

Commentary on the Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1

1Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

2To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

3Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul identifies himself as he typically did as an apostle, a chosen messenger called by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. He says that he is laboring alongside of Sosthenes who supports him in his work and communication. Sosthenes was likely a convert of Paul at Corinth, and it is recorded in Acts 18:17 that he was beaten by the Jews even though he had been the head of the synagogue. Clearly, something had caused him to change his stance on things, and likely it was a conversion to Christ. Paul writes to the church at Corinth which is sanctified, cleansed, and made holy in and through Christ such that they can be called saints, holy children of God. Saints are not those who are declared holy by men, but saints are any who have been washed of their sin in the forgiving and cleansing blood of Christ. All believers are saints because all have been made holy through faith in the sacrifice of Christ. The true church is made up of those who have received Christ as Savior, and it exists throughout the world wherever a person is found who has repented of sin and turned to Jesus. He becomes their Lord, and there is unity because He is their Lord and the Lord of every other believer. Paul wishes them grace and peace from God and Jesus, Who alone can give it. There is nothing special in Paul which can impart grace, but grace is of God through Jesus. Grace saves and grace keeps, and Paul wishes for further sanctifying grace and peace of mind for these believers whom he loves dearly.

4I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

5that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

6even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you,

7so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

8who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul thanks God regularly for the believers at Corinth because God was gracious to call some of them to himself as they responded in faith to receive the gospel of Christ. Their eyes were opened such that they were able to be made rich and full with spiritual understanding and wisdom, both of which can alone be found in Christ (Colossians 2:3). The word for speech (v. 5) is *logos*, implying that their mind and reason was able to grasp

the truth. Knowledge (v. 5) signifies general intellectual understanding, meaning that the propositional truths about Christ made sense to them. They not only understood them, but they believed them and submitted to them in obedience. There is evidence of their conversion as well because of the work of the Spirit among them as a testimony of their faith. The gifts of the Spirit were being manifested and used to advance the kingdom of God and to edify the believers in Corinth. Furthermore, they were eagerly looking forward to the return of Christ, something an unbelieving, unlearned pagan would not care to do. If he did, it wouldn't be with great anticipation and delight. As Christians, we can look forward to the coming of Christ and not have to be in fear of wrath because Jesus will complete the good work of sanctification which He began in our hearts (Hebrews 12:1-2, Philippians 1:6). We can rest assured of our salvation because God is faithful, and He will keep His promises. In Christ, we will be kept blameless in the sight of God for eternity. Everyone who has trusted Christ as Savior will enter heaven, though some with very few, if any, rewards (1 Corinthians 3:15). Salvation fundamentally is about a relationship with Jesus Christ, and it is God Who is behind the occurrence of this event, calling us into this relationship. No man seeks God unless God first draws Him to do so (John 6:44), which God does for all (Matthew 22:14, John 3:16), but not all receive Him.

10Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.

12Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

13Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

14I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.

16Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

17For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

Paul now begins shepherding the Christians at Corinth by exhorting them to unity. There are divisions and disagreements occurring which Paul is aware of because Chloe reported them to Paul. Each is following a human leader rather than having allegiance to Christ alone. Paul's desire and God's is that the believers be of the same mind and judgment, having come to a similar, right understanding of Scripture and life as a church body. Some swear allegiance to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Peter, and some to Christ, as if these mere men are on par with Christ Himself. The church will deteriorate into divisions and denominations when people start following a man rather than the authority of Christ through His Word. Rather than be associated with one mere man, we should declare allegiance to Christ alone as His church. His association should be our primary association, not some man or historical event or movement. Christ demands our full

allegiance and exclusively so such that in all things He might have preeminence (Colossians 1:18). Paul makes this so apparently obvious in his argument. The Corinthian Christians were not baptized in the name of Paul. Neither did they call upon the name of Paul or Apollos to be saved. Christ has not been divided, so His church should not be divided. Division and quarrels are occurring, however, because some devote themselves to mere men rather than to God above all. Paul shudders at the fact of thinking of baptizing in his own name because of how arrogant and blasphemous such a thought is. But to swear allegiance to a man at the expense of God is just as hideous, and that is what was getting the Corinthians in trouble. Paul was thankful that he only baptized two Christians, Crispus and Gaius, lest the Corinthians start actually claiming that they were baptized in the name of Paul. Paul remembers that he also baptized the household of Stephanas, but he doesn't remember any others. But such is not the main point, for he did not come to baptize but to preach the gospel. The gospel is a call to allegiance to Christ, and Christ is to be the main event. This is where the church needs to return its focus. Christ is the centerpiece, not a mere mortal man. Paul emphasizes that he preached in simple terms, not to showcase his advanced brainpower and intellect. He simply declared the simple gospel so that Christ would get the glory and so that his preaching wouldn't be in vain. Preaching that draws attention to self or that causes others to glory in the preacher rather than the message itself is futile and offensive to God. Paul made sure that from the beginning, even from the first time he preached the gospel at Corinth, that he made Christ the center of attention rather than he himself or any other man.

