appears about 45 times in the NT. (4) *Agape* or Christian love, love not conditioned upon natural ties, passionate desires, or emotional involvement. It is love with no strings attached — love not conditioned upon the status, response, or lovability of the object, love the nature of which is affectionate concern rather than mental or emotional attachment or attractiveness. In short, it is willed love. The word, in all of its forms, appears about 320 times in the NT, and is the word used in this chapter and translated by the KJV by charity. We are not to understand that the sharp distinction between the Greek words made here obtains in all cases. It does not, and I have given only enough to illustrate the nature of the love each word expresses. But they are often, especially in the case of *philia* and *agape*, overlapping in meaning and may occasionally be used synonymously or nearly so. But we are to understand that Christian love, while they may also be involved, rises above natural ties, passionate desires, and emotional involvement. Natural love is the result of nature (the nature of the case); passionate love results from God-given instincts; emotional love rises or falls with the feelings; concerned love is an act of the will — it is love by

deliberate choice, a love that prizes the object because of its worth, a love with no conditions attached.

THE NECESSITY OF LOVE

13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

13:1 **Though I speak with the tongues of men** — The language of men. That is, if he were endowed by the Spirit to speak in every language known to men. This positively indicates that Paul throughout this section (12-14) has known languages in mind when he speaks of tongues rather than some mysterious language of ecstasy. **and of angels,** — Angelic language (BV) or the tongues of angels. This has reference to the means by which heavenly beings communicate one with another. The point is that if he could speak in all the languages of both heaven and earth, in the absence of love he would be nothing — all his services would be futile. **and have not charity,** — But do not have love (NASV), the unconditional concern which seeks the welfare and benefit of its object, not because of the pleasure one finds in it but because of its value or worth. In a Bible class where I was speaking on our obligation as Christians to love everyone throughout the whole world enough to make whatever sacrifice possible to take the saving gospel to them, someone spoke up and asked, “How can we love someone in a foreign country we have never seen?” We cannot if we think only in terms of natural, passionate, or emotional love, but we can with the kind of love with which Paul is here concerned, the kind which is concerned for the welfare of all, even one’s enemies (Mt. 5:43-44). The nature of this love is to prize highly the worth and value of the object even when there is no personal pleasure or delight in view for the lover. It is love for the sake of value and not for the sake of what one may receive in return (cf. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8). **I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.** — I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (NASV). Without love, regardless of how many tongues with which one may have been endowed to speak, he would be no better than a noise that has no value beyond the sound itself, a noise that soon dies out on the air and leaves nothing behind.

13:2 **And though I have the gift of prophecy,** — The gift to receive the will of God by revelation and to deliver it to man by inspiration (see notes on 11:4; Rom. 12:6). As examples of how one might prophesy and still be of no value to the true Israel of God, consider Balaam (Nm. 22-24; 31:16) and Caiaphas (Jn. 11:49-52). **and understand all mysteries,** — And know every kind of hidden truth (Beck), that is, know all the secret or unrevealed things of God (Dt. 29:29). See note on 2:7. **and all knowledge;** — Referring to super-

natural knowledge, and probably that gift of knowledge mentioned in 12:8. **and though I have all faith**, — Miraculous faith (see note on 12:9), that kind of faith that manifests itself in the working of wonders. **so that I could remove mountains**, — Move them by the power and gift of God (cf. Mt. 17:20; 21:21). **and have not charity**, — Love. **I am nothing**. — Have no spiritual value nor lasting worth; or as Robertson (WP) says, “An absolute zero,” vain and useless, not serving any purpose of God.

13:3 **And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor**, — Dole out or distribute all his possessions for benevolent purposes. To share with those in need is a virtue prescribed throughout the Bible (Lv. 23:22; Ps. 112:9; Prv. 22:9; 28:27; Dn. 4:27), and especially the NT (Mt. 19:21; Eph. 4:28; Jas. 1:27). But Paul here supposes a case where he goes beyond sharing: he gives all, everything he has, gives until there is nothing left either for himself or others. “The poor” are supplied words but they, or a similar thought, are undoubtedly implied. **and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity**, — If he made the supreme self-sacrifice, that is, if he delivered his body up to be burned at the stake as a martyr. Life is the greatest gift that can be made — it is the ultimate sacrifice. Surely if anything could merit man’s salvation (or favor with God) or make him worthwhile, this could. But not so. Without love the greatest sacrifice man can make has no eternal benefits. **it profiteth me nothing**. — I get from it no good at all (Williams). It would not be counted as righteousness (see note on Rom. 4:3), and would thus be of no value at all in eternal matters. Love must be the foundation, the underlying motive, of every action. Without it all deeds, regardless of the sacrifice they may entail, are worthless and profitless.

THE MEANING OF LOVE

13:4-7 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

13:4-7 In this section Paul is not so much defining love as telling us what it is or giving its fundamental nature. He personifies it by describing the kind of person it would be. Thus its nature is to be longsuffering and kind. Its nature does not permit it to envy, or boast, to be puffed up, to behave itself unseemly, to seek its own, to be easily provoked, or think evil. It is its nature to rejoice in truth, not in iniquity, and to bear, believe, hope, and endure all things. Henry Drummond, in his famous address on “The Greatest Thing in the World” divided vv. 4-6 into nine ingredients of love, as follows:

Patience . . . “Love suffereth long.”

Kindness . . . “And is kind.”

Generosity . . . “Love envieth not.”

Humility . . . “Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.”

Courtesy . . . “Doth not behave itself unseemly.”

Unselfishness . . . “Seeketh not her own.”

Good Temper . . . “Is not easily provoked.”

Guilelessness . . . “Thinketh no evil.”

Sincerity . . . “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

To this I would add a tenth, from v. 7:

Tolerance . . . It bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things.

Another meaningful way to see the force of the description here is to read it in the KJV as it appears. Then read it again substituting the word love for charity. Since Christ is a perfect personification of love, read it a third time substituting Christ for love. Now since a Christian is a follower of Christ, conformed to His image (Rom. 8:28-30), we can justly read it a fourth time inserting in the place of love a Christian. But do not stop here (even though it may cause a little shiver to run up and down your spine), let each Christian read his own name in the place of love. While all of us will fall far short of depicting love as it ought to be, it ought to help us see its vitality — it will help us see what we would be if we loved as we should love.

13:4 **Charity suffereth long**, — Love endures long (BV). When wrong is heaped upon it by others, it endures with much patience and meekness (cf. 1 Pt. 2:23). That is, it is long on endurance. **and is kind**; — It is always considerate, good natured, courteous, and quick to lend a helping hand. **charity envieth not**; — Love is not jealous (RSV). It has no desire to possess another’s possessions nor to deprive him of what is his. It is not hurt when another is honored or succeeds. **charity vaunteth not itself**, — Love does not brag (NASV). It does not demand the place of honor nor does it show off by parading its virtues before others. **is not puffed up**, — It is not filled with pride, conceit, or arrogance — “It does not put on airs” (Goodspeed). In short, it does not look down on others as inferiors.

13:5 **Doth not behave itself unseemly**, — Does not act unbecomingly (NASV) or with rudeness (Williams). It makes no obscene, haughty, or riotous gestures; rather it acts becomingly on all occasions. **seeketh not her own**, — It is not self-serving (NIV). It does not seek its own interest and desires alone. Forgetting self, it looks to the welfare of others. It respects the rights, feelings, and possessions of its object. **is not easily provoked**, — Is not provoked (ASV), irritable (RSV), or angered (NIV). It does not fly into a rage but rather holds its temper. It does not seek revenge. **thinketh no evil**; — Taketh no account of evil (ASV). It keeps no records — that is, it does not keep books in order to repay evil for evil. Vincent (WS) quotes Godet as saying, “Love, instead of entering evil as a debt in an account book, voluntarily passes the sponge over what it endures.”

13:6 **Rejoiceth not in iniquity**, — Does not delight in evil (NIV). Is never glad when wrong is done (Williams). It takes no pleasure in wrongdoing; it finds no joy in unrighteousness. It is the opposite of having pleasure in the wicked (Rom. 1:32). **but rejoiceth in the truth**; — But rejoiceth with truth

(ASV). It takes pleasure with standing side by side with truth in what is right. Both love and truth are personified and love shares with truth in all that is right and against all that is false. Truth is the gospel or saving truth (15:1-4), that which makes men free (Jn. 8:32), is personified in Christ (Jn. 14:6), and is revealed in the word of truth (Jn. 17:17; 2 Tm. 2:15). To rejoice with truth is to delight in all that is good, pure, holy, and right in the sight of God.

13:7 **Beareth all things**, — It bears up under anything (Williams). It suffers any affliction or persecution with which it is faced without seeking revenge (cf. Rom. 12:20). The word may mean to bear (in the sense of suffer without complaint, as in 9:12) or to cover (in the sense that love covers the multitude of sins, Prv. 10:12; 1 Pt. 4:8). While either meaning will fit the context well, it seems to me that the former is more likely the case. **believeth all things**, — Always eager to believe the best (Moffett). This does not mean gullible but rather eager to put the best construction on all words, deeds, or dispositions in others. This is the exact opposite of what most of us do: when we have a choice, we usually believe the worst instead of the best. But not so with love. **hopeth all things**, — Hopes under all circumstances (BV). That is, it does not lose hope when things seem hopeless. It is an eternal optimist and sees the silver lining on every cloud. **endureth all things**. — It perseveres regardless of how perverse the circumstances may become — no hardship or discouragement can cause it to flee in defeat. This seems to be an advance on “beareth all things.” By the power of endurance it is able to bear up (or hold out) under any kind of injury, insult, or pain (cf. 2 Tm. 3:12; 2:24).

THE PERMANENCY OF LOVE

13:8-13 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

13:8-13 This section contrast the temporary with the permanent — the temporary being the miraculous as it relates to the incomplete (incomplete because all God’s will had not been revealed and the Christian system was therefore known only in part) and the permanent being love as it relates to the full or perfect Christian system when it would be revealed in its completeness, when the revelation would furnish the man of God unto all good works (2 Tm. 3:16-17), as it did when it was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). Paul’s purpose is to demonstrate to the Corinthians why love is the more excellent way: it belongs to the permanent while the miraculous belongs only to the temporary. The Corinthians were seeking spiritual gifts (which was not wrong *per se*, 14:1) and obviously seeing them as the most important aspect of Christianity. But in this they were in serious error. The gifts (three of which are

named as representatives of all, prophecy, tongues, and knowledge) belonged to a temporary aspect of Christianity. They were given to reveal, confirm, and deliver the truth, the will of God to man. But once the full revelation was given, as it was when revelation was completed, the temporary, the miraculous, would be removed. The temporary might be thought of as molds into which concrete is poured. Once the concrete is set, once the structure is perfected, the molds have served their purpose and are no longer needed. They are then removed — in the words of this section, they cease or fail. So it was with spiritual gifts. If the Corinthians succeeded in obtaining them (and they were overly fond of the gift of tongues) they would have succeeded only in obtaining the temporary molds, something that was not an essential part of the perfected Christian structure. But not so with love. That is something entirely different. While the temporary (the miraculous) was to be removed when the perfect came, vv. 8-10, love was to remain — that is, it was a permanent part of the structure. The structure is the completed or perfect Christian system (which depended upon the completed revelation) and the contrast here pertains to that which is only a temporary part of that structure (the miraculous) and that which is a permanent part (love). He who misses this point misses Paul's teaching absolutely.

13:8 Charity never faileth: — Love never ends (RSV), fails (NIV), or perishes. It, unlike the spiritual gifts, is not temporary and will thus never become obsolete. The gifts were a part of the temporary arrangement and would pass away with it, but love would remain an integral part of the permanent, the perfect (v. 10). **but whether there be prophecies,** — But where there are prophecies (NIV) or the gift of prophecy (12:10; see notes on 11:4; Rom. 12:6). **they shall fail;** — They will be brought to an end. The gift of prophecy would serve its purpose, would cease to exist, and be superseded by the completed revelation. A prophet received the revelation from God (through the Spirit) and delivered that revelation by inspiration (of the Spirit). Once the revelation was completed and delivered (which it now is in the NT) there was no further need for prophets and prophecy because no further message can be added to the perfect, the complete. Today, as DeHoff says, "No preacher or teacher has any message from God unless he gets it from the Bible." There are therefore no prophets today and have not been since the completed revelation was delivered. One should not confuse the gift of prophecy with the message spoken or the event foretold by the prophets. No prophecy from God ever failed to come to pass. Once the true prophet spoke, the fulfillment of his prophecy was as certain as if it had already happened (cf. Dt. 18:20-22). It is the gift of prophecy and not prophecy itself that would cease or fail. **whether there be tongues,** — Where there are tongues (NIV) or the gift of language, the type which characterized the apostles on the day of Pentecost (see note on 12:10). **they shall cease;** — They will stop (Beck). They will come to an end because they will have, as the other gifts, served their purpose. That is, they will run their course and stop (make themselves cease) because their end has been reached, their purpose has been served. Or as Robertson (WP) says, "They

shall make themselves cease or automatically cease of themselves." **whether there be knowledge**, — Where there is the gift of knowledge (see note on 12:8). **it shall vanish away**. — It will soon be set aside (Williams) or be brought to an end. Identical expression with that said of prophecies. The contrast here is between love, which belongs to the mature, the complete, the permanent, and the miraculous gifts, which belong to the temporary or partial (v. 9). Love will remain with the permanent and the miraculous will pass away with the temporary. That is to say, love will hold its place but the gifts will give way to (be superseded by) the perfect, mature, or complete.

13:9 **For we know** — For our knowledge (RSV). Paul has in view here the gift of knowledge, called the word of knowledge in 12:8. The context mandates that it be so understood. **in part**, — Is imperfect (RSV). The knowledge (derived from the gift) is incomplete or partial in contrast with that which is perfect (v. 10) or complete. This necessarily implies that those with the gift of knowledge did not possess the full revelation — their knowledge was fragmentary and incomplete. The whole body of truth (which would make possible the completed Christian system) had not yet been given. Moffett translates it, "For we only know bit by bit." This can be illustrated by the fact that the church existed from Pentecost to Cornelius (Acts 10) before the full revelation was given that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as for Jews. The matter of circumcision was not settled until Acts 15. Some things pertaining to marriage had not been revealed (at least to the Corinthians) until Paul wrote this epistle (7:1-39). During the age of miracles the church survived on revelation bit by bit, but that would change when revelation was given in its totality, which it now is (2 Tm. 3:16-17; 2 Pt. 1:3-4). **and we prophesy in part**. — Each one who had the gift of prophecy revealed only a part of the total body of truth. Thus the gift of prophecy (the receiving and delivering revelation), as is seen in v. 8, belonged to the time when God's will was still being revealed, before the parts formed the complete, perfect, or whole system. It is a mistake to conclude that Paul is here contrasting the Christian age with heaven or the age to come. His contrast continues to be between the temporary and the permanent.

13:10 **But when that which is perfect is come**, — The Christian system when it is mature, complete, and full grown because revelation has been given in its totality — when the temporary has been removed and the structure stands complete. The temporary (of which miracles were a part) was the operation of the system as it was being built on the bit-by-bit revelation the early disciples had delivered to them by the prophets; the permanent (the perfect) was the mature, complete, or full-grown system which would have the full revelation of God at its disposal. Contrary to popular belief, Paul is not looking to the second coming of Christ, the end of the present order, and the perfection of heaven. His contrast is between the temporary and the permanent in Christianity. The perfect then is the time when revelation would be complete and the man of God would be thoroughly furnished unto every good work — perfectly equipped with everything necessary to be saved from sin, to live the Christian

life, and to go to heaven. The best commentary on the perfect here is Eph. 4:11-14. There Paul shows that miraculous functions were given *till* (up to the time of) all would come together in the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ so that *henceforth* (after the perfect came) they would not be led about with every wind of doctrine and by cunning craftiness. That time was coming when the permanent would replace the temporary, the time when the Christian system would cease to be under construction and would stand as a completed structure. The complete revelation would be the material (the concrete) out of which the system was built. For this reason one is not wrong when he says that the perfect is the full revelation. But this is true only because the completed structure (the Christian system) depends upon the full and complete revelation. The perfect is the whole scheme of God for the salvation of souls when it is completely revealed, and that scheme was completely revealed only when revelation was completed (1:18-2:16). **then that which is in part shall be done away.** — What is imperfect will be set aside (Williams) or superseded (Moffett). When the structure is completed, the builders (the apostles and prophets and others with spiritual gifts) and their tools (miracles) will vanish from the scene. They will have served their purpose, finished their job, and will go away. The builders are temporary; the building is permanent.

13:11-12 Here we have two illustrations of the principle discussed in vv. 8-10. The temporary is illustrated by childhood and seeing through a glass darkly and the permanent by manhood and seeing face to face. The child is in contrast with the man and seeing through a glass darkly is in contrast with seeing face to face. The contrast continues to be between the now (while the incomplete system is being supported by the miraculous) and the then (when the perfect will supersede the partial).

13:11 **When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child:** — When he was a child he had all the characteristics of childhood. So the Christian system in its infancy had some characteristics which would not be a part of its permanent structure. **but when I became a man,** — Now that I am become a man (ASV). **I put away childish things.** — I've given up the ways of a child (Beck). When he reached adulthood the characteristics of childhood were left behind. So it is with the Christian system. This fact is perfectly summarized by the period of incomplete revelation (characterized by the temporary) and the period of complete revelation (characterized by the permanent).

13:12 **For now** — During the period of the incomplete or partial. **we see through a glass, darkly;** — We see in a mirror dimly (NASV) or indistinctly (BV). In the illustration he sees only a reflection, not the real person (not face to face), and that reflection illustrates the difference in the Christian system when it was under construction and the completed structure (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Jas. 1:23-24). **but then** — When the perfect comes (see v. 10). **face to face:** — Not just the reflection but the real person. This is in contrast with seeing in a glass

darkly. **now I know in part**; — At present I am learning bit by bit (Moffett). See notes on vv. 9-10. **but then shall I know** — But then shall I know fully (ASV), but then shall I understand (Moffett). Then, when the revelation is complete, the partial will be superseded by the whole. **even as also I am known**. — As all along I have myself been understood (Moffett). The point is that when the perfect comes they would no longer be confined to the bit-by-bit revelation. They would then have the perfect or completed revelation. That we now have in the NT.