18For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19For it is written,

**"I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE,
AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."**

**20Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?**

21For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

In the world, charisma, personality, and individual strength matter in terms of winning friends and influencing people. The end result is that people glory in the one doing the influencing. This is not God's design or way. His design is to save people through the foolishness of the message of the gospel preached. Preaching to someone about needing to change and turning to Christ to be saved flies in the face of conventional practice and human wisdom. People in their natural state can't see the truth, and they think the messenger is crazy. But it pleases God to do it this way such that man cannot steal the glory for the work that God does to save a person when He opens his eyes to respond to a true but foolish (according to the world) message. The message of the cross is considered foolish by those who are eternally perishing, but to those who receive it unto salvation, it is understood to have the power which God says it has (Romans 1:16, 10:17, Hebrews 4:12). God's plan is that those who think they are wise will be proven fools and that

those who think they are clever will be proven stupid. Man must be humbled in order to see his true condition, the lies he believes, the deceptions he lives, and the destiny of his soul. Only the grace of God through the message of the gospel has the power to enlighten and save. Some people many consider to be full of wisdom and of high intellects are scribes (writers, teachers, scholars) and debaters (those skilled in communication and in retaining and explaining knowledge). But even the smartest among us are prone to get it all wrong, and a trip to the local university's philosophy or religion department will make it clear that simple belief in the Word of God is only for the "ignorant." Yet God has made the wisdom of the world to be foolishness, for true wisdom can only be found in Christ (Colossians 2:3). The world cannot and does not come to the truth by its fleshly, self-centered wisdom. The same selfish journeys have been taken by humans for centuries. The names change and the titles change, but the same self-centered message continues to be propagated. God says that life is about Him, not self. The evidence for Christ is replete, yet men reject the wisdom of God. They need the grace of God to see the truth, for their own brains, because of their sinful nature, will lead them astray.

**22For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;
23but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,
24but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
25Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

Jews refuse to believe, preferring to get some kind of a sign. Yet even Jesus only gave them the sign of Jonah because He knew that their hearts were unbelieving and wicked (Matthew 12:38-40). No sign would encourage them to believe because the greatest evidence was right in front of them, God Himself, and they missed it. The Greeks, that is, non-Jews, aren't as interested in signs and wonders as they are in the mind and in science, knowledge, and learning. Those who have advanced degrees are those who we consider to have "wisdom." Yet when Christ is preached, the Jews can't accept Him as Messiah, and the Greeks can't see the true wisdom. So whether one is Jew or Gentile isn't the issue in terms of seeing the truth. What matters is God opening the hearts and minds of a person so that they choose in faith to repent and believe. God first must wake those who are spiritually dead such that they can believe (Ephesians 2:1-10). Those who believe recognize Christ as having all power and all wisdom, and they can then see the foolishness of the world and the lack of faith it possesses. The "foolishness" of God, which is true wisdom, is so far greater and truer than any "knowledge" man possesses. Men must come to see their weakness and God's strength, for even His "weakness" is stronger than their "strength."

**26For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
27but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,**

28and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
29so that no man may boast before God.

Paul points out that among the Corinthian Christians there are not many who are wise and mighty according to the flesh. There are not many of high status or whom the world would regard as powerful and having great influence. Those who have it all are like the rich man who is about as likely to enter heaven as a camel is to get through the eye of a needle (Mark 10:25). God has chosen to shame the strong by allowing the more of the weak to see the truth such that God gets the glory and not the “strength” of man. The weak will shame the strong when it comes to true wisdom, and those who are regarded by the world as base and insignificant are those whom Christ delights in saving (though He prefers all to come to salvation, and some who are of high standing on the earth do get saved). The purpose of the weak shaming the strong by being more ready to receive the truth is so that no man can boast before God. God wants the glory, and those who are the most boastful are prone to be the most wrong when it comes to true spiritual wisdom.

30But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
31so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

God is the author of salvation, the One Who makes the first move in initiating the relationship. He poured out grace so that those in Corinth who believed were saved, thereby demonstrating the wisdom of God at work in their hearts. They were made righteous and holy, having been bought back from slavery to Satan. The ransom that God required for His justice to be satisfied was satisfied by His own Son. Those who have been saved will recognize that God was behind their salvation and that His grace was sure. No man seeks God (Romans 3:11), but God seeks every man (Matthew 22:14, Luke 19:10). When we respond in weakness and humility, acknowledging the strength of God, we will make our boast in Him and not in ourselves.

1 Corinthians 2

1And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

2For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

3I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,

4and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Paul made a point of not waxing wise or eloquent when he delivered the gospel to those in Corinth. He was smart enough to impress the “wise” and to use his own human abilities to influence people to follow him. But that was not his mission. He did not want

to self-exalt. Rather, he chose to simply declare a simple message about Christ which would seem foolish to most of the listeners and make him look like a fool to them. He determined to know only Christ and the gospel so that Christ would get the glory and attention. When we simply rely upon the Word of God to do its work, we let God get the glory for what only He can do anyway. When we share the gospel there is good reason to feel afraid and tremble, but we must trust God and preach it boldly anyway. Paul did this. He did not try to cleverly persuade the Corinthians with human reason by appealing to various lusts of the flesh or by trying to get them to accept and like him. Rather, he preached the truth about Jesus in demonstration of the Spirit and of power because it takes the power of God to declare the truth of God without our human egos getting in the way. There is power in the Word of God going forth through a human vessel who seeks no glory but the glory of God. The fruit of this is that those who do repent and respond in faith have a faith that rests upon the power of God which has convicted their hearts rather than on the work of a man who has influenced their impulses and drawn out their fleshly ambitions. The gospel crushes pride and selfish ambition, and only a “fool” would accept it. But God saves some and glorifies Himself which gives us reason not to lift up ourselves but to exalt His name and praise Him for His grace. There just was no reason for the Christians at Corinth to associate themselves with Paul rather than Christ because Paul reminds them that their faith rests upon Christ not upon the abilities of some man, himself included.

6Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

7but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

8the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

9but just as it is written,

**"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."**

It is not that Christians are stupid, ignorant, or naïve. Christians ought to grow to maturity and be extremely educated in the Word such that they have wisdom to be able to defend their faith and know what and why they believe. True wisdom is found in Christ, and it is just that this wisdom isn't perceived by the world as wisdom. To the world this wisdom is hidden, and it is mysterious. Yet it has been revealed to us who believe because God loves us and wants to shower His blessing upon us. Our glory is that God loves us and chose us to be His. This does not mean that we deserved His love, but it means that we have been given glory. Our glory is that the Lord of glory indwells our hearts in our feeble vessel of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7-8). The rulers of this world rejected the wisdom of God and crucified the Lord of glory. They didn't see the truth right before their eyes, but for those who receive Christ, we get to see all that God has prepared for us because of His love for us. The world can't see it, hear it, or understand it, but those who have Christ in their hearts comprehend the truth about Christ.