13:13 **And now** — And so (Williams) or there remains (BV). The now here is not in contrast with the then (as in vv. 11-12, but rather spans both the time when Paul wrote [the time of the partial, v. 12]) and the time (when the perfect would come) which would supersede it (and of course love will continue beyond time into eternity, but that goes beyond Paul's point here). Faith, hope, and love were a permanent part of the Christian system, both when the system was revealed in part and after the revelation was complete. **abideth** — Remain. That is, they are permanent. **faith**, — Confidence and conviction derived from credible testimony (Jn. 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17). **hope**, — A combination of eager anticipation and confident expectation. **charity**, — Love. **these three**; — Faith, hope, and love. **but the greatest of these is charity**. — Love is greater than either faith or hope. How is this so? Paul does not say, but probably because it is divine in nature and permanent in duration. Perhaps we could paraphrase it: These three are permanent (in the Christian system), but the most permanent of these is love (because it will endure in eternity). All three would continue as a permanent part of the Christian system, but in the world to come faith (as we now know it) will be absorbed in sight (in reality) and hope in absolute fruition (Rom. 8:24-25), but love will continue forever. This makes it more permanent, more lasting, eternal in nature and thus greater than either faith or hope (cf. Mt. 22:37-40). Those who hold that the now of vv. 10-13 is the present and the then eternity have expended an amazing amount of ingenuity on trying to show how faith and hope will continue in heaven, but all their effort avails them nothing because it misses Paul's point. While I do not question the fact that in some specialized sense faith and hope will continue in eternity (certainly we will not be hopeless unbelievers), but it will not be true of faith as the belief of testimony (cf. 2 Cor. 7:5) or of the hope which when seen is no more hope (Rom. 8:24-25). The commentators could have saved all their effort simply by recognizing the context of the passage and giving their exegesis in keeping with it (as I have done). Paul did not have in view the present time and eternity to come (regardless of how attractive and appealing that might be) but rather the temporary nature of the miraculous and the permanent nature of love — that which belonged to the Christian system while it was under construction and that which would remain a permanent part of it after the construction was completed.

1 CORINTHIANS 14

It might be well to refresh our memory: chapter 12 enumerates the spiritual gifts, chapter 13 shows their duration, and chapter 14 gives their regulation in the assembly. Since all spiritual gifts have ceased (the temporary has been superseded by the permanent, 13:8-13) and there are now no assemblies where they are exercised, the regulations imposed can be applied now only in principle. Obviously, if we have no spiritual gifts, the instructions for their regulation in an assembly do not apply to us. However, all do not accept the plainly taught fact that miracles ceased with the completed revelation. This is especially true of the modern glossolalia movement, which makes the claim that the gift of tongues in this chapter is the gift of ecstatic utterance (rather than a language). But if this were true (and it is not) it would necessitate two gifts of tongues, one that of language (as is seen throughout the book of Acts and strongly implied in chapters 12 and 13) and the other that of ecstatic utterance. But by what reason or logic are we to conclude that the Corinthians received a gift not mentioned a single time in Acts, the history of the church? In my judgment, the only possible reason to conclude that Paul here has in view ecstatic utterances would be if the context was such as to force this conclusion. But the fact is to the contrary: the context forces us to the exact opposite conclusion when what is actually said is observed. Notice: (1) tongues are listed with the other spiritual gifts (12:8-10, 28-30), everyone of which was practical and served a purpose in the development of the Christian system. The language of ecstasy serves absolutely no purpose (except to give an emotional charge to the receiver). (2) They were to be done away (13:8-10). The gift of language has ceased. (3) They could be interpreted or translated (vv. 5, 13-17). Ecstatic utterance has no meaning and cannot be interpreted except as the supposed interpreter imposes his own meaning upon it (and no two interpreters have even been known to give the same interpretation of ecstatic utterance under controlled conditions). (4) Tongues have a distinction in sound (vv. 6-8). The ecstatic has no distinct sound for a distinct meaning. (5) Tongues are connected with the understanding (vv. 10-12). No one understands ecstatic gibberish. (6) Tongues are connected with the voice (vv. 10-12), which has significance here because it means the voice of speech (v. 11). Ecstatic utterance has no speech significance. (7) Paul himself spoke in tongues more than all the Corinthians (vv. 18-20). Since his speaking in tongues was in the context of Acts (where it is always the gift of language), and since he

traveled widely preaching the gospel in many different nations, we can be absolutely certain that he exercised the gift of language, not a useless utterance. (8) Other tongues of the law (v. 21) means other languages, such as is recorded in Acts. Anyone who can look at these eight facts, which comprise the context of tongue speaking in this chapter, and then conclude that Paul is speaking about a language of ecstasy has the capacity to conclude anything he wishes: for he will not permit reason, facts, and truth to get in his way. But consider further: those who practice this physical phenomenon (and here they tell us the truth: for it is an ecstatic utterance, not a language known to anyone on earth) claim that such enables them to more adequately praise God. Yet they tell us that it is not of their own doing, not an act of man, but the Spirit taking control and working through them. They not only do not know what they are saying, they also claim that it is wholly of God — the Spirit taking complete control of their vocal cords and speaking through them. It is thus the Spirit, not the man, speaking. But if this is true, it is not man praising God, it is God praising Himself through an instrument whose will is not exercised and who has no idea as to what is being said. It is God speaking to and praising Himself, not man willingly praising God from his own heart and under his own power. (Incidentally, they have never bothered to inform us why it is more glorious to praise God in a “language” one does not understand than it is in one’s own tongue!) If God had wanted such praise it seems to me that He would have made Himself a tape recorder instead of a man. But God made man a free moral agent, one with the power and right to choose, and it pleases Him when His creatures choose to praise Him. What would it mean to God to mechanically use man as a means through which to praise Himself? Thus if ecstatic utterance is a means of praising God (and the glossolalist could not prove, even if the salvation of the whole world depended upon it, that he is not praising Satan instead of God), it is not the tongue speaker who is doing it — it is not the man himself praising God; it is God praising Himself through a will-less machine.

PROPHECY TO BE SOUGHT OVER TONGUES

14:1-5 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

14:1 **Follow after charity**, — Make love your aim (RSV) or pursue love constantly (by practice). As a Christian, I suggested that one read 13:4-7 substituting his own name for that of charity. Even though love will not be absent from one’s heart, this will enable him to see how far short he falls of the ideal and it will emphasize the need to grow in love or constantly pursue it all

the days of his life. No one ever graduates from the school of love. **and desire spiritual gifts,** — Be eager to have the gifts of the Spirit (Beck). The miraculous gifts as listed in 12:8-10. Thus the desire for the gifts was not wrong *per se*. It was wrong only when the desire became so great that it put the gifts ahead of the more important (or permanent) aspects of Christianity (e.g., love) or when sought and used for the wrong purpose (for selfish reasons rather than for the edification of others). **but rather that ye may prophesy.** — Especially the gift of prophecy (NIV). Throughout this section (12-14) prophecy is seen as the highest in the order of gifts. Thus Paul instructs them to aim for spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of prophecy because it would enable them to unerringly impart to others the divine revelation they had received. Tongues had a tendency to limit edification (vv. 2, 4), but prophecy expanded it (vv. 3-4). The gift of prophecy is therefore superior to the gift of tongues.

14:2 The reason why the gift of prophecy is to be desired over that of tongues is now advanced. **For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue** — For one who speaks in a tongue (RSV) or a foreign language, a tongue unknown to those to whom it is addressed. This is shown by the fact that it must be interpreted before it is understood (vv. 5, 13). The word unknown is supplied by the translators and should be dropped (as is done by the ASV and most other translations). If it is a tongue, that is, if it is speech, someone somewhere knows it. **speaketh not unto men,** — His address cannot be understood by men who are hearing it. The purpose of speech is to communicate (and thus to edify), but there is no communication when the hearers do not understand what is said. **but unto God:** — What he is saying can be understood only by God (when no one present understands it). **for no man understandeth him;** — No one in the assembly to which he is speaking. It should be obvious that an interpreter could understand him and translate what he said for the audience (if one was present) and were one present whose natural tongue was being spoken, he could understand. Paul's statement is limited by the context to no one in that particular assembly. **howbeit in the spirit** — Nevertheless by the Spirit (MacKnight). While a majority of translators and commentators hold that the KJV is correct here in rendering it the man's own spirit, I believe the context demands that we understand that he is speaking under the power and directions of the HS. Otherwise his speech is natural, not miraculous, as it was on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). But furthermore, what he speaks indicates that the contents are from the Spirit. **he speaketh mysteries.** — He is speaking secret truths (Williams) or matters of divine revelation. That is, he speaks things from God, things that would edify if they could have been understood. The word mystery in the NT means the things of God which were once hidden but are now manifest. While hidden, they were a mystery; when revealed, they became the revelation of the mystery. Paul's point here is that tongues are inferior to prophecy because in the assembly they serve no useful purpose in edifying others. At best, they are only a private communication with God (which could as effectively be done in

one's native tongue).

14:3 **But** — On the other hand (RSV). **he that prophesieth** — Delivers divine revelation under the power and influence of the HS. **speaketh unto men** — The prophet addresses man in understandable words. That is, he makes known the will of God to them in their own language. This is in contrast to the one who speaks only to God in a language unknown to those assembled (v. 2). **to edification**, — He speaks words which builds them up or helps them grow spiritually (2 Pt. 3:18). **and exhortation**, — Encouragement (Williams) or admonition. **and comfort**. — Consolation in times of distress. The last two words, exhortation and comfort, come from two Greek words with almost identical meaning. Perhaps the distinction can be seen in this (if indeed Paul had a distinction in view): the prophet offers both courage to face and conquer objective enemies (such as persecution) and comfort for subjective distresses and sorrows (such as results in time of death).

14:4 **He that speaketh in an unknown tongue** — See note on v. 2. **edifieth himself**; — He builds up none but himself. Here we run into a problem, to which I know no easy solution. It can be presented by the following question: Did the one speaking in tongues understand what he was saying? If the answer is yes, then why did he need to pray that he might interpret (vv. 5, 13)? Or why would someone else have to interpret for him (v. 28)? (There is an escape from this by saying he understood the tongue but he did not understand the language of the assembly. And while there is a possibility that he did understand when he spoke in a tongue, it is unlikely that he did not speak the language of the assembly, since Paul was addressing the Corinthian church which was undoubtedly made up of Greek-speaking people.) If on the other hand he did not understand the tongue, how was he edified or built up by speaking it? On this problem I offer three observations: (1) the emphasis is not the edification of the man himself. Rather it is a contrast between the value of self-edification and assembly edification. This is not to deny that he was edified; he was. But the contrast is between the prophet who edifies others and the tongue speaker who edifies only himself. The value of the former is far superior to the latter. That is the point here. (2) From the whole context I conclude that the man was not exercising his gift for the purpose of teaching (or to confirm the fact that he was engaged in the work of God) but rather as an act of public demonstration. He was just showing off his gift. Thus he was using the gift for the wrong purpose. The gifts were not designed as something with which to entertain an audience or for the receiver to demonstrate what he could do. All miracles, including the gift of tongues (v. 22), were given for the purpose of revealing, confirming, and delivering the word of God (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4). No gift was given for the benefit of the receiver alone. But here it was used as a demonstration of the speaker's skill to an audience (who could not understand what he said). (3) While the audience was not edified as it would have been with prophecy (or if they had understood the speaker's words) this demonstration was in some sense an edification to the speaker, but not

necessarily in the sense that he would be learning from what he said. He may or may not have understood the words he spoke in a foreign tongue, but the fact that he was speaking under the power and influence of the Spirit would have encouraged him and thus built him up. The demonstration did not have the same effects on the assembly. **but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.** — By speaking the revelation of God in an understandable language, the prophet builds up the church. He does more than just edify himself, he edifies the whole assembly (cf. v. 26).

14:5 **I would that ye all spake with tongues,** — Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues (NASV). The fact that some used the gift for the wrong purpose (v. 4) does not argue against the value of the gift itself when properly used. **but rather that ye prophesied:** — Deliver revelation in understandable words (v. 3). **for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues,** — The one who prophesies has a greater or more important function than he who speaks in a tongue when the tongue is not understood by his audience because he edifies the church (see vv. 2-4). It is far better for one to edify the whole church than to edify himself alone. That is the difference in value in prophecy and in tongue speaking (when no one in the assembly understands). The prophet is thus greater because he does more good. **except he interpret,** — Unless he translates what he says into the language of the people. This (and v. 13) shows that one could have both the gift of tongues and the gift to interpret. If he spoke in a tongue and then explained the meaning of what he had said, he would, as the prophet, edify the assembly, not just himself alone. In this case, his gift would be useful. **that the church may receive edifying.** — So that the congregation might receive instructions or be built up.

TONGUES, AN UNCERTAIN SOUND

14:6-9 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

14:6 **Now, brethren,** — Introduces some arguments to further show the uselessness of uninterpreted tongue speaking. **if I come unto you** — If he, as an apostle, should come to them. **speaking with tongues,** — Languages they could not understand. **what shall I profit you,** — The answer is nothing. There would be no profit at all unless he communicated the divine message to them in understandable words. **except** — Unless (ASV). **I shall speak to you** — In a language they understood. **either by revelation,** — By way of revelation (ASV). The means by which the mind or will of God was disclosed to chosen men. To make known a revelation, the spokesman had to communicate it to his hearers. **or by knowledge,** — By means of the gift of

knowledge (see note on 12:8). **or by prophesying**, — Delivering the divine message under the direction of the HS (inspiration). **or by doctrine?** — Or of teaching (ASV). The imparting of revelation. While it is difficult to distinguish between the four words here, it seems to me that Paul is emphasizing the necessity of communication in revelation as the means of disclosing the contents of the divine mind; in knowledge as the means of retaining that which was disclosed; in prophesying as the means of delivering revelation (by inspiration); and in teaching as the means of instructing in or imparting of the contents of revelation. That is, they would profit (be edified), not by the speaking in tongues, but only if he spoke by way of revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching. For him to speak in foreign tongues would frustrate the whole process.

14:7 **And even things without life giving sound**, — Inanimate or lifeless things, such as the following instruments. **whether pipe or harp**, — The pipe (flute) was a wind instrument, the harp a stringed. **except they give a distinction in the sounds**, — Music is the combination of successive tones intelligibly connected to create rhythm, melody, and harmony. If there were no distinction in the sounds, it would be impossible to determine the music intended. **how shall it be known what is piped or harped?** — It cannot be. And that is the very point illustrated concerning tongues. If one does not speak in an understandable language, a language where to those addressed each sound has a distinct meaning, no one can determine what is said, in which case, the speech (as far as results is concerned) is nothing more than a useless noise.

14:8 A second illustration on the same point is now added (to that of v. 7). **For if the trumpet** — Bugle (NASV). The instrument used by the military to give signals, such as to prepare for battle, to advance, or to retreat. **give an uncertain sound**, — Does not sound a clear call (Goodspeed). Only a distinct sound can give a distinct signal. **who shall prepare himself to the battle?** — The effectiveness of the signal, whether to prepare, to advance, or to retreat, depended upon its distinction in sound. And so it is with speech: every sound must bear a distinct meaning. Thus the futility of speaking in a language not understood — a language in which the sounds had no certain meaning to those who heard it.

14:9 **So likewise ye**, — So it is with you (NIV). Just as in the examples (vv. 7-8), unless the sound has meaning no one knows whether to prepare, attack, or retreat, so it is with foreign tongues: the sounds are absolutely meaningless unless there is communication, that is, understandable speech. **except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood**, — Unless you speak in words which have precise meanings, unless the words convey a distinct thought, no message is delivered and no edification occurs. **how shall it be known what is spoken?** — Unless the words are understood, unless they have a certain sound (v. 8), no one knows what is being said and the speech therefore serves no useful purpose. **for ye shall speak into the air**. — You

might just as well be talking to the air (Williams) or addressing empty space. Speech that is not understood is as useless as any other noise that has no purpose and dies out on the air (cf. 13:1).

EDIFICATION, THE AIM OF SPEECH

14:10-13 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

14:10 **There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world,** — Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world (NIV). Here (and in v. 11) Paul varies his expression (from tongues to voices) but the thought is the same, namely, there are many different tongues spoken throughout the world. **and none of them is without signification.** — Not one is without its own meaning (Williams). In every language the sounds (or words) are attached to certain concepts. And without that meaning communication is impossible. In my judgment, this irrefutably shows that Paul had in view known tongues (languages) throughout this section (the tongues were unknown only because they were spoken before an audience which did not understand them). Paul's point may be stated: There is no voice that is voiceless or (perhaps better) no language that is not a language.

14:11 **Therefore** — If then (ASV). **if I know not the meaning of the voice,** — If the sounds had no meaning to him he could not understand what was said. **I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian,** — To the Greeks in NT times, one was a barbarian (a foreigner) who did not speak the Greek language (and who was ignorant of Greek culture). The point is, if one does not understand the language spoken, it is to him nothing but unintelligible sounds — sounds which convey absolutely no meaning. **and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.** — And to my mind he will be talking gibberish himself (Moffett), that is, incoherent meaningless sounds which make no sense at all to the ones addressed.

14:12 **Even so ye,** — And you are in a similar situation (BV). That is, if you speak in tongues so that no one understands, you will be as a foreigner to those addressed (cf. vv. 10-11). **forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts,** — Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit (RSV), that is, since you are ambitious for miraculous gifts. Gifts is a supplied word, but the context makes it obvious that this is Paul's point. The Corinthians seemed to prefer tongues over all other gifts, but Paul has just shown their uselessness in a congregation when they are not understood. Gifts were not given for the purpose of entertaining an audience, but as a sign to unbelievers (v. 22). Thus, since they were greatly disposed to seek the gifts, Paul urges them to be practical and seek for the ones which would be useful to edification. **seek that ye**

may excel to the edifying of the church. — Seek the gifts so that you may abound in building up the church through edification. Tongues not understood had no power to edify. Prophecy did. Thus they were to desire the gift of prophecy (v. 1) and other practical gifts.

14:13 **Wherefore** — For this reason (NIV). A conclusion drawn from what has been said about the uselessness of tongues when they are not understood. **let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue** — A language unknown to those to whom it is addressed. For the futility of such, see vv. 6-11 along with the notes. **pray that he may interpret.** — Pray that he may also have the gift of interpretation so that when he speaks in a tongue he may interpret it for the hearers and thereby be able to edify them. If there is no interpreter, he is to keep silent (v. 28). It is my firm conviction that spiritual gifts came only by the laying on of apostolic hands (Acts 8:17; Rom. 11) and not directly as an answer to prayer. This v. does not conflict with this view. One could then pray for the gift of interpretation and God could answer his prayer through the imposition of the hands of an apostle, while the apostles were still on earth. But since there are now no living apostles, and since the means of receiving the gifts are no longer available, one's prayer to receive them now would be in vain.

PRIVATE USE OF TONGUES

14:14-17 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

14:14 Here he gives the reason why one who speaks in tongues should pray that he may interpret (v. 13). **For if I pray in an unknown tongue,** — If he prayed in a language not understood by those in the assembly. To speak in a language one did not know was of necessity done by the power of the HS. A useless babble, such as characterizes the Pentecostals today, can be imitated by almost anyone (and they freely admit that there are frauds among them), but only under the power of the Spirit could one speak in a language he did not know. **my spirit prayeth,** — Even though he prayed to God in a tongue, he was still addressing God with the heart (in spirit, Jn. 4:23-24). **but my understanding is unfruitful.** — His understanding did not produce the desired fruit of edification (cf. v. 17). That is, it did not help anyone but himself. In my judgment, he has reference not to his own personal understanding of the prayer (although it seems to imply that he did understand it), but rather to the understanding which it should produce in others (and would produce if he spoke in a known tongue) (cf. v. 16). While there is unquestionably some difficulty here, I believe it can be correctly paraphrased as follows: If I pray in a foreign language I am still worshiping God in spirit but my engagement in prayer does not edify others because they do not understand what is being said.

14:15 **What is it then?** — So what shall I do? (NIV) in view of the problem presented in v. 14. **I will pray with the spirit,** — Here we encounter another problem: does Paul mean he will pray in spirit (as in v. 14), that is, in his own heart, or does he mean that he will pray under the power of the HS, that is, pray when he speaks in a tongue? It seems to me that the results demand that we understand it as the latter. The contrast is between speaking (in tongues) only for one's own benefit and in speaking (in an understandable language) for the edification of others. When he was speaking (praying or singing) in a tongue not understood in the assembly he spoke to God only for himself (v. 2), but when he spoke in a language understood by others, he aided their understanding also. Thus he is saying, "I will pray even when I speak in a tongue" — pray when not interpreted and consequently not understood. **and I will pray with the understanding also:** — He would also pray when understood by all. **I will sing with the spirit,** — Same as praying with the spirit, except here it is singing. **and I will sing with the understanding also.** — Sing in words that could be understood. This is in contrast with singing in tongues. Two observations: (1) While this v. does not directly deal with praying and singing as acts of public service, indirectly it does show beyond any question that both were engaged in when the NT church assembled for worship. (2) Some have tried to justify the use of instrumental music in Christian worship by the word *psallo*, which is here translated sing. They say that *psallo* means to sing to the accompaniment of an instrument (or harp). But, while this was true of the word as used in pre-NT times and in other contexts, in the NT, as Thayer says, it means "to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praise of God in song." Robertson (WP) says, "*Psallo* originally meant to play on strings, then to sing with an accompaniment . . . and here apparently to sing without regard to an instrument."

14:16 **Else** — Since or otherwise. **when thou shalt bless with the spirit,** — Same as praying in the spirit of v. 16. **how shall he that occupieth the room** — How shall he that filleth the place (ASV). Not a certain room or place in the assembly but the position of being unlearned pertaining to the tongue spoken. **of the unlearned** — One who is illiterate, uneducated, untrained, or unskilled in the subject matter at hand. **say Amen** — Give positive assent to, approve of, or agree with what is said; to say amen is to say, "Let it be so." **at thy giving of thanks,** — Thanksgiving in prayer (1 Tm. 2:1). **seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?** — For he does not know what you are saying (Williams). The point is, if one does not understand what is said in a prayer, how can he join in or participate by giving his approval?

4:17 **For thou** — The one praying in a tongue. **verily givest thanks well,** — You are giving thanks well enough (Goodspeed). **but the other** — The unlearned or the one who does not understand what is being said (v. 16). **is not edified.** — Is not helped or built up by the prayer. One can properly and privately address God in tongue but he cannot edify a congregation which has no knowledge of what is being said.

EDIFICATION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TONGUE SPEAKING

14:18-20 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

14:18 **I thank my God**, — Thanks be to God (BV). He was grateful to God for what he had received. It was not by his own achievement that he outstripped them in languages but a gift of God. **I speak with tongues** — Different languages. **more than ye all**: — He had more occasions to speak in tongues than all of them combined. He traveled widely among many nations and there is no record of him having a problem communicating with any one, nor is there any indication that what he said ever had to be interpreted.

14:19 **Yet in the church** — When the congregation is assembled for public worship. **I had rather speak five words with my understanding**, — Five intelligible words (NIV) with my meaning understood (MacKnight). The contrast is between an understandable language (a language that instructs) and speaking with tongues (a language which no one in the assembly understood). **that by my voice I might teach others also**, — That I might instruct others also (ASV). That is, edify the whole congregation. **than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue**. — Than ten thousand words in a language nobody understands (Beck). The aim of teaching is not the multiplication of words but the impartation of knowledge. Thus Paul is saying that it was better to construct a single sentence (five words) that would instruct and build up the assembly than to preach for two hours in a foreign tongue.

14:20 **Brethren, be not children** — Be not immature or childish in the sense that you must be amused by the novel rather than the practical. This indicates that some were using the gift of tongues, not to edify the congregation, but for its amusement. In this they were more like children than men. **in understanding**: — In intelligence (Williams), mind (ASV), or thinking (RSV). That is, do not be childish in your thinking pertaining to the purpose of spiritual gifts. They were not given as a psychological plaything with which to entertain others or to give the possessor an emotional high. **howbeit in malice** — Malice is a deep-seated bitterness toward others which is evil, wicked, vicious, and base in character. **be ye children**, — Be ye babes (ASV). We are not to be as children in understanding, but we are to be as infants whose purity of heart prevents them from harboring baseness. **but in understanding be men**. — Be perfect, mature (full grown) as men in contrast to the immaturity of children. Willis sums up this point well: "What Paul is commanding is this: the Corinthians must grow up in their thinking. They must learn to appreciate the gifts which help them rather than those which amuse them."

TONGUES — A SIGN TO UNBELIEVERS

14:21-25 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

14:21 **In the law** — The OT. **it is written**, — A summary from Is. 28:11-12. **With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people**; — Other tongues in Isaiah was the tongues of the nations in which Israel would be held in bondage. Thus they can mean nothing but foreign languages spoken by foreign people. Since Paul makes application of this to tongue speaking in Corinth, there is simply no way to be honest with the text and not conclude that he has in mind unknown languages rather than ecstatic utterances. **and yet for all that** — And not even thus (AŞV). Paul's application means not even with the miraculous manifestation of speaking in a foreign language. **will they not hear me, saith the Lord**. — The application is obvious: the Lord was speaking to them (another positive demonstration that it was not the gibberish of ecstatic utterances) in tongues, a miraculous manifestation, and yet they would not hear Him or believe the divine message of truth. Barnes states my view exactly: "The passage in Isaiah has no reference to the miraculous gift of tongues, and cannot have been used by the apostle as containing any intimation that such miraculous gifts would be imparted. It seems to have been used by Paul, because the words which occurred in Isaiah would appropriately express the idea which he wished to convey . . . that God would make use of foreign languages for some valuable purpose. But he by no means intimates that Isaiah had any such reference; nor does he quote this as a fulfillment of the prophecy; nor does he mean to say, that God would accomplish the same purpose by the use of foreign languages, which was contemplated in the passage in Isaiah. The sense is, as God accomplished an important purpose by the use of a foreign language in regard to his ancient people, as recorded in Isaiah, so he will accomplish important purposes still."

14:22 **Wherefore tongues are for a sign**, — A miraculous sign (cf. Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4) to confirm that the gospel preached by the speaker was from God. **not to them that believe**, — The congregation or those who already believed in the divinity of Christ and His saving message. This positively shows that tongues were not given for the benefit of the believer *per se*, that is, to help the believer or give him some kind of emotional life or a spiritual advantage in praising God. **but to them that believe not**: — The miraculous manifestation enabled unbelievers (as on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-13) to see that it was a supernatural gift and that God was working in them to reveal

His will. **but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.** — But prophesying is a sign, not to the unbeliever, but to them that believe (ASV). The effect of prophesying is the opposite of that of speaking in tongues (vv. 23-25). The design of prophecy was to edify the believer by delivering to him God's will. To fill its design, it had to be understood. This is not to say that believers did not profit in any way by tongues or that unbelievers received no benefit at all by prophecy. Paul's point is to show that speaking in tongues is useless before a congregation of believers who do not understand what is said. Tongues were a sign that God was revealing His will; but prophecy made known that will.

14:23 **If therefore the whole church be come together into one place,** — The assembly of the whole congregation (cf. 11:33; Acts 20:7). **and all** — All who have the gift of speaking in tongues. This does not mean that they all spoke at once (vv. 28-31), but in a proper order. **speak with tongues,** — Foreign languages not understood by the assembly or those coming into it. **and there come in** — Come into the assembly where Christians are gathered for worship and edification. **those that are unlearned,** — Ignorant of what is happening; illiterate in the language being spoken. **or unbelievers,** — A heathen or a Jew who did not yet believe in Christ and the saving message of His gospel. **will they** — The ignorant and unbelieving. **not say that ye are mad?** — Indeed, they would. The only reasonable conclusion they could reach would be that the Christians were insane, having taken leave of their senses (cf. Acts 2:13). Or as Robertson (WP) puts it, "They will seem like a congregation of lunatics."

14:24 **But if all prophesy,** — If all who have the gift of prophecy speak in proper order the revealed will of God (under the power and inspiration of the HS), then all can understand. **and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned,** — See note on v. 23. **he is convinced of all,** — He sees the truth and is convinced or convicted of his sins by the word of God which is being spoken (cf. Jn. 16:7-11). This conviction should lead to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 17:30). **he is judged of all:** — He is called to account by all who speak. The judgement is not that of condemnation but that of examination, and probably means that he will be brought by the teaching of the word to examine his own heart and life and thus see his lost condition. The contrast is between speaking in tongues (v. 23), which have no useful effects upon the assembly, and in speaking the word of God in an understandable language, with the desired effects of reaching and teaching the unbelieving and the unlearned. The conclusion: prophecy is of greater worth than speaking in tongues.

14:25 **And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest;** — The secrets of his heart are disclosed (RSV). The real condition of his heart would be brought to light by the preaching of the word (Heb. 4:12). One of the purposes of preaching is to bring men to a knowledge of God as the Creator and Ruler. The word will prick the heart and cause one to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" See Acts 2:36-38. **and so falling down on his face he will**

worship God, — He will be converted — become a believer in God and worship Him as God. **and report** — Declare or exclaim. **that God is in you of a truth**. — God is certainly here among you (Beck) (cf. Dan. 2:47). Thus speaking in tongues had the effect of making public worship look foolish; prophesying on the other hand had the effect of bringing the unbelieving and ignorant to a saving knowledge of the gospel (Jn. 8:32).

ORDER IN WORSHIP

14:26-33 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

14:26 **How is it then, brethren?** — Then what is the right course, brothers (Goodspeed)? In view of what was said in vv. 22-25, what was the order or rule to follow when they are assembled? **when ye come together**, — When you meet together as a congregation for worship and edification. **every one of you** — Not literally everyone, but everyone who has a gift may contribute his part to the edification of the assembly. That is, each one has his part to contribute. **hath a psalm**, — A song or hymn. The context is set in the miraculous; consequently the song (psalm) is probably one given by the Spirit; hence an inspired song (cf. the son of Deborah in Judges 5). It is difficult to escape the strong implication here that in apostolic times it was customary for one person to sing for the edification of the whole congregation. **hath a doctrine**, — Something to teach (Williams). That is a lesson, a discourse, or instructive words. **hath a tongue**, — Speak in a foreign language. It was thus not to be concluded from what Paul had said that there was no place for tongues in the public worship. They were proper under the controlled conditions of vv. 27-28. **hath a revelation**, — Some truth from God (Beck). Revelation is the manifestation of the will of God — the mind of God made known to the mind of man; hence the setting forth of heretofore unrevealed truths. It was given by the HS (2:9-14; Jn. 16:13) to those selected for that purpose. Those who received the revelation, and spoke it by inspiration, are probably the same as the prophets spoken of elsewhere in this chapter. **hath an interpretation**. — The gift to interpret foreign languages. **Let all things be done unto edifying**. — Whether it be a song, a lesson, a language, a revelation, or an interpretation, the right course to follow in the assembly is to edify or build up the saints.

14:27 **If any man speak in an unknown tongue**, — A foreign language, unknown in the sense that it was not understood in the assembly. "Unknown" is a supplied word. **let it be by two, or at the most by three**,

— To maintain an orderly worship, those permitted to speak in tongues at any one service were limited to two or not more than three. **and that by course;** — One after the other or each taking his turn. They were not all to speak at the same time but rather one following the other. **and let one interpret.** — Someone must interpret (NIV). That is, it was imperative that someone translate for the audience what was said in tongues. No one was to speak in a tongue unless there was an interpreter present (v. 28).

14:28 **But if there be no interpreter,** — If there is no one present with the gift to interpret tongues (12:9). **let him** — The tongue speaker of v. 27. **keep silence in the church;** — He is not to speak, even once, in the congregational meetings. Nothing is to be done in public worship that does not edify, and to speak in a tongue not understood by an audience in no way edifies it. **and let him** — The tongue speaker. **speak to himself, and to God.** — Speak only to himself and to God. See note on v. 4.

14:29 **Let the prophets** — Those who impart divine revelation. **speak two or three,** — Let two or three of them speak in turn, as with those who spoke in tongues (v. 27). That is, let one at a time speak and no more than two or three in a single service. **and let the other** — The rest (Williams). This may have reference to the audience but more likely to the other prophets (cf. v. 30), those who had the gift to discern spirits (12:10). **judge.** — Discern (ASV). That is, let them discern whether the prophet is true or false, whether the revelation is from God or from human imagination.

14:30 **If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by,** — But if a revelation be made to another who is seated. That is, if one of the prophets who are waiting their turn to speak (see v. 29) receives a revelation, probably in conjunction with his judging or discerning what the speaker says, he is to be given the floor. This has reference to true revelation (a manifestation of the mind or will of God as a direct work of the HS), and what was said was authoritative (just as much so as the Scriptures are today) and eternally bound upon man. Many today claim to receive new revelation but few, very few, make the claim that what they receive and deliver has the binding nature of Scripture. But why not? The word of God is the word of God, regardless of whether spoken or written. And Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away” (Mt. 24:35). Thus any man who claims to speak new revelation ought to claim the same authority for what he delivers as adheres in the Scriptures themselves. Furthermore he ought to write it down as the inspired word of God bound upon all men for all time to come . . . or else he ought to cease making his false claims. **let the first** — The prophet currently speaking. **hold his peace.** — Keep silent (NASV). Let him stop and give place to the one who receives the revelation.

14:31 **For ye may all** — All who have the gift of prophecy. **prophecy one by one,** — All would have an opportunity to speak, one following another, but not more than three at a single service (v. 29). **that all** — All those assembled for worship. **may learn,** — Be instructed or edified (v. 26). **and all may**

be comforted. — Be encouraged (Williams) or admonished. Thus every prophet would be permitted to deliver the revelation he had received to the assembly. Some truths would be revealed to one while other truths would be revealed to others, but all truth was needed and all was equally authoritative so that what one had to say was no more vital than what another had to say. All truth (necessary for the man of God to be complete, 2 Tm. 3:17) was eventually brought together into the completed revelation (the NT). When this occurred, that which was perfect had come (13:8-13) and that which was in part (miraculous manifestation of truth bit by bit) was done away.

14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. — The prophet is in control of his own action while exercising his prophetic gift. While the HS reveals the message to him and guides him in delivering it, and while he is passive as far as the contents are concerned (2 Pt. 1:20-21), he may cease to speak (or speak as the case may be) at will. He was not so controlled by the Spirit that he could not restrain himself or at any time give place to another prophet (v. 30). And the one seated, who received a revelation, was not so pressed that he could not wait to speak until the first surrendered the floor. Or to say it another way, they were in command of their spiritual gift. Just because the HS is working through a man, in a miraculous way, does not mean that he loses his own responsibility or that he becomes less than a free moral agent. As Willis says, "Any person who was unable to control his spirit was not under the influence of the Holy Spirit."

14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, — The kind of disorder which would have resulted had more than one prophet spoken at the same time. **but of peace,** — Order (v. 40) or harmony. **as in all churches of the saints.** — As in all local assemblies made up of God's people. Nearly all modern translations and scholars connect this to v. 34, giving it the sense, as in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silent in the churches (assemblies). This appears to me to be the most likely view.