10For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

It is by the Spirit of God that we understand true wisdom. The Spirit searches out all things because, being God, He knows all things. It is difficult to know what other people think, but each of us know what we think in the depths of our hearts and in our spirit. In the same way, the world cannot understand the thoughts of God because they don't know the Spirit of God. If they knew the Spirit of God, then they could have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). True wisdom and learning comes only through the Spirit by faith in God through Christ.

12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

14But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

15But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

16For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

We have the Spirit of God, not a worldly spirit, such that we can understand what is given to us by God. These are the things we teach and share with others even though they might think it is foolish. When we are led and filled with the Spirit, we are able to speak spiritual words of spiritual wisdom. Only through a relationship with Christ can such wisdom be thought about, mentally processed, and verbally communicated. Without the help of the Spirit, we are on the outside of true wisdom looking in. The things of God require the Spirit of God, and so those who are not spiritually reborn but in their natural sinfully depraved state cannot understand wisdom. Those who are spiritual are able to understand all things which are spiritual and given by God to understand. Yet the spiritual ones are not understood by the world but are rather regarded as fools. This makes sense given that the natural man cannot know the mind of the Lord. God alone possesses all wisdom, and man in his natural state cannot instruct God. Yet in Christ and by the Spirit of God, we are able to think as God thinks in terms of wisdom and Biblical morality and understanding. Spiritual insight and discernment comes only by the Spirit of God through being reborn into a relationship with God through Christ.

1 Corinthians 3

1And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

3For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Paul says that, though the Corinthians are reborn of the Spirit so that they could and should have spiritual understanding and insight, he cannot speak to them that way because their flesh has gotten in the way. This is because they haven't grown up in Christ and continued to take in the wisdom of God. They are mere infants in Christ, living in many ways according to the wisdom of the world rather than according to the wisdom of God. Though they are not natural men but spiritual because of Christ, they are living much more like the natural man rather than the spiritual man. Such is the power of the flesh even in the life of the believer if we do not walk in faith and by the Spirit. Paul has been only able to give the Corinthians milk rather than solid food when it comes to spiritual wisdom and teaching. When a church body becomes so corrupted and fleshly, it is not going to be able to process and receive the in-depth teaching of God's Word. Rather, they need to be reprimanded and given the basics such that they can get back on track. Spiritual infants can only take in milk, and Paul once again had to give them milk. They were living in jealousy, strife, and division, acting like little undisciplined children, walking not after the Spirit but according to the flesh. Paul needed to set them straight with some spiritual wisdom, albeit very basic wisdom.

4For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

5What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

6I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

7So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

Paul's message to the Corinthians is that they are acting no differently than the world, being mere men rather than spiritual men. To associate with Paul or Apollos rather than to all associate with Christ is an elementary mistake filled with self-centeredness, arrogant competition, and vain glory. Paul and Apollos are merely servants of God through whom the Corinthians believed as God worked through them and gave them opportunity. Neither Paul or Apollos would take credit for their salvation, but they understood that they were merely servants of God submitting and surrendering to the work and will of God in their lives. God was the saving force and the power behind their message. Even their message wasn't really theirs but God's. It was just plain foolish to, in effect, worship Paul or Apollos by giving them the credit and glory when all belongs to Christ. The church doesn't need people claiming allegiance to men but to God. The world can worship its icons, idols, celebrities, and superstars, but such is fleshly and not for the church of God. Paul planted some seeds of the gospel, Apollos watered them by adding to the teaching with spiritual wisdom, but God was the One Who allowed and enabled the seeds to grow. No amount of fleshly persuasion and human ability can make a seed grow. No human effort can make a tare into wheat. God must give spiritual understanding and grace to be reborn and to accept the "foolishness" of the gospel of Christ. God is the One Who must get the glory. So it is not about those doing the

planting and watering as if they are anything, but it is God Who gives the growth. It is not about the work of man but the work of God. It is not about the glory of man but about the glory of God. A basic lesson in spirituality is that man is weak while God is strong. Man is unable while God is able. God must get the glory because spiritual victories are only accomplished by His power and might.

8Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

God accomplishes His spiritual kingdom purposes through His church, which is one entity. Each member of the church will be rewarded according to how they labor and serve, but there is to be no division and animosity between brothers and sisters in Christ. They are to be one because they are one church, one field, fellow workers, and one building. Believers are on the same team fighting for the same objective, but it is imperative that all recognize the leadership and authority of God and His Word. If it starts becoming a me-versus-you thing, then division will result. It is not about competition but cooperation. God is the One Who brings the growth, and He is gracious to let us work alongside of Him such that He can accomplish His objectives and work His power in and through us. So it is not about us but about God, the One Who makes it all possible, the One with all the power, and the One Who is Himself building each of us into His dwelling place. Even those who do planting and watering are themselves part of the building and the field. Who needs to be the point of attention is the Master Builder and Master Farmer.

10According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

11For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

14If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

15If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

By the grace of God at work in and through him and around him, Paul preached the gospel to those at Corinth, thereby laying a foundation of faith. He was very careful in what he did as a wise master builder would be, speaking just what he should and being careful not to distract from the message. Yet others will build on this foundation as they teach the Word of God, and they must also be careful so that the building goes according to plan, the measuring stick being the Word of God. The foundation is Christ Himself, and there is no other true foundation which can be laid. All faith must rest upon Christ and His work on the cross where true wisdom is found. But as we serve one another and

teach the Word of God, we build on this foundation by the grace of God. We must be careful how we build because we will be judged by Christ for our faithfulness. If we build with things which are of God and by the grace and power of God which Paul explains metaphorically as gold, silver, and precious stones, then they will endure the fiery test before Christ Who will judge motives and intents. If we did things for the glory of God, they will endure and bring us rewards in heaven. But if we have built with wood, hay, or straw, we will lose any possibility of rewards because these things are of human wisdom and by fleshly exercise rather than by the power of God. There will be grieving in that day when we stand before Christ for judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10) because some will not receive what they had desired to receive. There will also be rejoicing because many rewards will be given. Yet the good news for true believers is that they themselves will be saved because of the faithfulness of Christ. The fire of His holiness will remove the leftover garbage and false motives, and they will enter heaven to be with their Savior in great joy forever (Revelation 21:4).

16Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

18Let no man deceive himself If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.

19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS";

20and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS."

Each child of God is a temple of God in that God Himself takes up residence in us. The Spirit of God indwells us and ministers to us. God gives a stern warning to any who would corrupt or defile the church by leading it away from purity and sound doctrine (the word translated “destroy” is better understood as “corrupt” or “defile”). Such a one would have to be considered a false teacher, to whom God consistently gives severe warnings of judgment (see Jude). If there are any who think that they are wise based on the criteria of men rather than of God, they need to repent and become “foolish,” trusting in the gospel of Christ. The only way to become truly wise is to recognize the truth and accept the fact that the world will call such individuals foolish. But to continue in the ways of the world, scorning the gospel and defiling the temple of God, is to be deceived and destined for judgment. The Lord is not impressed with man’s “wisdom” or reasoning because left to himself, he is deluded and deceived. The thinking of the natural man is vain because God’s ways are wisdom and the world’s ways are foolishness.

21So then let no one boast in men For all things belong to you,

22whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,

23and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

Since boasting in men is foolish and vain, the church must certainly not take part in that. Believers have access to every spiritual blessing, including wisdom and the ability to live peacefully with one another, and they need to do this. Believers belong to God, they are part of one body, and since Christ belongs to God, they belong to God. Thus, unity is possible, and it is commanded. But, in order to achieve it, the church must recognize that God is the Supreme Authority, the Source, and the One to Whom the church must surrender and submit.

1 Corinthians 4

1Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Paul sums up his exhortation to the Corinthians by telling them to think of him and Apollos as servants of Christ and servants of the gospel of God. God and Christ are the unifying pieces and Who should be worshipped. Paul and Apollos are merely helpers, fellow workers with the Corinthians. Thus, the Corinthians need to unify their allegiance to Christ, rather than with men.

2In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

3But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.

4For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

5Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

Paul explains that servants and stewards of God need to be trustworthy. Just because God is the centerpiece does not mean that man is not accountable for his influence and leadership. Man can either direct people to God or away from God, and the way to point them to God is to serve faithfully and in a trustworthy manner by faith. Paul is not aware of any error in his heart, so he doesn't need to bother examining himself at this point. If an error comes up, he would be sure to deal with it immediately. Thus, he fears no earthly court or examination, not even one by the Corinthians. He knows that he is a reliable shepherd, but still God must be the issue. Paul makes the important point that just because he thinks he is innocent doesn't mean he is innocent. It is what God thinks of him that renders him guilty or innocent. He doesn't believe that the Spirit of God has shown him any error of sin, and this is what makes him feel acquitted. But still the final say is not his belief but the judgment seat of Christ, for at that time the Lord will bring to light the inner motives of the heart. He knows all things now, but then He will judge how we have lived. Those who have done well and who have been faithful will receive praise from God. God is the ultimate Judge, and we should examine ourselves now to be sure that we are ready for His examination.

6Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

7For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Paul has used various analogies up to this point to emphasize the truth that he and Apollos are mere men. They are fellow workers, builders, farmers, laborers, servants, and stewards, but they are not Jesus. Jesus is to be the center of attention, and this will bring unity and reconciliation at the church at Corinth. It is imperative that man does not think more highly of himself than the Bible describes. The Bible is plain that Christ is the power and the Judge, and we need to revere and respect Him as the authority over all and the One Who makes ministry even possible. Paul and Apollos are not on any kind of power trip or ego trip, and this is an important example as shepherds. The Corinthians had fallen into the trap of pride in that they were thinking of themselves as being better than others. They looked down on others whom they didn't view as superior as themselves. Obviously, this caused strife and division in the church. They were also acting self-sufficiently as if they could rely upon themselves, their own abilities, and their own resources rather than upon God. They didn't understand that everything that they had was given to them by God. They didn't honor Him as God which is a step toward destruction, and they boasted in what they did have, insulting the God Who gave them what they have. Paul was aware that they were in a very fleshly position and in danger of really going astray, so the rebuke had to continue.

8You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.

9For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

10We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

11To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;

12and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

13when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

The Corinthians were acting as if they needed no instruction because they thought they knew all that they needed to know. They were puffed up, self-righteous, prideful, and self-sufficient. Since they acted as the kings of their own lives, Paul sarcastically referred to them as kings who had advanced so far beyond him and the other apostles. One day believers will reign with Christ, and this is a good thing to look forward to. But we are not kings yet, and if we think we are, we have likely lost sight of the King of Kings. Paul explains that, as an apostle, he doesn't think of himself highly or gloat in his status as the Corinthians did in theirs, and they aren't even apostles. They thought so much more