WOMEN ARE TO KEEP SILENT

14:34-35 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

14:34 Let your women — All women, whether it be wife, mother, or daughter, whether in possession of spiritual gifts or not. **keep silence** — Be silent. Utter no words in tongues or in prophecy. **in the churches:** — In the assemblies when the congregation is gathered for public worship (cf. 1 Tm. 2:11-12). It seems to me that Paul gives four reasons for this imposed silence on women: (1) It is not permitted; (2) the law teaches obedience or subjection; (3) they can ask their husbands at home, that is, outside the assembly; (4) it is a shame. This is set in the context of a service where the miraculous gifts of tongues and prophecy were being exercised; consequently the instructions are

for women to keep silent in the assemblies as far as tongue speaking and prophesying are concerned, that is, they were not to exercise these spiritual gifts in public worship. Now since some early Christian women had gifts, or at least the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9), and since they are here prohibited from exercising them in the public assembly, we must conclude that they were to exercise them only in an informal or private setting. This would take care of our exegesis of this imposed silence if we were not faced with some additional questions relating to the extent and purpose of the imposition. Does the principle here bound apply to all public worship services of the church, even those of today? Certainly the context is concerned only with a service in which miraculous gifts are being exercised, but based upon the whole section (11:2-14:40) and 1 Tm. 2:11-14 it appears that the principle of subjection is so involved that it necessitates a universal application. This is strengthened by the concept that the latter part of v. 33 should be the first part of v. 34, thus reading, "As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silent." Was the imposed silence given because of cultural or social customs which at that time regulated women to an inferior position? This undoubtedly would be the most attractive and popular way to explain it, but all available evidence (e.g., 1 Tm. 2:11) points to it being based in the Scriptures rather than custom (or at least part of the reasons are based on Scripture; perhaps others are on custom). If a custom (similar to the covering of 11:2-16) was it bound only on women of that day and time? Unlike the veil, the holy kiss, and other customs regulated by inspired instructions, this has all the appearance of being more than a custom — it is rooted in the order of creation (1 Tm. 2:11-14), the curse placed upon woman because she was the first to sin, and is a command of the law. But if all this is true, if women are universally bound to silence in the public worship of the church, why would she be prohibited from speaking in the assembly but permitted to speak in political rallies, teach in public schools (even in Christian colleges), and serve in offices of authority over the man, such as legislators, judges (even on the Supreme Court), and scores of other such authoritative positions? Here in my judgment we reach the crux of the matter. If I have not missed the whole thrust of the section, Paul is simply applying the principle of subjection to women's role in the public worship of the church (for a discussion of the role of women under the man, see notes on 11:3 and the section comments on 11:4-16). While the context is an assembly where the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy were being exercised, and thus limited to that as far as direct teaching is concerned, it seems to me (based on 1 Tm. 2:11-14) that the principle is to be universally applied. If so, Paul is saying that leadership in public worship is the domain of the male. That is, God has placed man over the worship just as He has placed a husband over the wife or a father over the son. A son can never serve in the role of a father over the father (although he may have to serve in place of his father if the father is absent). Just so, a woman can never serve the role of a man in the public assembly of the church over the man. In the absence of men, she may be forced to serve in his place, but not over him. For

example, I heard of one church which was made up of seven members, all women. They met together for worship, praying, teaching one another, singing, taking the Lord's Supper, and giving of their means. One of them had to take the lead (the role of a male) in each act. But were they serving over the man? Indeed not. They were serving in the place of the man but not over him. But turn that around. Suppose there were men in the congregation capable of serving and the women still took the lead. They would then be serving in the place of man over him. All this assumes that God has assigned to men the lead in public worship — that the leadership in worship is the role of man and not the role of woman. But this assumption is based on a strong implication running through this whole section (11:2-14:40) and I believe plainly stated in 1 Tm. 2:11-14. The role of woman then is to be in subjection to (or under) the man. Thus in the public worship she is to be silent. It is certain, however, that this rule did not apply in informal or private gatherings (cf. Acts 18:24-26; 21:9). **for it is not permitted unto them to speak;** — They are not allowed to speak (NIV). That is, speak in the sense of speaking in tongues or prophesying. It could not mean that she could not utter a sound in any way. If so, she could not sing or in any other way participate in the service vocally. Thus in the context it is a prohibition of speaking in tongues and prophesying, but in principle the prohibition of women addressing the assembly in the place of a man over the man. **but they are commanded to be under obedience,** — They must take a subordinate place (Williams) or be in submission (cf. Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; Ti. 2:5; 1 Pt. 3:1-6). They are to recognize, acknowledge, and respect the role of men over them. **as also saith the law.** — The OT (Gn. 3:16).

14:35 **And if they will learn any thing,** — If there is anything they desire to know (RSV). That is, if they have questions they wish to have discussed, let them not disrupt the worship, either by speaking or by raising questions in a disorderly way (cf. v. 40). I doubt that Paul was restricting them from asking questions under all circumstance (e.g., suppose the speaker called for questions from the audience) but rather they were not to interrupt with brashness nor in their forwardness disregard the man's role. **let them ask their husbands at home:** — Let them ask their husbands outside the assembly. (Incidentally, this indicates the role of man over the home.) It seems to me that Paul has in view women in general, but he uses a wife to represent them all. If so, the principle is, let them ask their males (whether father, husband, brother, elder, etc.) in a more private setting than the public worship. **for it is a shame** — A disgrace. A disgrace because it violates the divine injunction for women to be in subjection (v. 34). **for women to speak in the church.** — To speak (or even to raise questions) in the assembly. This final reason for the imposed silence could conceivably have overtones of the social attitude and customs of the time. And were it the only reason given it could, with some degree of probability, be argued that it was thus a violation of social propriety and bound only as a custom for that time and locality (as was the veil in 11:2-16). But if my conclusion is correct, that it is a shame because it violates God's injunction of subjec-

tion to the male rather than the violation of modesty imposed by society, the disgrace would adhere “in all churches of the saints,” both then and now.

Additional note on 14:34-35: These are unquestionably difficult vv., not difficult to understand what they say but difficult to apply. I have dealt with them as honestly as I know how and have given my views as best I can. Yet I am painfully aware of the fact that I have not considered all the problems nor have I given much help for their application in modern times. And besides that I have taken a slightly different approach than anyone I know (or have read) on the subject. Some of the difficulties can be seen by the following: First, making application of the principle to modern times when women are considered in most countries the equal of men, having the same rights, privileges, and obligations. Second, lines between a formal and an informal setting (necessary to my own exegesis) are not as distinct as one would like for them to be. Third, women throughout the Bible play an active role in public as well as in private. Deborah was a judge and a prophetess (Judges 4:4). Huldah served Israel as a prophetess (2 Kgs. 22:14). Joel’s prophecy foretold the fact that both sons and daughters would prophesy in the Christian age (Joel 2:28), which according to Peter came to pass (Acts 2:14-18). Anna, a prophetess, served in the temple at the time of Christ’s birth (Lk. 2:36-38). Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9). Fourth, society and custom in most of the ancient world, at the time Paul wrote, considered women inferior and bound them to many restrictions unknown to most countries in this century. Fifth, then the vast majority of women were illiterate — ordinarily no formal education was provided for them; now the literacy of women, in many respects, equals or surpasses that of men. Sixth, then most women (all except widows and a very few others) were under almost complete control of men (father or husband) who made all major decisions for them (cf. Saul who was supposed to give his oldest daughter to David as wife but instead gave her to another, 1 Sm. 18:17-19; he gave his youngest daughter instead, 1 Sm. 18:30-31, but later took her back and gave her to another man, 1 Sm. 25:44); now women are for the most part independent, making their own decisions. It can thus be seen that in respect to women the situation in the modern world is entirely different than in the first century. Yet, if I am correct in my exegesis, the principle of subjection still demands silence in the public assembly of the church — the principle has not changed, nor will it as long as the world stands. While we may not know why God gave the leadership role to men in the public worship of the church and thus made it the place where women’s subjection is on display for all to see, we can be all but certain that this is the case and that as His creatures we ought to humbly submit to the role He has assigned to each of us, whether we be male or female. This imposed silence, tied up with her submission to and recognition of the role of man, does not restrict women from performing great and mighty works in the kingdom of God. They can serve the Lord with honor and distinction, as many of the ancient women did (cf. 1 Pt. 3:1-6; Rom. 16:1-5), but they must do so within the role assigned to them by God and not by assuming the role of man over the man.

THESE RULES ARE THE WORD OF GOD

14:36-40 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

14:36 **What? came the word of God out from you? —** Or did God's message get its start from you (BV)? The gospel had not originated with them — they had not made the rules by which they were to live and conduct themselves in public worship. **or came it unto you only? —** Or were you the only ones to whom it came (Beck)? The word of truth had not originated with them (it came to them from God through His chosen messengers) nor were they the only ones unto whose trust it had been delivered. The truth of God is subject to universal proclamation and practice.

14:37 **If any man think himself to be a prophet,** — If anyone claims to speak for God or regards himself as a prophet. That is to say, his attitude toward Paul's writings, whether he considered them inspired or not, would determine whether he was a true or a false prophet. **or spiritual,** — Or inspired (BV). If he claims to receive and deliver revelation by the power of the Spirit or be inspired (see 2:14-16 along with my notes there). Some think this means one who has a spiritual gift of any kind (e.g., Willis). MacKnight thinks that it means one who has the gift to discern spirits. But it seems to me that Paul uses spiritual here in the same sense he did in 2:15, where it is in contrast with the natural or uninspired man; hence, one who is inspired. **let him acknowledge** — Let him recognize or understand. If one was a prophet or spoke by inspiration then he would know that what Paul wrote was from God. **that the things that I write unto you** — Contextually the things pertaining to spiritual gifts and the role of women under the man in public worship, but in principle, everything Paul wrote under the direction of the Spirit (cf. 2 Tm. 3:14-17; 2 Pt. 3:15-16). **are the commandments of the Lord.** — Is the Lord's command (Williams). He was making known the will of God to man (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19-20; Gal. 1:6-12). Thus when the Bible speaks, it is God speaking. Some years ago I had a conversation with a liberal who had lost his faith in the Bible as the word of God. One of the arguments by which he sought to justify his rejection of the Scriptures was that the writers had no idea that what they wrote would someday be considered the word of God, an authoritative rule of faith and practice. He was simply saying that neither the writer nor the receiver was aware of such a concept. That was a concept that was later added. In reply, I quoted this v. from Paul. In my judgment it totally refuted his argument and established beyond question that what Paul (and the other writers of the Bible) wrote was not only the inspired, infallible, eternal word of truth, originating with God, delivered by inspired men, and received as heaven's message, but was also written in full knowledge that it was the word of God.

14:38 **But if any man be ignorant,** — But if any one does not recognize this (RSV). If anyone professing to be a prophet or a spiritual ignores or fails to recognize the fact that Paul speaks the commandments of the Lord (v. 37), and is thus inspired, his own ignorance of God's means of revealing His will to man is manifest. **let him be ignorant.** — Pay no attention to him (Goodspeed). That is, recognize his ignorance and disregard what he has to say. There is a textual variant here (represented by the KJV and RSV) and the correct reading at present cannot be certainly established. I have given what I believe is the true sense, even though I may have commingled the two readings.

14:39 **Wherefore, brethren,** — To sum up, my brothers (Moffett) or to conclude (BV). **covet** — Desire (12:31) or be eager (NIV). **to prophesy,** — See vv. 1-5; 12:31. **and forbid not** — Do not prevent or hinder. **to speak with tongues.** — Throughout this chapter Paul has forbidden the abuse of tongues (speaking in tongues for no higher purpose than to display a spiritual gift) but he does not prohibit their use. To be able to speak in a language never studied was a gift from God and no gift of God is to be forbidden when properly used.

14:40 **Let all things be done decently and in order.** — But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way (NIV). In the public assembly everyone and all things should appear proper, appropriate, and in good taste; everyone should conduct himself in an orderly manner, that is, without confusion, discord, or strife. This is a rule that applies to all assemblies of the saints, then, now, and forever. God is great and when one approaches Him in worship, his decorum should be fitting to the occasion and the manner of his actions both blameless and a good example for all to follow. One's appearance and demeanor in worship reveals his attitude toward and respect for God and holy things.

1 CORINTHIANS 15

Paul now introduces a new subject, the resurrection of the dead. He does so, not because they have raised questions concerning it, but because some among them were saying there was no resurrection (v. 12). Just who they were who were teaching this, whether Greek philosophers or Jewish Sadducees, we are not informed. But it seems clear to me that the doctrine of no resurrection was originating outside the congregation (v. 29), and perhaps outside of Christianity, but it had influenced some in the church and undoubtedly it had an appeal to many so that the church was in danger of being led astray on this fundamental matter. The resurrection of Christ, as is known by all who understand the good news, is the heart of the gospel message and is therefore the hope of the world — the only hope that death does not end all. Since the resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel, if He is not risen, there is no power in the gospel and the message of the apostle is thus powerless to save. If the gospel Paul preached is powerless to save, then all is lost for the cause of Christ — our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. But further, if Christ is not risen, then there is no general resurrection — we are all doomed eternally to the grave. “But now is Christ risen” and the gospel is true, salvation is a fact, death has lost its sting, and we can die in full assurance that we shall live again. Every grave must give up its dead (cf. Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Thes. 5:16; Rv. 20:11-15). This is the beautiful and vital message of this chapter.

FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you — Now I make known unto you, brethren (ASV). He now comes to a new section in his epistle to them (on the resurrection, both of Christ and the general resurrection of every man), and he starts it by reminding them of the contents of the gospel. The resurrection of Christ is central to the gospel — it is what gives it its power to save. Thus to deny the resurrection is to destroy the gospel, to take away its power to

save. **the gospel which I preached unto you**, — The gospel Paul had proclaimed unto them in bringing them to a saving knowledge of Christ and His system (see Acts 18:1-11). No other gospel was permitted (Gal. 1:6-12). Thus the gospel Paul preached was their only hope. To deny the resurrection of Christ was to deny that gospel, and to deny the gospel was a return to hopelessness. **which also ye have received**, — Which they had joyfully accepted as the means of their salvation (Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:18, 21). **and wherein ye stand**; — When Paul had preached the gospel to them they had accepted it and took their stand upon it, and they had continued to stand on the gospel as the foundation of their salvation until the very time Paul was writing.

15:2 **By which also ye are saved**, — By this gospel you are saved (NIV). The gospel is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16) because it reveals the means of salvation, the death of Christ by which our sin debt is paid. The gospel is not the savior *per se* but rather the means by which the death of Christ is applied to our sins — the means by which we are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. **if ye keep in memory** — If you cling to (Beck) or hold fast the words (ASV) he had proclaimed unto them. **what I preached unto you**, — That is, they would remain in their saved relationship if they continued to stand steadfastly in the gospel. Primarily this is an exhortation to faithfulness (Rv. 2:10). **unless ye have believed in vain**. — Unless your faith has been all for nothing (Goodspeed). If they did not hold fast the word Paul preached, their faith would be of no purpose (cf. Jas. 2:14-26; Mt. 13:19-22) and the power of the gospel would be lost to them. But further, one of the facts of the gospel is the resurrection of Christ from the dead (v. 4). They could not believe the gospel and deny His resurrection. They either believed in His resurrection or else their faith was worthless. Thus a denial of the resurrection was a denial of the gospel; a denial of the gospel was a denial of faith; and a denial of faith was the loss of salvation.

15:3 **For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received**, — For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance (NIV). The cardinal facts of the gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, along with the significance of each in the scheme of redemption, were received by Paul by revelation (11:23; Gal. 1:11-12) and delivered by inspiration (2 Tm. 3:16-17; 2 Pt. 3:15-16). Because the facts were central to the structure of the gospel, and thus indispensable, they were of foremost importance. **how that Christ died for our sins** — Died in behalf of our sins, that is, died as our sin offering, died to pay our sin debt (Mt. 20:28; Jn. 1:29; Rom. 5:6-9; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pt. 1:18-19; 2:24; 1 Jn. 2:2; Rv. 1:5). **according to the scriptures**; — In fulfillment of that which was foretold by the prophets and as revealed in the OT Scriptures, undoubtedly referring to Ps. 22; Is. 53:5-8; Dn. 9:24-27; and Zec. 12:10. In fact, the whole OT found its purpose (and thus its fulfillment, Mt. 5:17-18) in the coming of Christ, which included His death for sins and the establishment of the NT system (Gal. 3:19-25). The end the law had in view (the end toward which it pointed, the object toward which it looked, the purpose for

which it was given) was righteousness in Christ (Rom. 10:4).

15:4 **And that he was buried**, — Buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Is. 53:9; Mt. 27:59-60; Acts 2:29; 13:29) and Roman guards were placed to assure that no one would remove the body (Mt. 27:63-66). The fact of His burial is vital because it certifies the reality of His death. The swoon theory is false — it, and not the resurrection, is a hoax. Christ literally and actually died; otherwise the resurrection would be meaningless — it would be a resuscitation rather than a resurrection. **and that he rose again on the third day** — That He was raised on the third day (RSV), that is, He was raised by the power of God (v. 15). His resurrection is a historical fact (Mt. 28:1-6; Mk. 16:1-9; Lk. 24:1-9; Jn. 20:1-8; Acts 1:3) confirmed by over 500 eyewitnesses (vv. 5-8). This was an electrifying event to the ancient world (and should be to the modern world), one that brought unbelievers to their knees, emboldened the apostles to preach under the threat of persecution and death, and turned thousands to faith in Christ as the Son of God in the early days of the church and millions since. History knows nothing that equals it. It is a fact that everyone must believe in order to be saved (Rom. 10:9). The nature of the resurrection and its relationship to the gospel is such that if it is true it proves beyond question that Christ is God's Son, the Savior of the world; if false, it leaves us all in absolute hopelessness. If true, the gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16) and we have the means to win the victory over sin and the world; if false, the whole foundation of Christianity crumbles into dust, leaving man without a soul, salvation, or a Savior. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and I believe that God raised Him from the dead. In this I place my hope. There is nowhere else to go — there is no one else worthy of such trust. **according to the scriptures**: — In fulfillment of that which the Scriptures foretold. On the resurrection itself, see Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:31; on the third day, see Mt. 12:39; Jon. 1:17. I am unable to determine for certain whether this connects to the resurrection or to the third day, but I am inclined to think that it is the former.

WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION

15:5-8 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once: of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

15:5 **And that he was seen** — He appeared and was seen by human eyes after His death and burial. It was not a hallucination nor just a mental vision, but He was alive and in the same body that was placed in the tomb (Jn. 20:27-28). The Christian religion is based upon historical facts — facts that are proven by eyewitness accounts. The facts are presented to us by those who saw and heard them; we must either believe or disbelieve their accounts; belief of their testimony is what the NT calls faith (cf. Jn. 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17). Faith is

thus similar to if not identical with the convictions of a jury in a murder trial where there are eyewitnesses to the crime. The jury hears the testimony (as we hear the word). Each one believes the witnesses (as we believe the witnesses to the resurrection of Christ). As a group, they find the alleged killer guilty (as we find Jesus to be Lord). Did they reach their verdict by a logical process of reasoning in which they proved beyond any possibility of doubt that he was the killer? Or was it the results of their belief of the testimony? Did they have absolute knowledge that the accused was guilty? Or did the evidence just put it beyond a reasonable doubt? In a similar way our faith is the belief of testimony. The inspired witnesses tell us what they saw and heard. We believe their testimony. And that belief is called faith. Faith is thus not absolute knowledge, but of course it is reasonable (the most reasonable thing in the world); it is not, however, the conclusion of a syllogism. And while one would deny his faith to question the resurrection of Christ (a fundamental fact of faith), that faith is not the end product of a process of reasoning but rather the results of the belief of testimony. **of Cephas**, — Peter. This appearance is not directly recorded but the fact of it is stated in Lk. 24:34. **then of the twelve**: — At this time Judas had betrayed the Lord and had hanged himself and Matthias had not yet been selected to take his place, which leaves only eleven apostles. But this should present no problem to us since “the twelve” indicates the apostolic office (the apostles as a group) rather than the exact number composing it. Paul may have reference to the appearance recorded in Jn. 20:26-29.

15:6 **After that**, — Later than the appearance of v. 5. **he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once**: — There is no record of this appearance in the four gospels, but since it is unlikely that so many brethren would be together without some kind of prearrangement, it is probable that the appointment referred to in Mt. 28:10, 16 is the time when it occurred. The importance of this appearance lies in the fact that it would be incredible to believe that so many could be deceived at one time or that so many would have agreed to perpetrate a falsehood or to so have agreed to have maintained it over so long a period without a single defection. Faith (the belief of testimony) is not only reasonable in this case, to disbelieve the testimony of more than five hundred people who were eyewitnesses, for no reason higher than preconception or subjective conclusions, is not only incredible but is intellectual dishonesty. **of whom the greater part remain unto this present**, — Most of whom are still alive (RSV). They could thus attest the truthfulness of the appearance. **but some are fallen asleep**. — But some have gone to their rest (Beck). That is, some of the witnesses were already dead.

15:7 **After that, he was seen of James**; — No record other than this is given of this appearance, nor can we be absolutely certain which James is meant, but in all probability it was the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19), the author of the NT book which bears his name. **then of all the apostles**. — The final appearance during the forty days (Acts 1:3) in which He showed Himself alive to His chosen apostles (Lk. 24:36-51; Acts 1:4-11).

15:8 **And last of all** — Not the last appearance of Jesus (cf. Jn. 21:22-23; Rv. 1:16-20) but the last in the sequence here listed and the last in which He commissioned one to be an apostle and an eyewitness. **he was seen of me also**, — Undoubtedly has reference to the Damascus Road appearance (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-15; 26:13-20). **as of one born out of due time**. — As to one abnormally born (NIV). This has reference to a violent birth, as in miscarriage or abortion and depicts for us his late, and in comparison to the other apostles unnatural, call to the apostleship. As the record of his conversion shows, he was chosen while he was still a persecutor and was informed of that choice while he was still in the throes of conversion (Acts 22:12-16). But regardless of its nature, he was still divinely called (1:1; Rom. 1:1).

PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

15:9-11 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

15:9 **For I am the least of the apostles**, — Least because he was called last, as of one untimely born (v. 8), and because he considered himself unworthy to be an apostle in view of the fact that he had persecuted the church of God (1 Tm. 1:13). **that am not meet to be called an apostle**, — Not deserving the name of apostle (BV). The circumstance surrounding his call was less than ideal; he thus considered himself unworthy of the high honor he had received by being numbered among the apostles. **because I persecuted the church of God**. — He came on the NT scene as a persecutor, continued zealously in making havoc of the church (Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3; 9:1-2), even to the point of putting Christians to death (Acts 26:9-11), was then converted to Christ (Acts 9:3-20), and became the staunchest proclaimer of the gospel in the whole history of the church. After his conversion he devoted himself wholly to Christ, yet he was never able to forget the awful fact that he had persecuted God's people — that he had laid bloody hands on the Lord's anointed (cf. Acts 22:20). He saw this as an offense that should have eliminated him from being an apostle, but by God's abundant grace he was chosen in spite of that fact and the choice was not in vain (v. 10). But regardless of his past condition, or his attitude concerning it, he was in no way an inferior apostle (2 Cor. 11:5), neither in authority nor in work.

15:10 **But by the grace of God** — By the unmerited favor of God, He extended the call to Paul, not because of his goodness or worth, but because of who he was, a being made in the image of God. God did not look favorably upon Paul, then Saul, or anyone else, because of his merits but because of his potential. **I am what I am**: — He was an apostle, not by his own merit but by the favor of God. **and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in**

vain; — That is, God's favor was not wasted on him, as is shown by the remainder of the v. and by his whole Christian life. While there appeared to be good reason for him not to be chosen to the apostleship, God made a good choice in him. **but I laboured more abundantly than they all:** — He did more labor, took the gospel to more people in a shorter period of time, and produced more results than all the other apostles, even though their background and calling were more favorable than his. **yet not I,** — Not by his own merit, power, or authority (cf. Gal. 2:20). **but the grace of God which was with me.** — Grace had enabled him to be called and had remained his constant companion in all his work. Man by himself is nothing; but man serving as the channel through which God works can do marvelous things for God, for himself, for others, and for the world. Paul thus saw his toil as something God had graciously given to him, not something that had been forced upon him. This should be our attitude toward anything we are privileged to do in His kingdom. This applies with special force to those who preach the gospel. Such a labor is not only a divine obligation but is also a high and holy privilege, one that we ought to enter with joy and continue with delight. I have observed that most preachers fall into one of two categories: (1) those who preach because they have something to say, and (2) those who preach because they have to say something. The former is a joyful compulsion and the latter a laborious burden.

15:11 **Therefore whether it were I or they,** — Whether then it be I or they (ASV). Whether it was Paul, who labored more abundantly (v. 10), or the other apostles, the same message was proclaimed. **so we preach,** — This is what we preach (Williams). Regardless of which witness spoke, he proclaimed to all his unshakable convictions in that which they had seen and heard (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1-3). That is, all the called and chosen apostles preached the same gospel. **and so ye believed.** — And this is what you believed (NIV). They believed the gospel, the testimony concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ from the dead, with all that such faith implies.

IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED

15:12-19 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

15:12 **Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead,** — If we preach that Christ rose from the dead (Beck). The apostles, including Paul, did preach this — it was at the very heart of the gospel message (vv. 1-4). The purpose of this section (vv. 12-19) is to show the consequences of denying the resurrection. Evidently those who denied the resurrection, as is usually the case with those who teach a false doctrine, had never considered the full

ramification of their doctrine. How could they believe the gospel and deny the resurrection of Christ? And how could they believe in the resurrection of Christ and still say there is no resurrection? **how say some among you** — Regardless of the source of this false doctrine, some of the Corinthian Christians had embraced it and it probably had a popular appeal to a good number of them. **that there is no resurrection of the dead?** — To say that there is no resurrection and still say that Christ rose from the dead is to make a contradictory statement. If one has been raised, then there is a resurrection. Hence to deny the resurrection was to place Christ back in the tomb. But if Christ is still dead, the gospel is based on a falsehood, faith is vain, and there is no forgiveness of sins. Thus if there is no resurrection we are all lost, world without end.

15:13 **But if there be no resurrection of the dead,** — But if there is no resurrection of the dead (ASV). Those who denied the general resurrection probably believed that a resurrection of the body, once it had decomposed, was impossible. But if resurrection is impossible (or cannot occur): **then is Christ not risen:** — Not even Christ has been raised (NASV). See v. 16; Rom. 8:11. To deny the resurrection of the body was to deny the resurrection of Christ; to deny the resurrection of Christ was to deny the fundamental facts of the gospel; to deny the gospel was to say that both preaching and faith are vain (v. 14), the apostles are false witnesses (v. 15), we are yet in our sins (v. 17), those who have died in the faith have perished (v. 18), and Christians are of all people most to be pitied (v. 19). They were not, nor are we, ready to accept these severe consequences of denying the resurrection.

15:14 **And if Christ be not risen,** — See vv. 12-13. **then is our preaching vain,** — Without the resurrection of Christ the gospel preached by the apostles (vv. 1-4) was empty, powerless, meaningless, and useless — it meant nothing. **and your faith is also vain.** — And your faith is futile (BV). It would be faith in a dead Christ rather than in a living Savior. Apostolic preaching is the basis of true faith (Rom. 10:14-17). Since faith is the belief of testimony, if they bore false witness, if the facts which were essential to the gospel were not facts at all, their faith was nothing more than the belief of a fantastic falsehood. Belief of correct testimony means true faith; belief of false testimony means false faith.

15:15 **Yea, and we are found** — Discovered or exposed as lying witnesses. They were not simply mistaken; they were falseifiers against God. **false witnesses of God;** — And we are found guilty of lying about God (Williams). This is another consequence of denying the resurrection. **because we have testified of God** — They had proclaimed that they were eyewitnesses of the risen Lord (Acts 2:32; 4:2; 13:30-32). **that he raised up Christ:** — Raised by the power of God. The Scriptures teach that the resurrection of Christ was both by the power of God (Mt. 16:21; Rom. 6:4; 8:11) and by His own power (Lk. 18:33; Jn. 10:17-18). **whom he raised not up,** — That is, they had testified that He had done that which He had not done — they had as-

cribed to God a work that had never occurred. **if so be that the dead rise not.** — If in fact the dead are not raised (NASV). If it is the case that Christ arose, then it cannot be true that there is no resurrection. One exception invalidates the whole argument. Thus it logically follows that if there is no resurrection Christ Himself could not have been raised. Who among them were ready for this conclusion?

15:16 **For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:** — See v. 13, from which this is repeated.

15:17 **And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain;** — And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is a mere delusion (Williams), and without reward. While they are synonyms, the word in v. 14 means empty and the one here means useless. **ye are yet in your sins.** — The resurrection of Christ is central to the gospel; the gospel is central to faith, that by which we are saved; thus if there is no resurrection, the gospel is false; if the gospel is false, faith is vain, and there is no means of forgiveness. They were, therefore, yet in their sins — lost without hope!

15:18 **Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ** — Christians who have died in the faith, died with their hope in Christ and the truthfulness of the gospel. **are perished.** — Lost with no hope of reward. If there is no resurrection the dead Christians are gone forever, never to live or be seen again.

15:19 **If in this life only we have hope in Christ,** — If we have hope in Christ for this life only (BV). That is, if the dead rise not, there is nothing to hope for beyond this life. Hope in Christ, which should be for all eternity, is for this life alone. If there is nothing for us to hope for beyond the grave, death ends all. **we** — Throughout this section (12-19) the first person has reference to the apostles and the second person to the Corinthian Christians. If this holds true here, Paul has in view only the apostles as men most to be pitied. But I doubt that the “we” is to be so understood here, but even if it is, the principle would extend to all Christians. I am thus treating the passage as if it applies to all Christians, both then and now. **are of all men most miserable.** — Are of all men most to be pitied (RSV). Even if their faith is vain, I know of no sense in which Christians are more miserable than others, who have not even the delusion of hope. Hence the word here should be understood as pitiable rather than miserable. The Christian has committed everything to Christ (Mt. 6:33; 16:24), his life, his faith, his hope. If there is no resurrection Christ is a deceiver, faith is a delusion, and hope is a fantasy. Who is more deserving of pity than one who is so deluded? All his sacrifices and hopes are doomed to disappointment. The argument summed up: if there is no resurrection, Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, the apostles were false witnesses; if the apostles were false witnesses, their preaching was vain or empty; if their preaching was vain, the Corinthian’s faith was useless; if their faith was useless, they were yet in their sins; if they were yet in their sins, the dead in Christ were perished or doomed to eternal death; if the dead are perished, we are left without hope; if we are left without hope, then we are of all men most pitiable. Who, among

those who denied the resurrection, were ready for these severe consequences?

BUT CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED

15:20-23 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

15:20 **But now** — As the fact now stands. **is Christ risen from the dead**, — Christ has indeed been raised from the dead (NIV). The witnesses (vv. 4-7) are trustworthy. The resurrection of Christ is a fact, one that all Christians believe (Rom. 10:9-10). The conclusion is inevitable: the apostles were true witnesses, their faith was valid, their sins had been forgiven, the dead are not eternally destroyed, there is hope for more than this life only, and there is no just cause for Christians to be pitied. **and become the firstfruits** — Not merely the first to be raised from the dead (cf. Lk. 7:11-15; 8:49-55; Jn. 11:43-44), but the first of that which was to follow — that is, He leads the way for all those who are to come after Him. This figure is taken from the offering of the firstfruit unto God in the OT (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Lv. 2:12; 23:9-21; Nm. 15:17-21). When the firstfruit was devoted to God, it signified that the remainder was holy to man (Rom. 11:16) — the firstfruit signified that the remainder was to follow. Thus Christ as the firstfruit of the dead certifies that the remainder of the dead will follow in the proper order — the firstfruit is not different in kind from the remainder of the crop. His resurrection therefore assures the resurrection of all those who die in the faith. **of them that slept**. — The dead of v. 19, and in principle all the dead in Christ. While there will be a resurrection of all the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous (Jn. 5:28-29), Paul here considers only those who have died in faith — died believing the gospel facts.

15:21 **For since by one man came death**, — For since it was through a man that death resulted (Williams). Death here is different than in Rom. 5:12: there it is the penalty of sins; here it is physical death. As a result of Adam's sin (which brought spiritual death or condemnation) he was barred from the tree of life, lest he should eat of it and live forever (Gn. 3:23-24). **by man** — Christ, who was raised to die no more. **came also the resurrection of the dead**. — That the resurrection resulted (Williams). By the resurrection of Christ death has been conquered — that is, His resurrection assures that all will be raised. The resurrection of Christ will result in the resurrection of the dead just as the sin of Adam resulted in their death. Or as Barnes puts it, "The devil was introduced by one man; the recovery would be by another."

15:22 **For as in Adam all die**, — As a result of Adam's sin all die physically because as descendants of him all are cut off from the tree of life. **even so in Christ shall all be made alive**. — So in Christ shall all be made to live (BV). The contrast is between what continues to result from Adam's sin

(physical death) and what will result from the resurrection of Christ (all shall be made to live). While both death and the resurrection are universal, it seems to me that “all” is limited here by the context to those who die in Christ. This teaches that the fall made physical death, not sin and its penalty, hereditary. Barnes states the truth precisely: “This passage has been often adduced to prove that all mankind became sinful in Adam, or in virtue of a covenant transaction with him; and that they are subjected to spiritual death as a punishment for his sins. But, whatever may be the truth on that subject, it is clear that this passage does not relate to it, and should not be adduced as a proof text.”

15:23 **But every man in his own order:** — Each in his own group. There are two groups in the resurrection: the first is Christ and the second are those who belong to Him. That is to say the harvest is followed by the firstfruit. **Christ the firstfruits;** — See v. 20. **afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.** — Then His own at His coming (BV). While there is no question among Bible believers that both the good and the bad will be raised at the same time (Dn. 12:2; Jn. 5:28-29), this shows positively that Paul has in view only the righteous dead. Because he speaks only of the resurrection of the saints does not mean that he excludes the wicked from the resurrection. It is simply not in his purpose to discuss them in this context.

DEATH WILL BE DESTROYED

15:24-28 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

15:24 **Then** — At the coming of Christ (v. 23). **cometh the end,** — The absolute end of the present system (cf. 2 Pt. 3:10-12). The order in view here is: Christ raised from the dead; the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection, then the end. The point is that if there is no resurrection then there could be no consummation, no delivering the kingdom back to God. **when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God,** — When the present system (Christianity, the church, or the realm over which the Lord now reigns from His throne in heaven) shall have served its purpose He shall deliver it back to God as mission accomplished. It should be easily observed by anyone who has a smattering of understanding of plain language that the Lord is coming again to deliver the kingdom, not to establish it (as the premillennialists contend). The fact is, Christ established His kingdom at His first coming (e.g., Mt. 3:1-2; 16:16-19; Col. 1:13) but men have failed to recognize it, just as the Jews failed to recognize Christ as their promised messiah. It appears in the NT under different designations, such as the church (Eph. 1:22-23), the family of God (Gal. 3:21; Eph. 3:14-15), the house of God (1 Tm. 3:15), the temple (3:16-17), the blood purchased (Acts 20:28), and the kingdom, but every designation has

reference to the called out people of God, over which the Lord reigns supreme. That the church and the kingdom are the same is clearly seen by the following: (1) All OT prophecies foretold the coming of the kingdom (Is. 2:2-4; 9:6-7; Dn. 2:44) but in fulfillment the church came (Acts 2; Eph. 3:10-11; 5:20-30). Whatever Christ established is that which the prophets foretold. They foretold the kingdom; He established the church. (2) The kingdom was to begin at Jerusalem in the last days and the law (new covenant) was to be preached from its beginning (Is. 2:2-4; Mi. 4:1-2; Jl. 2:28-32). The Lord's church was established at Jerusalem (Acts 2) in the last days (Acts 2:16-17) and the gospel, beginning there, was preached to the world (Col. 1:6, 23). (3) The Lord's Supper was to be in the kingdom (Lk. 22:16; Mk. 14:25; Mt. 26:29). But the Lord's Supper is in the church (11:23-24; Acts 2:42; 20:7). (4) Jesus promised to build His church but He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom (Mt. 16:16-19). (5) When one is born again he enters the kingdom (Jn. 3:5) and is added to the church (Acts 2:47). When the NT system is called the kingdom it is simply emphasizing the reign of Christ in the hearts and minds of His people. This is the kingdom, the reign, that Christ will deliver up to God at His second coming (Rv. 11:15 and the notes there). **even the Father;** — The Father (RSV), that is, God the Father. **when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.** — All forms of ruling powers which stand in opposition to Christ and His cause, whether worldly or infernal.