highly of themselves than where they actually were. They thought they were spiritually advanced when they were mere infants in Christ. Paul explains that he thinks God has put the apostles on display to the world for ridicule and condemnation unto death, and most of them did die as martyrs. Even the angels would witness their suffering and persecution. They were not gloating in earthly fame and glory, but they were laying their lives and well-being aside for the sake of the gospel. They were servants, not kings. They were fools, weak, and without honor by the world's standards, while the Corinthians thought they were wise, strong, and distinguished among men, a very dangerous place to be because it is filled with pride and arrogance. The church is not to try to win the praise of the world, but it is to preach the message of foolishness to the world. The apostles were poorly clothed, hungry, thirsty, roughly treated, and homeless. They were not wealthy or successful in the world's eyes at all, but they had joy, they got along with each other, and they glorified God. The Corinthians were failing where it mattered, and they weren't even recognizing it or being bothered by it. The apostles' lives were difficult, working to have sustenance and yet to have time to do ministry. They gave up all the comforts of life for the sake of the Name. When they were reviled and mocked, they blessed and loved. When they were persecuted, they endured. The Corinthians couldn't even get along with one another, let alone some unbeliever who persecuted them. When people spoke ill of them, the apostles tried to reconcile the relationship. The Corinthians, on the other hand, just kept fighting with one another and furthering the slander. Paul refers to himself and the apostles as the scum of the world and the dregs of all things, meaning that they are the least desirable part of the world. Their lives weren't very desirable as far as comfort and ease, and the world thought extremely little of them. An apostle was not a position of prestige, though it carried great responsibility. Paul was going to be rich in heaven, but for now, he was despised and suffering. Such is going to be the life of those who serve Christ unashamedly and without becoming fleshly (2 Timothy 3:12). The truth about the Christian life is in no way seeker-friendly, unless one has a mind to value eternity over the temporal world, which would be evidence of God's grace at work.

14I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

So Paul has gone on at length rebuking the Corinthians and exhorting them to look at his example as one of lowliness and humility, one which learned to love and get along with others, even those who persecuted him. His purpose in saying this was for the good of the Corinthians because he wanted them to repent and grow to maturity such that they would have an abundance of rewards in heaven. They needed this admonishment, and it was in their best interest. Paul loved them as a father loves his children, and his purpose was not to shame them or to enjoy making them feel bad. It was to give them the truth which would set them free and lead them into life that is truly to the full, which is a life of surrender and sacrifice. It is a difficult message to give, but Paul, in great love, delivered it to the Corinthians.

15For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

16Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

Paul views himself as a sort of spiritual father of the Corinthian church because it was he who first went to them with the gospel. It was he who led them to faith by the grace of God. Thus, given how much he loves them and the instrumental role he has played in their lives, he desires to give them direction and to be an example of godliness for them. Others may come who will teach them about Christ, but only Paul was there at the beginning. Thus, he wants to be sure to lead them in the right way and to set a good example for them. Yet the Corinthians must watch, learn, and follow him (Philippians 4:9).

17For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul sent Timothy to them, another person whom he loves and has discipled in the Lord, to remind them of Paul's ways, example, and instruction in Christ. What Paul teaches consistently to churches everywhere, he wants Timothy to teach to them.

18Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.

19But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.

20For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

Some of the Corinthians were feeling the power of not having Paul there to confront them, so they acted arrogantly and furthered the strife and division that was present. Paul does desire and expect to visit them soon, if God wills and allows him to, and when he does he plans to find out who the troublemakers are. Those who oppose the will of God are not serving God but the enemy, and Paul will find out who is of the enemy. Their words will reveal them, but the issue is whether they are of the kingdom of God or not and seeking to advance it. Those who are not working for the kingdom will need to be challenged and confronted. The kingdom of God is a spiritual reality with the power of God behind it. Those who oppose this reality serve a different power, and this must be dealt with.

21What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

Paul issues a firm challenge to those who are doing evil. He can come gently and lovingly to those who have received this exhortation, or, if they remain hardened and fleshly, he may have to come with a rod, invoking his apostolic authority to put people out of the fellowship and turn them over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5, Matthew 18:15-18).

1 Corinthians 5

**1It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.
2You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.**

The Corinthian church was a very tolerant church, failing to discipline those in flagrant, unrepentant sin, even sin worse than would be reported among the Gentiles. It was said that some were sleeping with their own mothers, a heinous immorality. If the Corinthian church allowed this kind of behavior to continue knowingly, what wouldn't they tolerate? This was a very worldly church which had grown soft to sin and open to compromise and immorality. Rather than mourn, they became arrogant and failed to remove the guilty one from the fellowship. When church discipline was needed, the church failed its calling.

**3For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.
4In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,
5I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

Paul, even though not actually present in Corinth, had decided what to do when he got there. He would assemble the people, and in the name of Jesus and with His power, deliver the unfaithful immoral believer over to Satan. The purpose of this was to communicate to the church that sin could not be tolerated in its midst because of the corrupting influence it has (v. 6). Secondly, it was for the potential restoration of the sinning believer. The hardened sinner needed to suffer the shame of being put out of the church and to lose out on the benefits of fellowship. If he loved Satan more than God, he would have to see what Satan would do to him when the church wasn't there to buffer, or in this case, aid and abet his sin. The sinner needed to be forced to let sin work its full destructive force so that he might yet call out to God in this lifetime.

**6Your boasting is not good Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?
7Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.
8Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

Paul uses leaven (yeast) to describe the effects sin has on the body of Christ. A little bit that goes on tolerated and unfronted in the body of Christ can pollute and contaminate the entire church. It creates an attitude of arrogance and compromise that God hates. The corrupting influence must be removed from the fellowship so that the lump of dough, the church, can be made new and clean once again. Christ died for sins once for all that we might not continue in sin but be set free from its power. Thus, to continue in sin is to spurn our Lord and His work on the cross. Sin must be confronted, and church discipline

must be carried out for the sake of our Lord and for our own purity and preservation. The church was to come together to remember the sacrifice of Christ, not in wickedness and malice but in purity and truth. This is the only way that God could be honored.

9I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

10I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

11But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one.