15:25 **For he must reign,** — It is necessary for Him to continue His present reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm. 6:15; Rv. 17:14; 19:16) until the end (v. 24). Or, which is to say the same thing, **till he hath put all enemies under his feet.** — Alluding to Ps. 110:1 (see also Eph. 1:20-22). He will retain the kingdom (the present reign over His people, Lk. 1:33) until all foes are brought into absolute subjection (or abolished as in v. 24), and then, as is stated in v. 24, He will transfer it back to God, that God may be all in all (v. 28). The fact that He must retain the reign until His second coming necessarily implies that He is now King over His kingdom, not an earthly but a spiritual kingdom (Jn. 18:36).

15:26 **The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.** — Death is the last enemy to be stopped (Williams). Following the destruction of the other enemies (v. 25) death will then be abolished. There are two aspects of this destruction: (1) Death will cease its rampage — there will be no more dying (Rv. 21:3-4). (2) The dead will be raised — death will lose its hold upon all those in the grave (Jn. 5:28-29). Because it will lose its hold on every victim, death will of necessity be destroyed. The point is clear: the resurrection (the general resurrection which will occur at the second coming of Christ) will free us from our most dreadful foe. Victory is ours! Or as I wrote in the concluding stanza of the last poem I tried to write (now many years ago):

*So we each have a rendezvous — an appointment to meet,
A resurrection of body, and with a judgment seat.
Then with the saints the song of the triumphant we'll sing,*

*“O Grave, where’s thy victory? O Death, where’s thy sting?”
And then it will be as the Bible’s revealed,
The last enemy’s destroyed and destiny sealed!
And there’s no death
For death will be dead!*

15:27 **For he** — God the Father. **hath put all things under his feet.** — God put everything under subjection to Christ. This is quoted from Ps. 8:6 where it applies to man in general in relation to creation. Paul appropriates the statement and applies it to Christ, in whom it is extended far beyond its application to man. The point here is that death must be subdued (v. 26) because God has put everything under subjection to Christ. **But when he saith all things are put under him,** — When God says (in Ps. 8:6) “Everything has been put into subjection to him” (Williams). **it is manifest** — Clearly evident. This limitation seems obvious but Paul evidently wished to forestall those who might conclude otherwise. **that he is excepted,** — God the Father is excluded from the all things. **which did put all things under him.** — He who subjected all things to Christ did not include Himself in the all things.

15:28 **And when all things shall be subdued unto him,** — When everything has been subjected, including death, the last enemy (v. 26), which will be abolished by the resurrection. **then shall the Son** — Christ, in all His functions and relationships as Son in the Christian religion. **also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him,** — Shall subject Himself to the One whom all obey (BV). While this statement probably defies complete human comprehension, it most certainly involves the facts that Christ will cast Himself and all His victories at the throne of God, will cease the role assigned to Him in the New Testament system (Christianity will then have served its purpose in full), and will be merged with God, probably as He was from all eternity. As I understand it, this means that the Christian system, the final dispensation God has provided for sinful man on this earth, will be delivered up as a completed effort and will thus cease its function under Christ as its divine head. **that God may be all in all.** — That God (probably meaning the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all functioning as one) may be supreme and sovereign over all. This does not mean that Christ will become inferior to the Father (that is, that He will surrender His Godhood), but that His function as the Son in the Christian system, all that He now is to the scheme of human redemption, will be brought to an end — will cease because it will have served God’s eternal purpose, that is, its final object will have been attained.

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

15:29 **Else** — Otherwise (Williams). **what shall they do** — If it is otherwise what shall they do who teach that there is no resurrection. In my judgment the

change in person of the pronouns is of the utmost significance in a proper understanding of this difficult passage. Paul uses the first person when he means himself, himself and the other apostles, or himself and the Christians to whom he is writing. But here he abruptly changes to the third person, obviously meaning some who fell outside the first groups. Just who they were we have no means of knowing, but in all probability they were the false teachers who had taught some of the Corinthians the no-resurrection doctrine (v. 12). This strongly indicates that no Christians, at least not at Corinth, had fallen into the error of practicing baptism for the dead. **which are baptized** — I see no reason to seek for a meaning of baptism here other than literal immersion in water. **for the dead,** — Baptized by proxy in order to bestow some benefit upon those who were dead. Unquestionably this is one of the most difficult expressions in all of Paul's epistles to explain, if not in all the Bible. It has been subjected to scores of explanations (Willis says he has read 40 different ones) for nearly 2000 years and still there is no concensus among believers as to its true meaning. This being the case, one would be worse than an egotist to claim that he has all the answers. But it seems to me that the most natural meaning, while not free of difficulties, is to take it at face value and say that Paul spoke of an actual practice among those who denied the resurrection, a practice which by the very nature of Christianity would have been rejected by faithful Christians and thus one that needed no refutation or repudiation by Paul to the church at Corinth. If this is the case, Paul takes a false practice of the false teachers to show them the inconsistency of their theory of no resurrection. They had denied the resurrection (and consequently must concede that the dead had perished, vv. 17-18) but at the same time were practicing baptism for (in order to benefit) dead people (who, if their theory was right, were completely destroyed, never to be heard from again). Or to say it another way, he takes one of their practices (though false it was) and refutes their false theory about the resurrection. That is, he shows that their practice is inconsistent with their doctrine. To illustrate this method we might construct a parallel: sometimes those who teach non-violence will violently attack others in an effort to enforce non-violence. When this is the case, we could paraphrase Paul's words by asking, "Else what shall they do who violently attack others in order to end violence, if non-violence is their method? Why then are they using violence?" **if the dead rise not at all?** — If the dead are not raised, nothing could possibly benefit them. **why are they then baptized for the dead?** — There would have been no way they could have answered this question without surrendering their doctrine of no resurrection. And this is the very point Paul sought to make. It was not his aim to show the uselessness of proxy baptism. All who have even an elementary knowledge of the Christian system know that it is a personal religion, one in which faith and action of one cannot be transferred to the account of another. Every man stands or falls on his own faith and obedience. Every man will be judged by his own works (2 Cor. 5:10), not by what another has done (except in the case of Christ). Furthermore, when one dies his destiny is sealed. Nothing can change

that. How then could the baptism of a living person benefit a dead person, even with the resurrection a fact? It cannot. And the question is even more forceful if the dead are perished, destroyed so as never to have any benefit from any source whatsoever. I have thus concluded that Paul refutes a false doctrine with a false practice. A few questions might be in order here so as to expand on some of the more difficult areas: (1) Does the view here expressed (that is, admitting that some did practice baptism for the dead) give the Mormons an advantage? No. This is true basically because their authority for vicarious baptism does not rest on this or any other NT passage but upon their supposed new revelations. But besides that, we should seek the truth of a passage regardless of the advantage it may give to anyone. What right do we have to misinterpret a passage in order to give us an advantage over false theories? Truth is truth, and that is what we should all seek (Prv. 23:23). (2) Nearly everyone admits that this is a difficult passage. What is its most difficult aspect as pertaining to your exegesis? Undoubtedly the fact that Paul uses a false practice (without directly refuting it) by which to prove a true doctrine. And, too, there is the fact that no record exists of anyone practicing baptism for the dead at this early date, except this v. The practice that we know about later seems to have grown up as the results of a misinterpretation of this passage rather than the other way around. (3) Is Paul's failure to condemn the practice not a tacit approval of it? No. First, the purpose of mentioning baptism for the dead was to show the absurdity of their denial of the resurrection, not to refute an unscriptural practice. Second, he addressed the church by using those outside of the church who were already proven wrong by their denial of the resurrection. The context has already proven them wrong. Third, it seems to me that if Paul had refuted their practice his argument, designed to show the inconsistency between their practice and theory, would have been greatly weakened in their minds (it would not have been weakened but it would have in their minds). (4) What alternative explanation seems most likely in the event one cannot in good conscience accept your exegesis? That one which says that the dead ones are the dead to sin. That is, in order to become a Christian one must die to sin. Baptism is for those who are thus dead. All, therefore, who are Scripturally baptized are baptized for the dead (the dead to sin). If this view is adopted, then Rom. 6:3-4 serves as a divine commentary on this v. This makes it rather appealing (at least to me). But it has two objections that I cannot overcome: (1) it mixes a figurative death (in a chapter wholly concerned with physical death and the resurrection from it) with a literal resurrection. (2) The v. itself affirms they do something for the benefit of others, not for their own benefit.

STANDING IN JEOPARDY

15:30-32 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

15:30 **And why stand we** — Why are we also (NASV). The pronoun is now shifted back to the first person, meaning Paul, the other apostles, and their associates, away from the false teachers who were outside the Corinthian church. This again shows the contrast between the “we” and “they.” **in jeopardy** — Exposed to grave danger or great peril. **every hour?** — Constantly or all the time. He was rarely if ever completely out of danger from the time of his conversion until he was beheaded at Rome for preaching the Christian faith (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 11:23-28; 2 Tm. 4:6-8). Simply stated, this is another argument (in addition to that on baptism for the dead, v. 29) favoring the resurrection, which says, “All our labors, perils, and sufferings to preach the gospel is in vain if there is no resurrection. If death ends all, it is senseless to sacrifice so much to preach the gospel and we are foolishly putting our lives on the line for nothing.” All effort to save souls (including our own) is for naught if there is no resurrection from the dead.

15:31 **I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.** — I must confess that this is the most obscure text I have yet encountered in the KJV. As it stands I can make no sense out of it. The order of the Greek is followed more closely by Moffett: “Not a day but I am at death’s door! I swear it by my pride in you, brothers, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Goodspeed may have more accurately captured its thrust: “By the very pride I take in you, brothers, through our union with Christ Jesus our Lord, I face death every day.” At any rate, the point that is in harmony with the context is that Paul faced the peril of death every day (cf. Rom. 8:36) by his glorying (boasting) in them because they were in Christ as a result of him preaching to them the gospel (which included as one of its cardinal facts the resurrection of Christ). Why such risk if there is no resurrection?

15:32 **If after the manner of men** — Speaking as men who have no higher reason or motive than the applause and worldly rewards that are given in the affairs of men, which would certainly be the case if there is no life after this one. **I have fought with beasts at Ephesus,** — Fought the good fight of faith (1 Tm. 6:12) in the presence of ferocious men (cf. 19:21-41, which occurred after he wrote this but is an illustration of what he endured) whose conduct toward him was beastly. It is not likely that, since he was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-28), he had literally fought with beasts in the arena (although that is a distinct possibility). I thus take the expression figuratively, meaning the severity which he suffered at the hands of cruel men. **what advantageth it me,** — What does it profit me (ASV)? That is, what would be his reward? **if the dead rise not?** — If there was nothing beyond the present there could be no rewards for his sacrifices. **let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.** — Quoted from Is. 22:13 where the Lord had called Israel to repentance (weeping and mourning because of the prevailing condition) but instead they were rejoicing (living by the philosophy of the flesh rather than the directions of the Spirit, cf. Gal. 5:19-23). They were living as men live who know not God and seek no eternal reward. But why not live after the manner of men if there is nothing beyond this life? If there is no resurrection, all is lost anyway at death.

EVIL ASSOCIATION

15:33-34 Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

15:33 **Be not deceived:** — Do not continue to be misled by such foolish philosophies as “Eat and drink; for to morrow ye die” (v. 32). **evil communications** — Evil companionships (ASV) or bad company (NIV). He has in view the bad association with those who deny the resurrection and live only after the manner of men (v. 32), that is, they live as men who have no higher aim, purpose, or hope than to satisfy the flesh and let death end all. This also shows the power and danger of false doctrines. One cannot long associate with evil departures from the truth and remain true and faithful to the Lord. While faith is planted in the human heart by the sowing of the seed (the word of God, Lk. 8:11; Rom. 10:17), it must be cultivated to grow and produce. False doctrines may daily try to choke it out. Thus we must constantly be on guard to weed out all false teaching. As we have already observed (vv. 5-8), true faith is the results of believing true testimony (the word of God). The belief of false testimony (any testimony that runs counter to that which is inspired) will corrupt faith, and a corrupt faith will lead to a corrupt life. Jesus warned, “Take heed what ye hear” (Mk. 4:24) and “Take heed how ye hear” (Lk. 8:18). **corrupt good manners.** — Corrupt good morals (ASV) or is the ruin of good character (Moffett). While the context limits this to the association with false teachers and teaching (especially pertaining to the resurrection), the principle is true with all evil. If one lives with swine he will eventually learn to live on slop. The association with evil men or evil things will inevitably lead to evil practices. The more a man is in company with the world the less he is with Christ.

15:34 **Awake** — Arouse from your spiritual stupor. **to righteousness,** — As you ought (NASV). Awake to a more fitting manner of doctrine and life. Righteousness, or that which is fitting, is here set in contrast with sin. Hence, to return to a righteous way of life. The Corinthians had been in a moral stupor because of the false teaching concerning the resurrection (cf. v. 32). They are urged to return to soberness from their intoxication with erroneous doctrine and do right — do what they ought to do. **and sin not;** — And stop sinning (Goodspeed). Cease to live under the philosophies and rules of men who deny all future rewards and return to God’s way, that which is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:17). **for some have not the knowledge of God:** — For there are some who are ignorant of God (NIV). That is, they are ignorant of God’s will, God’s power (to raise the dead), and God’s righteousness (cf. Rom. 10:1-4). **I speak this to your shame.** — When one has the ability and the opportunity to know God, know His will, and does not take advantage of it, his ignorance is a disgraceful thing. Thus Paul wrote these things to bring them to a recognition of their shameful state.

HOW THE DEAD ARE RAISED

15:35-38 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

15:35 **But some man will say**, — Referring to those who denied the possibility of a bodily resurrection (v. 12). **How are the dead raised up?** — How can bodies which have decomposed, returned to dust from which they came (Gn. 3:19) and the elements reabsorbed into the life cycle of vegetables, animals, and other men again and again, be reassembled? Paul answers in vv. 36-38: as a seed that is sown, comes to life, and products after its kind. **and with what body do they come?** — What kind of body will it be? The answer: a celestial body, one that is incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (vv. 39-50). Two questions are here put into the mouth of the objectors: the first pertains to the manner of the resurrection (that is, the possibility of it) and the second to its form (the kind of body which would come from the grave). Both questions are answered in vv. 36-50.

15:36 **Thou fool**, — You foolish man! (Williams). If one would just stop and think surely he would not ask such foolish questions: for in doing so he is as a simpleton who denies in man what he sees daily taking place in seed. We do not understand how the seed reproduces, but we know that it does. **that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:** — Here (and in vv. 37-38) by analogy he answers the first question of v. 35: How are the dead raised up? The seed does not live in a new kernel until it dies — that is, it cannot live in its new form without dying. Or to say it another way, a seed cannot reproduce until it surrenders its life — surrenders it first to the plant and then to the new seed (cf. Jn. 12:24-25). The new kernel is a complete change in material, but its nature (individuality) remains the same, e.g., wheat produces wheat, nothing else. So it is with the material body and the resurrection. Just as a seed must die to live, so the individual whose body returns to dust is raised, but the body that is raised is not the identical elements that composed the body at the time of death. This is no great marvel when we consider the fact that personal identity (individuality) does not depend upon the physical makeup of the body. As I write this I am less than a month away from my 57th birthday. In that 57 years every cell in my body (except the ones that are not replaced) have been changed several times. Yet, even though my body is composed of entirely different material than it was 10 years ago, I am the same individual, having the same identity. Thus individuality does not depend upon the exact material makeup of the body.

15:37 **And that which thou sowest**, — And what you sow (Moffett). A seed and by analogy the physical body. **thou sowest not that body that shall be**, — You do not plant the body that will be (NIV). The fruit produced is

not the same seed planted. **but bare grain**, — But is a naked grain (Williams), a bare kernel (RSV), nothing but grain. The point is that the seed sown is not that which will be. **it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain**: — The seed may happen to be wheat or some other grain, but the principle is the same. The fruit is always of the same nature as the seed but it is never the old seed itself. The seed must die in order to live in its new form. So it is with the human body.

15:38 **But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him**, — Just as God created each seed with its own distinct nature and form (in which is housed the germ of life), He created each human body with its own individuality (the dwelling place of the real person, 2 Cor. 5:1-4). And when a seed is sown God, by His law of reproduction, gives it a new body, the very kind He willed it to have, different in some respects but the same in others. **and to every seed** — Each kind of seed. **his own body**. — Its own particular or distinct form, the very body the seed should produce and no other. In the beginning God established a universal law, one that has known no exceptions, namely, every seed reproduces after its kind (Gn. 1:11). Wheat will always reproduce wheat . . . and nothing else. We learn then by analogy that in the resurrection the body, the individual, will be raised, even though the body that is to be will not be composed of the identical elements that were placed in the tomb. It will be a new body but not a new individual — a new body but the same nature, the same image, the same person. It will be the kind of body God has designed for man in the eternal state.

THE KIND OF BODY RAISED

15:39-50 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

15:39 **All flesh** — Used synonymously with body as in vv. 38, 40. Or as Vincent says, “Flesh is the body of the earthly, living being, including the bodily form.” **is not the same flesh**: — This explains the final statement in v. 38. Just as there are varieties of seed, each having its own form, there are different kinds of bodies, each made by God to fill the particular need of the individual. There is a vast difference in the individuality of each one, man, beast, fish, and fowl. Paul’s point is to show that even though there is a change in the elements

of the body at the resurrection, there is no change in the individual. **but there is one kind of flesh of men**, — Man is given a body to fill his needs. So it is with every other living creature. **another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds**. — All have bodies adapted to survive in the environment where they live.

15:40 **There are also celestial bodies**, — Heavenly bodies or bodies fitted for heavenly beings. The exact composition of heavenly bodies is not now known to us (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2), but it is enough to know that, having prepared us for a place by His death and resurrection, our blessed Lord is now gone to prepare for us a place. The new body will be gloriously suited for the new place. I think that large number of commentators who see this as the material heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars as in v. 41, totally miss the point. First, the context strongly favors resurrected bodies. The whole section (vv. 39-50) is given in response to the inquiry, "With what body will we be raised?" (v. 35). The answer is a heavenly body, one that is gloriously fitted for heavenly beings. Second, the heavenly body (which we shall have in the resurrection) is in antithesis to the earthly body (which we now have). The sun, moon, and stars offer no antithesis to earthly bodies. **and bodies terrestrial**: — Earthly bodies, the bodies in which we now tabernacle. **but the glory** — The splendor, the beauty, the magnificence, and the proper form to serve the needs of the individual in glory. **of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another**. — The heavenly body is designed and fitted for the spiritual world just as the fleshly body is designed and fitted for this world.

15:41 **There is one glory of the sun**, — The sun is glorious in one way (BV), that is, it has its own beauty, splendor, and purpose. **and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars**: — The glory of any created thing is to fill the purpose for which it was made. The sun was made for one purpose (Gn. 1:14-15), the moon for another, and the stars for still another. But each was made to fill a divine purpose and each is glorious in its own way when that purpose is served. **for one star differeth from another star in glory**. — Every star has its own function, some shining with brighter splendor than others.

15:42 **So also is the resurrection of the dead**. — So will it be with the resurrection of the dead (NIV). The aim here is to show the reasonableness of a bodily resurrection when the body raised is different from the body planted — different in composition but not in person. The body raised will be fitted for heaven; the present body is fitted for earth. Each is glorious in its place and for its purpose. **It** — The physical body. **is sown** — Planted or buried. **in corruption**; — Is perishable (RSV). A body that is subject to death and decay, one that will decompose and return to the elements from which it was made (Gn. 3:19). But not so with the resurrection body: **it is raised in incorruption**: — Raised immortal, not liable to death and decay. The former finds its glory in dying (cf. vv. 36-38); the latter in living.

15:43 **It is sown in dishonour**; — It is sown in humiliation (Williams), in-

glorious (Moffett), or in shame. In Phil. 3:21 Paul calls the mortal body vile or as the ASV translates it, "the body of our humiliation." The RSV renders it, "our lowly body." It is humbled (or embarrassed) by the indignities of disease and death, from which it cannot escape. **it is raised in glory:** — Raised in splendor (Goodspeed) or in dignity, without being subject to the humiliation of death. It is raised a son of the resurrection (Lk. 20:36) to shine as the brightness of the firmament (Dn. 12:3), raised to die no more. **it is sown in weakness;** — Sown powerless to escape decay. **it is raised in power:** — It is raised strong (Beck) because it has won a powerful victory over death (vv. 55-57), as well as every other weakness that characterizes the physical body.

15:44 **It is sown a natural body;** — A physical body, one that is mortal and earthly in nature (v. 41) and subject to corruption (v. 42), dishonor (v. 43), and weakness (v. 43). **it is raised a spiritual body.** — A heavenly body (v. 40), incorruptible (v. 42), glorious (v. 43), and powerful (v. 43), a body which is capable of adapting to and filling the needs of the individual in the world to come. **There is a natural body,** — If there is a natural body (ASV). A textual variant. The ASV is more likely the true reading. That there is a natural body cannot be questioned by any sane person, but if there is a natural body what follows is certain: **and there is a spiritual body.** — There is also a spiritual body (ASV). If there is a physical body, adapted to the physical world, then there is also a spiritual body, adapted to the spiritual realm. We may not be able to fully comprehend the connection between the natural and spiritual body, but we can understand Paul's illustration of the seed. According to him, the natural body relates to the spiritual body as a seed relates to the grain that is produced from it. The earthly body that is planted results in the heavenly body that is raised. But regardless of which body one may possess, the person remains the same. The body is changed but the identity of the individual is not.

15:45 **And so it is written,** — That is what the Bible says (Beck) Gn. 2:7. Only the first part of the v. is a quotation; that last part is added by Paul. **The first man Adam was made a living soul;** — Adam was made a living being with a natural body (v. 44), the kind that fitted him for earthly existence but which was subject to death and decay. **the last Adam — Christ. was made a quickening spirit.** — Became a life-giving spirit (ASV). Just as the descendants of Adam receive from him a natural body which fits them to life on earth, the followers of Christ will receive from him a spiritual body which will fit them for heaven.

15:46 **Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual,** — The spiritual did not come first (NIV) **but that which is natural;** — The physical. **and afterward that which is spiritual.** — That is, Adam came before Christ (v. 45). Just so, we first live in the physical body, which is adapted for earthly living, and graduate from that to the spiritual body, the one that will be adapted for the world to come. This is the due order, as can be observed in other things as well: the law (engraved on tables of stone — the physical, 2 Cor. 3:6-17) came before the gospel (engraved on the heart — the spiritual, Heb. 8:6-13); the

earthly kingdom of Israel came before the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Jn. 18:36); the natural birth comes before the new (spiritual) birth (Jn. 3:5).

15:47 **The first man** — Adam, and by analogy our physical bodies. **is of the earth, earthy:** — Was of the dust of the earth (NIV). His body was made from the dust (Gen. 2:7; 3:19), bound to the earth, and fitted for earthly existence. This is a good explanation of previous expressions used for the physical body, terrestrial (v. 40), corruption (v. 42), dishonor (v. 43), weakness (v. 43), natural (v. 44, 46), and made a living soul (v. 45). The physical body is well adapted to this earth but it cannot inherit heaven (Rom. 14:17). **the second man is the Lord from heaven.** — The second man is of heaven (ASV). The ASV reflects the fact that some manuscripts omit “the Lord.” The second man is Christ, from whom we derive our spiritual bodies — bodies fitted for the spiritual state. Paul’s purpose here is to distinguish the earthly origin of Adam (and thus the physical bodies of all) from the heavenly origin of Christ (and thus the heavenly source of our spiritual bodies at the resurrection).

15:48 **As is the earthy,** — As Adam was of the earth. **such are they also that are earthy:** — The descendants of Adam are also of the earth, subject to death and decay. Or to say it another way, just as Adam had a natural body (made from the dust and fitted for the earth), all those who have descended from him have earthly bodies. **and as is the heavenly,** — Christ. **such are they also that are heavenly.** — Like Christ, they shall have bodies from heaven, bodies fitted for the spiritual world. The contrast here is between the bodies we now possess and the spiritual bodies we shall be given at the resurrection. Bodies are not heavenly until they bear the image of the heavenly (v. 49). Current bodies have the characteristics of Adam (they are earthly); our future bodies will have the characteristics of Christ’s (Phil. 3:21), that is, they will be heavenly. Beck translates: “The people of the ground are like the man from the ground; the people of heaven are like the Man from heaven.”

15:49 **And as we have borne the image of the earthy,** — We are like Adam in that we have a physical or material body, with its earthly nature. **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.** — As we are like Adam in our present body, we shall be in the likeness of Christ in our resurrection body (1 Jn. 3:2). Presently we are fitted for this earth — we are earthly; then we shall be fitted for heaven — we shall be heavenly, that is, have a body partaking of the nature of heaven.

15:50 **Now this I say,** — To sum up what he was saying. **brethren, that flesh and blood** — The earthly or material body. **cannot inherit** — Cannot obtain as an heir (cf. Rom. 8:16-17). **the kingdom of God;** — The spiritual or heavenly kingdom which Christ has gone to prepare (Jn. 14:1-6). That is why those who are living when Christ comes again must be changed from the mortal to the immortal (vv. 51-57). **neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.** — A body subject to death and decay would be totally out of place in a state where the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and never fades away

(1 Pt. 1:4). Corruptible bodies are simply not suited for heavenly existence. Hence the body that is raised from the dead will not be a material body, but a spiritual, incorruptible, immortal body, one suited to eternal life.

VICTORY OVER DEATH

15:51-57 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:51 **Behold, I shew you a mystery;** — Listen while I tell you a secret. A mystery in the NT is that which is yet unknown because it has not been revealed; hence a secret. But once a mystery is revealed it is then a revelation. **We shall not all sleep,** — We shall not all die. By this he simply means that some Christians will be living when Christ comes, not that that grand event would occur in his lifetime or in the lifetime of some of the Corinthians. **but we shall all be changed,** — Changed from a mortal to an immortal body. This is necessitated by the fact that the material body is not suitable for the heavenly state. Here Paul is answering the question, “If the resurrected dead receive an immortal body at the coming of Christ, what about the living?” In 1 Thes. 4:13-18 the question is exactly the reverse, “If the living are caught up when Christ comes, what about the dead? Putting both passages together we can see that the results will be the same: whether we are living or dead when Christ comes we shall all be changed from mortal to immortal.

15:52 **In a moment,** — In a flash (NIV) or an instant of time so short that it cannot be further divided, a split second. **in the twinkling of an eye,** — A blink of the eye. This shows how quickly the change from mortality to immortality will occur (v. 51). **at the last trump:** — The signal that will end the present order (the earthly) and begin the new (the heavenly). **for the trumpet shall sound,** — The signal shall be given. **and the dead shall be raised** — The trumpet is the signal for the dead to come forth from their graves. **incorruptible,** — See v. 42. **and we shall be changed.** — See v. 51. The order here is first, the trumpet or signal; second, the dead raised; and third, the living changed. After this, according to 1 Thes. 4:16-17, all the saints will be caught up together to be with the Lord. But all this instantly, as suddenly as a flash or the blinking of a eye.

15:53 The change that will occur instantly at the coming of Christ is now stated: **For this corruptible must put on incorruption,** — The perishable body must perish and a body not subject to decay must be given. See v. 42. **and this mortal** — The flesh and blood body which is subject to death. **must** — Imperative before it can inherit the spiritual kingdom. **put on im-**

mortality. — Be clothed in a spiritual or resurrection body which shall never die (2 Cor. 5:4). Beck renders it, “This decaying body must be made one that can’t decay, and this dying body must be made one that can’t die.” Exactly!

15:54 **So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality,** — See v. 53. **then** — At that time. **shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,** — At that time the following saying of the Scriptures will be fulfilled. **Death is swallowed up in victory.** — Freely paraphrased from the Hebrew of Is. 25:8. Death, the last enemy to be destroyed (v. 26), will have been swallowed up by the resurrection of the dead and the changing of the living from mortal to immortality. All the saints will be immortal and death will thereby be abolished, that is, triumphantly destroyed.

15:55 The two questions raised here appear in reverse order (as in the NIV below) in nearly all modern translations, including the ASV. **O death, where is thy sting?** — Quoted from Hos. 13:14, but adhering more closely to the Septuagint than to the Hebrew. It depicts one in the incorruptible state looking back and taunting death because it has lost its power to sting (cf. a bee that has lost its stinger). **O grave, where is thy victory?** — O death, where is thy victory? (ASV). Death, rather than grave, is undoubtedly the better rendering. The joyful refrain is:

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting? (NIV).

Its power, its sting, had been swallowed up and the immortal sings this triumphant and victorious song. What a jubilant day it will be when the chilly hands of death are folded never again to lay hold upon us or our precious loved ones! Victory! Victory! Sweet will be the victory!

15:56 **The sting of death is sin;** — Sin gives death its sting (Beck). That is, sin is the stinger by which death is inflicted. Or as Hodge says, “Death would have no power to injure us if it were not for sin.” Because of sin physical death gained its power over us (v. 21 and the note there), not as the penalty of sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23) but as a consequence of it. **and the strength of sin** — The power it has over us. **is the law.** — God’s law. The law reveals sin as sin (in fact, sin is the violation of the law, 1 Jn. 3:4) and imposes the penalty. Once the law is disobeyed, the certain result is condemnation (Rom. 7) for the violation. Thus the law, through sin, rules with an iron hand, knowing neither mercy nor pardon (see Rom. 4:15; 5:20; 6:14 along with my notes). But when sin is forgiven (through the payment of the penalty by the blood of Christ), the law loses its power of condemnation, and without the power to condemn death has no sting (v. 57). With the sting gone, death is simply a transition, a step, from this life to the next.

15:57 **But thanks be to God,** — But thank God! (Williams). An exclamation of gratitude ascribing to God the honor and glory for providing for us salvation from sin and victory over death (v. 56; cf. Rom. 7:25). **which** — Who

(ASV). **giveth** — Continues to give day by day. **us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** — God gives the victory but He does so by means of the Lord of our lives who paid our sin debt by His death on the cross and conquered death for us by His own resurrection from the dead. Our victory over death is therefore as certain as His own resurrection. To deny the resurrection then would be to deny the resurrection of Christ; to deny the resurrection of Christ is to deny the gospel; to deny the gospel is to leave the whole world in total hopelessness, still suffering the sting of death.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT IN VAIN

15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

15:58 **Therefore,** — He now introduces his concluding admonition based upon his whole argument concerning the resurrection which culminates in the song of victory over death (vv. 54-57). **my beloved brethren,** — They had fallen into many errors, not the least of which was a denial of the resurrection, errors for which he had administered stern rebukes and offered painful corrections, but he still recognized them as dear brothers in Christ. **be ye stedfast,** — Stand firm in the faith of the gospel, not moved about by every wind of doctrine which may blow against it (Eph. 4:14). Stedfastness is firmness (standing true to one's convictions), not stubbornness (obstinate and unyielding when confronted with evidence which demand a change). **unmoveable,** — Incapable of being moved (Williams) when assaulted by persecution, suffering, temptation (10:13), or any other enemy of the faith. Faith (Christ) is our most precious possession. We should never be moved by anything that might weaken or destroy it. **always abounding in the work of the Lord,** — Always engaged in, devoted to, and giving oneself for the work God has given one to do. God put each into the body (12:12-27) for a specific work in His service. This is the toil in which one should abound (Gal. 6:9). This is the work for which one will be eternally rewarded. **forasmuch as ye know** — Know by the arguments presented to prove that we do not perish at death. We shall live on, and we shall be rewarded for our work (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). **that your labour is not in vain** — Never futile, voided, thrown aside, or forgotten. **in the Lord.** — A favorite expression of Paul (it appears in his writings approximately 169 times) which has in view a proper relationship with Christ, that is, a Christian, one who has his sins forgiven by the shed blood of Christ. Here it relates to the work we do both to establish and to maintain that relationship. All work is not in Christ, not the work of Christ. All such is in vain. But when one is in Christ and he does the work Christ has commanded or authorized him to do, that labor is never vain, is never forgotten, regardless of how great or small (cf. Mt. 10:14).

1 CORINTHIANS 16

COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS

16:1-4 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

16:1-4 This section concerns itself with the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (v. 4; Rom. 15:26), but it also contains some principles that govern giving in general. Giving is, without question, a divine requirement. No one could sincerely study the Scriptures long without coming to this conclusion. Jesus, the Master of our life and substance, taught it by both word and example (Acts 20:35). Giving is a requirement of every Christian (2 Cor. 9:6); it is to be done both cheerfully and bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6-7); it proves the sincerity of one's love (2 Cor. 8:8); it is to be done on the basis of equality (2 Cor. 8:12); the amount is to be determined by one's prosperity (v. 2); each is to purpose the amount to be given in his own heart (2 Cor. 9:7); and its purpose is to provide for the needs of the destitute (v. 2; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; Eph. 4:28) and aid in preaching the gospel to the whole world (Gal. 6:6). When each Christian contributes into a common treasury, which is under the oversight of the church, then each is equally related to the work that is done from that treasury. The work done is a joint action. Hence all have fellowship in it. This makes giving one of the Christian's highest privileges, one in which he helps himself (to become more unselfish), helps others, participates in the Lord's work, and pleases the Lord. It is no wonder the Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

16:1 **Now concerning** — With regards to (Moffett). This seems to introduce another subject upon which they had submitted a question. **the collection** — The contribution (RSV). The Greek word, appearing only here in the NT, was used for the collecting of money, usually for the gods or religious causes. **for the saints**, — Poor Christians at Jerusalem (v. 4; Rom. 15:16). The cause of their poverty is beyond our present knowledge, but had probably resulted from a famine or persecution or both. **as I have given order to the churches of Galatia**, — As he had commanded or appointed for the Galatian churches. Since they are not found in his epistle to the Galatians, it is not known when Paul gave these instructions. The word from which order is

translated appears 15 other times in the NT and is rendered command seven times (Mt. 11:1; Lk. 8:55; 17:9-10; Acts 18:2; 23:31; 24:23), appoint four times (Lk. 3:13; Acts 7:44; 20:13; Ti. 1:5), set in order one time (11:34), and ordain three times (7:17; 9:14; Gal. 3:19). Thus the force of the word is that of a command to be obeyed or directions to be followed. The order he had given is stated in v. 2. **even so do ye**. — That which was ordained for the churches of Galatia is now enjoined on them. That is, they were to do as the churches of Galatia were told to do.

16:2 Upon the first day of the week — On the first day of every week (RSV, NIV, NASV, Goodspeed, and others). That is, on every Sunday, the day appointed for Christians to assemble themselves together for worship. The NT attaches a great deal of significance to the first day of the week, significance that does not pertain to other days. It was the resurrection day (Mt. 28:1), the day the HS descended on the apostles and the church began (Acts 2), the day the early church assembled, took the Lord's Supper, and engaged in the other divinely appointed acts of worship (Acts 20:7), and the day the apostle John called the Lord's day (Rv. 1:10). Since the Lord's people met on the Lord's day to take the Lord's Supper, it was logical that while they were gathered together to remember the suffering of Christ for their sins, His glorious resurrection for their justification, and His promise to come again to receive them unto Himself they should express their love to Him by making a sacrifice of material things. When the Scriptural significance of the first day of the week is understood, it makes giving far more meaningful; separated from the first day of the week, much of its significance is lost. By giving on the Lord's day, Christians are constantly reminded that their giving is to the Lord. **let every one of you** — Each one of you (NIV). His order was not confined to the rich alone, but to every Christian. All could have blessed fellowship in the work done when all made a contribution. **lay by him in store**, — Lay by in a common treasury, one to which every Christian contributed. Many interpret this to mean to put something aside from his income at home, meaning nothing more than a personal fund from which he could draw when a need arose. But this view does not take into account the impact of the whole statement. Paul's instructions pertain to a regular contribution laid by in such a manner so that a hurried collection would not be necessary when he came. If it had been stored by each at home, rather than in a common treasury, a collection would still be mandatory. Hodge says, "The words do not mean to lay by at home, but to lay by himself . . . i.e., let him take by himself what he means to give." MacKnight adds, "The apostle's meaning is, that every first day of the week each of the Corinthians was to separate, from the gains of the preceding week, such a sum as he could spare, and put it into the treasury." In view of this, I think there can be no question but that the contribution was made by each Christian into a common treasury which was under the oversight and control of the church. **as God hath prospered him**, — In proportion to his prosperity. A related statement is, "According as he purposeth in his heart" (2 Cor. 9:7). Under the OT system tithing

was bound (Lv. 27:30; Dt. 12:6; 14:22), but no such stipulations are found in the NT. The instruction is give as prospered and as purposed places the responsibility for determining the amount (the percentage) squarely upon the individual. He must make this determination, not by a command that specifies the exact percentage, but by adhering to certain Biblical principles, such as the fellowship of ministering (2 Cor. 8:4), the sincerity of love (2 Cor. 8:8), sowing and reaping (2 Cor. 9:6), etc. In Christianity the attitude of the heart, from which the gift must come, is the determining factor. **that there be no gatherings** — No collecting. **when I come.** — The collection was to be made before his arrival. In fact, the purpose of laying by in store on the first day of the week was to have it ready for him when he came. When each Christian contributes weekly to the common treasury, the church has on hand the means to carry on the Lord's work without the frustration and confusion often caused by going from person to person and place to place to make an appeal for the needed resources. The weekly contribution into a common treasury simplifies the whole procedure. And besides that, it is God's order.

16:3 And when I come, — He had plans to go to Corinth, but he would remain at Ephesus at least until Pentecost (vv. 5-9). **whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.** — Whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem (ASV). Paul himself was not to receive the collection. They were to choose their own messenger to carry their gift. Paul's role was to see that the messengers were received by the brethren in Jerusalem. Here we must make a choice between the KJV and the ASV. Were they to approve messengers by their letters, as in the KJV, or were they to approve the messengers and Paul send letters of introduction with them to Jerusalem, as in the ASV? The latter is far more likely. The church was to select those who would carry the contribution to Jerusalem and Paul would either send letters of introduction with them or, if circumstance permitted, accompany them on their journey (v. 4). Messengers from other areas are mentioned in Acts 20:4, some of all of whom were probably approved by Corinth.

16:4 And if it be meet that I go also, — And if it seems proper for me to go too (Williams). If the church thought it advisable, and if circumstance permitted, Paul himself would go. **they shall go with me.** — They will accompany me (NIV). As it turned out, Paul did go (Acts 24:17).

PLANS TO VISIT CORINTH

16:5-9 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

16:5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: — He had originally planned to go from Ephesus through Corinth, on to

Macedonia, and then back to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:15-16), but he had, in order to spare them, changed his plans and now meant to go to Macedonia first and then back to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:23-24). It was not his desire to go until they had time, after receiving this epistle, to set their house in order (2 Cor. 2:1). **for I do pass through Macedonia.** — For I will be going through Macedonia (NIV). They could therefore expect him sometime before winter (v. 6).

16:6 **And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you,** — When he came to them from Macedonia (v. 5) he would pay them more than just a passing visit. He would spend some time with them and it might work out so that he could spend the whole winter. From Acts 20:2-3 we learn that after leaving Macedonia he came into Greece (undoubtedly Corinth) where he spent three months. **that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.** — It is difficult to decide which of two possible meanings should be understood here: (1) So that they might go a short distance with him and thus send him off with their approval and moral support, as in Acts 20:38; or (2) that they might supply his needs for the journey, either by means of traveling companions, arrangements for the travel, or financial support. The latter seems more likely to me.

16:7 **For I will not see you now by the way;** — It was not his desire just to pay them a passing visit on his way to Macedonia, as originally planned (v. 5; 2 Cor. 1:15-16). Thus he would go to Macedonia first, and then he could come to Corinth for possibly a more extended stay (v. 6). After hearing of the disorder in Corinth he evidently decided that a short visit would furnish inadequate time to correct all the problems among them (2 Cor. 1:23). Thus he wrote this epistle instead of making them a passing visit. His trip into Macedonia would give them time to digest the epistle and correct the problems. It would also enable Paul to determine their attitude toward his stern rebukes and stinging corrections. From 2 Cor. 1 we learn that he was overjoyed when he learned that they had humbly accepted his words and had corrected the disorders by repentance. He could then visit them with joy rather than in heaviness (2 Cor. 2:1). **but I trust to tarry a while with you,** — I hope to spend some time with you (NIV). See v. 6. **if the Lord permit.** — His whole schedule, indeed his whole life, was at the Lord's disposal (cf. Acts 16:6-10). See note on 4:19.

16:8 **But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.** — He would be staying on at Ephesus, where he had opening to him some great opportunities (v. 9) and from which he is writing this letter, until Pentecost (corresponding to our late May and early June), the annual feast of the Jews which fell on the 50th day after the Passover. Thus it is spring in Ephesus, he plans to spend the summer months in Macedonia, and then will be in Corinth in the fall and perhaps spend the winter there (the next spring will find him in Jerusalem, Acts 20-21). By mentioning Pentecost, he does not mean to attach religious significance to it, but rather it is a vehicle to mark time, as we would say, "I will remain here until the middle of June."

16:9 **For a great door and effectual is opened unto me,** — For a

door for effective work has opened to me (RSV). Precisely what that door was we are not informed, but it presented him with a great opportunity to effectively do his work of reaching the lost with the saving truth of the gospel (cf. Acts 19:10, 26-27). **and there are many adversaries.** — Many opposers of the work (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-11). No opportunity to effective work has ever presented itself but that there were many obstacles in the way. Obstacles may defeat or challenge, depending on which one of two attitudes one may take toward them: (1) He may see them as the cause of defeat, a sufficient reason for not taking advantage of the opportunity. He thinks the work cannot be done because the obstacles obstruct the way. (2) He may see them as part of the reason for taking advantage of the opened door — a challenge to defeat the adversary by doing the work. Many of us have the former attitude; Paul had the latter. There were thus two reason for him to stay in Ephesus: (1) there were many opportunities for effective work; and (2) there were many adversaries to battle. Both were a challenge to him. He would run from neither.

TIMOTHY AND APOLLOS

16:10-12 Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

16:10 **Now if Timotheus come,** — Now if Timothy comes (ASV). Paul expected this letter to be in their hands before Timothy arrived. From Acts 19:22 we learn that Paul had sent Timothy into Macedonia, undoubtedly with plans to go on to Corinth from there (4:17), but since he was with Paul when he wrote the second epistle (2 Cor. 1:1) it would appear that there had been a change in his plans (he may have met Titus somewhere along the way, cf. 2 Cor. 7:6-13, and decided that since the problems had been corrected his going was unnecessary). **see that he may be with you without fear:** — Timothy evidently feared rejection, probably because of his youth (v. 11). Thus Paul exhorts them to relieve his fears by a hearty reception and to put him at ease among them by respecting him for what he was. **for he worketh the work of the Lord,** — He was a faithful servant with Paul in preaching the gospel and in caring for the saints (Phil. 2:19-23). **as I also do.** — Just as I am (NIV). In the Lord's work, Paul and Timothy were of the same mind (Phil. 2:20). No higher commendation than this could be given.

16:11 **Let no man therefore despise him:** — Because he was a faithful co-worker with Paul (v. 10), he should not be rejected, slighted, refused, or treated with contempt by anyone. This expression reminds us of 1 Tm. 4:12 and thus leads me to think that these instructions were given to prevent the Corinthians, some of whom prided themselves on their wisdom, from rejecting Timothy because of his youth and inexperience. **but conduct him forth in**

peace, — Send him off in a cordial way. See note on v. 6. **that he may come unto me: for I look for him** — The plans called for Timothy to return to Paul after he had visited Corinth. As noted in v. 10, he probably returned before the visit was made, but of this we cannot be certain. **with the brethren**. — Just who they were, I know of no means of knowing, but probably Titus and those who delivered the letter (cf. v. 12) are included.

16:12 **As touching** — This may indicate that they had requested Apollos to come. **our brother Apollos**, — He was a favorite among some of the Corinthians (1:12; 3:4-6; 4:6) and would certainly not have had the reception problem which Timothy feared (v. 10). **I greatly desired him to come unto you** — Paul had often and strongly urged Apollos to come. **with the brethren**: — Probably those who carried the epistle. **but his will was not at all to come at this time**; — He had a will of his own as to what God would then have him to do. **but he will come when he shall have convenient time**. — He planned to come when the opportunity presented itself.

FIVE EXHORTATIONS

16:13-14 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity.

16:13 **Watch ye**, — Keep awake or constantly alert (1 Thes. 5:6; 1 Pt. 5:8; Rv. 3:2), the opposite of sleeping on the job. There were many dangers around them and they should never be caught off guard by temptation (10:13; Mk. 14:28), false teachers (Mt. 7:15), worldly possessions (1 Tm. 6:6-11), or any other device of Satan (2 Cor. 2:11). But not only were they to guard against evil, they should also watch for the Lord's second coming (Mt. 25:13). **stand fast in the faith**, — Stand firm in the gospel (cf. Jude 3; 2 Tm. 1:14), that is, objective faith. Some however (e.g., RSV, Goodspeed, Williams) translate *faith* as subjective. While either makes good sense, the former is far more likely since the thrust of Paul's thought is that they stand firm for the truth in the presence of false doctrines, such as the denial of the resurrection (15). **quit you like men**, — Act like men, that is, conduct yourselves in a bold and courageous manner. Do not give up when the battle is fierce. In short, your conduct should be that of brave men rather than cowardly children. **be strong**. — Grow in strength, be steadfast (15:58; Eph. 6:10-17).

16:14 **Let all your things be done with charity**. — Let all that you do be done in love (ASV). All the affairs of life, whether in matters of faith or matters indifferent, whether in worship, in the home, at work, or in recreation, should be transacted by the principle of love (1 Pt. 4:8). See chapter 13.

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING STEPHANAS AND OTHERS

16:15-18 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit

yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and your's: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

16:15 **I beseech you, brethren,** — An urgent appeal to them as brothers in Christ to submit themselves to all who labor with him (v. 16). (**ye know the house of Stephanas,** — See 1:16. **that it is the firstfruits of Achaia,** — The first to be converted to Christ in Achaia. There is no conflict here with Rom. 16:5. The true reading there is undoubtedly Asia, as in ASV, rather than Achaia, as in KJV. **and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)** — And that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints (ASV). They had devoted their lives to hospitality, to supplying the needs of God's people. This was their work in the Lord's service. It is not possible for everyone to do everything the Lord wants done. He thus sets some in the body for one purpose and some for another (12:12-27). Paul was devoted to preaching . . . and that where Christ had not been named (Rom. 15:20). But he did not expect everyone to set himself to that particular phase of the work. The family of Stephanas had devoted itself to ministering to the saints. That is, each member was engaged in that particular aspect of the work. From this we should learn that God has work for every Christian and He had prepared every Christian for a work. Each then should find his work, accept the responsibility for it, and devote himself to doing it.

16:16 **That ye submit yourselves unto such,** — You should yield obedience to their kind (BV). He exhorts them (v. 15) to respect, honor, support, and put yourselves under (that is, obey, cf. Heb. 13:7, 17; Eph. 5:21) such men of integrity as Stephanas who were older in the faith and who were devoted to the service of the saints. **and to every one that helpeth with us,** — And under anyone who joins with you (Goodspeed). That is, submit to every fellow helper who by his work proves himself faithful and trustworthy. **and laboureth.** — One who works hard or toils to the point of exhaustion.

16:17 **I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus:** — All three were evidently messengers of the church to Paul and probably carried the letter to him which contained the questions he replies to throughout the epistle (cf. 7:1). Of Fortunatus and Achaicus nothing more is known from the inspired record. **for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.** — For they have supplied your deficiency (MacKnight). Many translators (e.g., RSV, BV, Beck, Goodspeed) and commentators (e.g., Willis, Hodge, Coffman) see this deficiency as the absence of the Corinthians themselves. Hence these men had filled his longing for fellowship with them. And this may well be the case but I am inclined to think that it was either the encouragement they gave him by their being true to the gospel which he preached (a thing of which he could not be sure of the Corinthians as a whole) or, since Stephanas was probably rather wealthy, to supply his financial needs, a thing the Corinthians had never done (9:15). At any rate, their coming had

been a soothing tonic to Paul's spirit (v. 18).

16:18 For they have refreshed my spirit — By supplying Paul with that which was lacking on the part of the Corinthians (see v. 17), the messengers had encouraged him and cheered his heart. **and your's:** — He probably has in view the cheer they would bring the Corinthians when they arrived with this epistle and gave a personal report of their visit with Paul and the assurance of his love for them. But regardless of how it is viewed, the messengers brought benefit and refreshment to the spirits of both Paul and the Corinthians. **therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.** — You must deeply appreciate such men (Williams). That is, they should duely respect them and recognize them for what they were.

SALUTATIONS

16:19-20 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. — The churches in the Roman province of Asia (cf. Rv. 1:4, 11), of which Ephesus was the capital, desired to send their greetings to the Corinthians through Paul. **Aquila and Priscilla** — Aquila and Prisca (ASV). See note on Rom. 16:3. **salute you much in the Lord,** — They sent their warm, hearty, and special greeting to them as Christians to Christians. Because they were in Corinth when Paul first arrived in that city (Acts 18:1-3), and because Paul, being of the same trade as they, lived with them while preaching the gospel and planting the church (3:6), they had a very special place in their hearts for the Corinthians. They had been involved with them in the struggle for truth and in their change from paganism to Christianity. Because of their deep concern for them and the welfare of their faith, they were eager to add the weight of their names to that which Paul had written. **with the church that is in their house.** — The congregation which met in their home. See note on Rom. 16:5.

16:20 All the brethren greet you. — Probably meaning all the Christians at Ephesus, including both the church and those who were in Paul's company. **Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.** — The customary manner of greeting among the early Christians (Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26). See note on Rom. 16:16.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

16:21-24 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

16:21 The salutation of me Paul — The final greeting is mine (Williams). He concludes by sending them his personal greetings, but in a special

way: **with mine own hand.** — He adds this greeting in his own handwriting, which serves as his signature to prove that it is from him. It is thus obvious that he dictated this letter to an amanuensis (some think Sosthenes, 1:1) who wrote it for him. It was his policy, probably to prevent forgery in his name (cf. 2 Thes. 2:2), to close each epistle with a sentence or two from his own hand (Rom. 16:22; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thes. 3:17).

16:22 **If any man love not** — The word for love here (*phileo*) is unusual for Paul. He uses it only one other time (Ti. 3:15) in all his writings. When distinguished from *agapao*, it means affections which have their seat in the emotions rather than the will. We are certainly to love (*agapao*) Christ with the will (Jn. 14:15, 23; Eph. 6:24), love separate and apart from all personal attachments and conditions, but here Paul goes even further and says, because of what Christ has done for us, that we must also love Him emotionally. This means that we are to love Christ with both our mind and emotions, that is, love Him with our whole being (cf. Mt. 22:35-40). **the Lord Jesus Christ,** — The Lord of glory, the Redeemer of the world. If Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (Mt. 1:23), if He died to save men from their sins (Rom. 5:8-9), if He rose from the dead (15:20), if He gave the great commission and offered salvation to the whole world (Mk. 16:15-16), if He ascended (Acts 1:9-11) and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3), if God has exalted His name above every name (Phil. 2:5-11), if He is coming again to claim His own (1 Thes. 4:16-18), if He is now Lord of all (Acts 2:36), to fail to love Him (with both mind and emotion), to follow Him, to obey Him, would make one an enemy of God, a disgrace to himself, and well deserving of the awful curse that follows. **let him be Anathema** — Let him be accursed (RSV). Let him be under the strongest disfavor and judgment of God, without the benefit of redemption, and thus doomed to destruction (2 Thes. 1:7-9). This is the exact opposite of the state of grace (v. 23) and thus a state in which the gospel (and consequently the death of Christ) is nullified (Gal. 1:8-9). As some author, unknown to me, has well said, "If any one by profligacy, by contentiousness, by covetousness, by idolatry, by arrogance, by heresy, evinces an utter lack of love to the Lord Jesus, he must abide the consequences of his moral status: there is no outlook in the future for such a man, but the perdition from the presence of the Lord at His coming." **Maran-atha.** — An Aramaic term meaning either the Lord has come or the Lord is coming. The latter is far more likely (supported by nearly all translations). Thus the Lord is coming to call into judgment all those who refuse His love and spurn His grace. This word should not be connected with Anathema as in the KJV. Robertson (WP) says, "It was a curious blunder in the King James Version that connected *Maran atha* with *Anathema*." The ASV corrects this by putting a period after Anathema.

16:23 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.** — This, with only slight variations, is the blessing with which Paul usually concludes his epistles (e.g., Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18). His fervent desire was that, in sharp contrast to the Anathema of v. 22, the divine but unmerited favor of

the Lord would continue with them. That is, he wanted them to be in a state of full possession of all spiritual blessings (cf. Eph. 1:3).

16:24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. — Even though he had been stern in dealing with their many errors, he closes by reminding them of his tender love for them. He had rebuked them, corrected them, shamed them, and exhorted them, but he had done it all in love. **Amen.** — So may it be — that is, may that which is written in this epistle stand confirmed. Omission by some manuscripts may indicate that this word was added by a later hand. If so, it loses its inspiration but still retains a wholesome sentiment.