Paul had written to the Corinthians some time earlier to exhort them not to fellowship and keep association with those who claimed to be Christians who lived in immorality of any kind. Rebellious, hardened believers have an extremely defiling and corrupting influence on the body as a whole. Paul is not saying not to associate with unbelievers, for unbelievers are expected to live in evil ways. They need to be loved and given the gospel of Christ. It is not right to hide out from them, ignore them, spurn them for their evil, or hate them. They must be loved, prayed for, and witnessed to. Christ Himself was the friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19), and it is not for us to ignore the world. We are in it, but not of it. So it makes no sense to try to go out of the world and not let salt be salt and light be light (Matthew 5:13-16). The message Paul is trying to communicate is that Christians must stop associating with a professing brother or sister who refuses to repent. How drastic must the refusal to associate be? Paul says that Christians shouldn't even share a meal with such a one. Those who are put out of the church need to know that they are still loved and are welcome back when they repent, but they cannot enjoy the benefits of fellowship. To fail to separate from a believer who is hardened in sin is to encourage him to continue in sin and to risk being compromised also. There is a time for reasoning, confrontation, and loving care and counsel, and then there comes a time for one to be cut off from fellowship. If the church actually practiced this for all sins as Paul suggests it should do, then it would be a much purer place with a much stronger testimony.

12For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

13But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

It is not the place of the Christian to judge and condemn outsiders, for those who are headed to hell will live for self. We already know this. They don't need judgment, and Christ didn't come to condemn them (John 3:17). He came to seek and save them (Luke 19:10), and so must we. However, we should discipline those who profess to be part of the church but who live consistently in sin. These need to be confronted as per the steps in Matthew 18:15-18, and if they still do not repent, they need to be put out of the fellowship. The goal is always restoration, and letting sin go unchecked and unchallenged with no consequences, is not going to bring restoration. If a church family loves one of its own who has fallen into rebellion, it must be willing to confront. If

confrontation fails, then it is time for being removed from fellowship and choosing not to associate with them on Sunday or anytime.

1 Corinthians 6

1Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?

2Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?

3Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

4So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?

5I say this to your shame Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,

6but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

7Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

8On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

Paul is adamant that believers do not go to court against one another. To do this communicates that God is not able to resolve the conflict or that the Bible doesn't give the necessary information or resources to solve conflict and work out problems. It is a very poor testimony to the world, which as Paul has already communicated, doesn't have the wisdom of God. Why does the church, which has access to God's wisdom and the mind of Christ, have to go to the world which doesn't have this wisdom in order to be reconciled? It doesn't even make sense. There should be plenty of people with wisdom in the local church to be able to help rectify a conflict. The church will judge angels in the future, so it only makes sense that they can work out the disputes of life (2 Peter 1:3). They will rule with Christ in the future kingdom, so it only makes sense that they can figure things out now by the grace of God. Just because a person has a law degree does not mean they have the wisdom of God. There must be those within the church who can help resolve these conflicts, so there is no reason for brother to take brother to a secular court. If only those in the situation are humble, things can be worked out. Even if one is at wrong, it is worth the other being defrauded for the sake of not communicating to the world that the church is evil or incompetent. Yet the Corinthians were bringing lawsuits against one another, and they were indeed defrauding one another. This is the initial problem. If brother can't be trusted by brother, the church is a wreck. This must be fixed, and if it is, then there will be no need for lawsuits, which is how it should be among brothers.

9Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

10nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

11Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Paul is shocked at the level of unrighteousness in the church which presents the possibility that some of those who profess to be saved may be deceiving themselves. The unrighteous will not inherit heaven, and some of these sure seem to fit the bill. Listed as examples of ungodliness and unrighteousness is idolatry, premarital sex or any kind of sex outside of the confines of love in marriage and according to the principles of Scripture, adultery, men taking on the role of women and rejecting their God-given masculinity, homosexuality, stealing, coveting, getting drunk, mockers, and con-men. When these kinds of things occur in the church, discipline must occur or else the church will evaporate into worldliness as the ungodly lead, deceive, and exploit the godly. Many of the Corinthians had been sinners according to Paul's list, but they were saved, having been washed in the blood of Christ and purified from sin. They were justified, having been declared by God as saints rather than sinners. The ungodly can become godly by the grace of God, and this should be the overwhelming testimony of the church. Church discipline preserves godliness and a pure testimony.

12All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Just because we are under grace rather than under law (Romans 6:14) does not mean that grace is license to sin (Romans 6:2). Grace is the power and ability to fulfill the law of Christ which is love, selflessness, service, sacrifice, and surrender. It is not indulgence or arrogance. Two guidelines for choosing whether or not to engage in a certain behavior are whether or not it is profitable and whether or not it enslaves. Sin is destructive and enslaving, so it needs to be avoided at all costs. But if a behavior has some positive effect, drawing us closer to the Lord and keeping us from evil, then it is fine to engage in it. We must stay away, however, from anything that masters our hearts and souls, for we can't serve God and something else (Matthew 6:24). The Christian life is a life of freedom (John 8:31-32), for we have been set free by the truth. Our freedom however is freedom from the bondage of sin, not freedom to not have to obey God. Obedience is the only way to remain free. The Corinthians clearly were abusing the idea of Christian freedom, and they needed to start obeying.

13Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

14Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

It appears that the Corinthians were influenced by thinking that suggested that the body is disconnected from the spirit such that sin in the body might not affect the soul. This is dualism, and it is not Biblical. To sin with the body is serious, and it is a sin against God. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so defrauding the body is the same as defrauding God. Even though the body is not going to inherit heaven, it is still attached

to the spirit on earth such that committing immorality affects the whole person, not merely the flesh and bones. We will be given a new body one day (Romans 8:11), and it is important that our body glorifies God even now, as we know it will later. The body is given by God to serve the Lord and for the Lord to indwell. It is not for sin and attachment to the devil.

15Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

16Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

17But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Spiritually, being the church, we are the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:32). We are also members of His body, He being the head (Colossians 1:18). Thus, corrupting ourselves in sexual immorality is highly offensive to the Lord. Members of Christ's body should not be being joined with a prostitute. Sexual immorality leads one to be joined to another person in a deep physical and emotional bond. This bond is designed only for the covenant relationship of marriage. There is to be a one-flesh reality that is physical, emotional, and spiritual, as well as practical. Sexual immorality removes the commitment for a cheap physical thrill. Thus, this feeling of oneness is destructive because there is a pull to a person that has made not commitment of marriage faithfulness or relationship. This leads to frustration, destruction, discouragement, disappointment, and a feeling of internal division. The sexual union is a powerful thing, and it works properly only in the bond of marriage. The one who is in a saving relationship with Christ is one spirit with Him given that he is part of His body. It is evil to take what is Christ's and join it to a prostitute. The destructive force is great.

18Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

19Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

20For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Immorality must be fled from because of its severe consequences in addition to the mere fact that it is sin. Sin is always destructive, but sexual immorality is particularly destructive because of the effects it has on a person. Most sins are outside the body. There might be internal guilt and emotional struggle, but there is not a feeling of damage and carnage at the deepest heart and soul level. Sexual immorality, since sex targets the deepest needs, feelings, and longings of the human heart, also can corrupt a person at the deepest level, causing them to feel incurably dirty, used, divided, fragmented, and incomplete. Sex outside of marriage robs a person of his most priceless possession outside of Christ which is his wholeness as a person. To rip a marriage apart is to rip a person apart. To have sex outside of marriage is also to rip a person apart. Sexual immorality has devastating effects to the body, the mind, the heart, and the soul. Thus, we should live morally and in purity since the Spirit indwells our bodies. We don't even own our bodies, but God owns us and rents space, so to speak, to Himself, namely the

Holy Spirit. He purchased us through the blood of Christ to be His own possession, and that means He should be able to have His will done in our hearts and lives. In light of the fact that God indwells us, is one spirit with us, and owns us, we had better obey and glorify Him in our body. How we live in the body matters because it affects us and our Lord.

1 Corinthians 7

1Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

Evidently, the Corinthians had written Paul earlier with some questions about marriage. Paul says that it is fine and acceptable for a person to remain celibate (see Matthew 19:12 for examples of Biblical celibacy). Yet, given that sexual desire is good and of God, those who are called to marriage will have a good and healthy outlet to express their sexual desires. Marriage is one man for one woman as Paul clearly identifies. And sex is to be only between the man and his wife.

3The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

4The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

5Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

6But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

Within the marriage relationship, both partners have needs. The wife is to look out for the needs of her husband, and the husband is to look out for her needs. Paul has in mind the sexual needs in particular. If both partners are getting their needs fulfilled by the other, falling into temptation is far less likely. Wives should realize that the husband has authority over their bodies, and husbands should realize that wives have authority over their bodies. This simply reinforces the idea that it is not right to keep one's body from satisfying a legitimate need for the partner. The partner has a right to enjoy the other, and the other should not stop them from doing this. To deprive one another is wrong, and it must be stopped. Sexual expression is normal, good, and healthy in marriage because of the unifying force it brings and cultivates. There may be a time to agree together to abstain for a time such as for prayer, but it should also be agreed upon when the time to come back together is. It appears that it shouldn't be too long of a gap given that Satan will try to exploit the situation. The concession Paul is speaking of is in verse 2 when he says that marriage is necessary because of immoralities that would otherwise occur. Thus, he is not commanding people to get married, but he is saying that some people are better off marrying than committing immorality because they are unable to harness their

desires. Obedience in marriage is better than disobedience as a single person. This is his point.

7Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

His wish, however, is that all people could be single as he is such that they could devote themselves wholly to the work of the kingdom rather than having to care for the needs of family as well. Yet he realizes that God has not gifted all that way, and some are not able, as he was, to remain celibate. To impose celibacy upon a person with a desire and call to marriage is foolish, evil, and wrong. Paul understands this, and thus he goes on to give instruction concerning marriage.

8But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

9But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Those who are unmarried or who are widowed can stay as they are and be morally in the right. Yet if they lack self-control because they desire the intimacy of marriage, then they should marry rather than start committing adultery or lust to satisfy their needs. It is better for them to marry than to let the passion and desire fester and burn until it leads to giving in to temptation.

10But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband

11(but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

For those who are married already, the wife should not leave the husband or divorce him, and the husband should not abandon or divorce his wife. The marriage should remain in tact, and divorce is not a desirable option. In fact, from the beginning, it has never been God's plan (Matthew 19:4-6). God merely allows it in the instance of adultery (Matthew 19:6) because of reasons of safety and protection for the innocent party, but still, if at all possible, the marriage should remain in tact legally. Even if divorce occurs, the marriage is still in tact before God because of the covenant made (Romans 7:1-3, Malachi 2:14-16, 1 Corinthians 7:39). What is also clear from this passage is that it is not right to divorce and then remarry. This is because of the fact that marriage is a permanent covenant until the death of a spouse. Thus, to remarry after a divorce is still adultery (Matthew 5:32). If a divorce occurs, then both parties should remain single. The desirable outcome is for them to recommit themselves to one another, and thus they should be very wary of the danger of committing adultery.

12But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.

13And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

14For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

In the case of a marriage where one spouse is a believer and one is an unbeliever, obviously conflict will arise because the two are unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). But if the unbelieving spouse is willing to live with the believing partner, then the believer must not divorce the unbeliever. A marriage should not be ripped apart, particularly in that the unbeliever could still come to Christ. The believer need not worry about the children because the children can come to Christ and be saved. The unbelieving spouse is sanctified in that the Lord watches over the family as if it is a believing family because of the faith of the one believing spouse. Thus, staying together, if the unbeliever is willing to do so, is much better than divorcing.

15Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

16For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

If the unbelieving spouse does leave or divorce the other, the one abandoned or divorced is no longer under bondage. This does not mean that the believer is now free to remarry because Paul has already explained that in the case of marriage in general that marriage after divorce is wrong (v. 10). What Paul is saying is that the believer can let the unbeliever go and live his or her separate life. The believer does not need to feel as if he or she still needs to live under the same roof, share finances, or these kinds of things. The practical attachments of marriage are free to dissolve in this instance, and the believer does not need to worry about maintaining these things. There is also no longer a sexual need to meet (v. 3). Thus, the believer should feel free to live as a single person, except that he or she ought not to remarry. God's call is for peace, and to force the unbeliever to stay by any means is not Biblical. If the unbeliever wants to leave, he or she needs to be allowed to leave for the sake of peace. God is in charge of salvation, and it is possible that the unbeliever who left could still be saved. This is another reason why the believer should not remarry. The unbeliever might return some day as a saved spouse. Yet, in the short term when conflict is tense, the believer shouldn't force the unbeliever to stay as if he or she could force that person into salvation to preserve the marriage. There is a time to let the unbeliever go for the sake of peace, and the believer should pray for salvation and restoration of the marriage.

17Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk And so I direct in all the churches.

Christians will find themselves in different walks of life. Some will be single, others will marry, and still others will end up divorced or widowed. The bottom line is that in whatever stage a person finds themselves, they must do things God's way and accept the

reality given them. This is all the more reason to marry rightly the first time, and all of this teaching should motivate individuals to do just that. These principles are not just for Corinth but for all the churches.

18 Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

Some might get saved after being circumcised, and there is no reason for them to go back to being uncircumcised. Some might be saved while uncircumcised, and there is no reason for them to get circumcised. Circumcision is not the issue but whether or not somebody keeps the commands of God. The heart is what matters (Romans 2:29), so each person should remain as they were when saved so that circumcision doesn't become an unnecessarily distracting issue.

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.

Some were saved when they were slaves. If so, it is fine for them to remain as they are, but if they can become free, then they should seek freedom. It is important for slaves to understand that they are free in the Lord, having full dignity as human beings. Those who are free should realize that they are slaves of Christ, servants of Him called to do His will. Who a person is in Christ is thus more important than their status in life. Those who are free should not seek to become slaves. God bought them with a price, spiritually speaking, and as servants of God, they should live in an honorable way but not as slaves. A Christian should only have one ultimate master and that is Christ Himself. So if a person is saved while free, he must stay free. If a person is saved while a slave, he can remain a slave or seek freedom if he can get it. But the bottom line is that they need not worry about their lot in life as much as their spiritual state. If things are right with the Lord, they can be content whether slave or free.

25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.

26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

In light of the difficult time that these believers lived in where persecution was severe, Paul advised those who were single to remain single, lest they have to deal with the

heartache of being separated from family or watching family be persecuted. As a single person, one could be spared some of the possibilities of such immense sorrow.

27Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

28But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

If a person is already married, then he should stay married and not seek to be released no matter what happens. Divorce is never God's plan as Paul has already emphasized. If a person is divorced, he is not allowed to remarry, but if he is separated because of death, he would be free to remarry. Yet, Paul's advice, in light of the difficult time, is that he should not to seek a wife. Yet, if one chooses to marry anyway, it is not a sin. It merely opens the door to the possibility of great loss or sorrow should persecution come to that family. So virgins can marry or stay single and not sin either way. The important thing is that they do what God calls them to do. Paul's only point in cautioning those who would be married is to spare them the trouble that they might have in life because of hardship that comes from being a believer in a hostile environment.

29But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

30and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;

31and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

32But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

33but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

34and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

35This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

Given that time is short until Christ returns and the that the devil will wreak havoc until then, it is important for believers to live fully devoted to the Lord and without distraction as much as is possible. Obviously, this is easier for the single person than it is for those married or with children. Paul's advice is to not hold on to things too tightly. One should not get too excited given that trouble could be just around the corner, but one needs to be sober and focused on what matters. One should not get overly sad because time is short and heaven is coming quickly. Those who own things should think as though they don't really own things given that they might be separated from their possessions quickly and given that they can't take them along after death anyway. Paul's desire is that believers be free from the concerns of the world which can become

overwhelming. Obviously, those who are married, who own things, or who have children, must tend to those things, but they must do all that they can to not let those things distract them from the ultimate purpose of their lives, which is serving God. Those who are single have the advantage of time and fewer distractions, and so they should be especially diligent to be holy in body and in spirit. Paul isn't forcing a person to remain single and not marry, but he simply thinks that it is for their own benefit in this particular time. Yet each must choose before the Lord what is best and right for him or her to do according to His principles. Whether single or married, each must strive to make Christ the ultimate center of attention and devotion in their lives.

36But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

37But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well.

38So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

A father is allowed to keep his virgin daughter from marrying if he believes before the Lord that that is truly the best thing for her. If he believes that it is best to give his virgin daughter in marriage, he can do that as well. In Paul's view, he does a good thing to give her in marriage and a better thing to keep her. We should remember, however, that this is in the context of difficult times, and this should be a factor in determining whether or not a father should agree to marriage for his daughter. The assumption here is that the father is not treating the daughter wrongly but is taking her desires and interests into view as well because her desires matter (Psalm 37:4, Song of Solomon).

39A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

40But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Paul reiterates the fact that marriage is for life until one of the spouses dies. If the wife's husband dies, the woman can be remarried to whomever she desires as long as the person is a believer. A principle here is that believers can marry whomever they desire as long as it lines up with the Biblical criteria of what a person should look for in a mate. Paul's opinion is that the widow will be happier to remain single than to try to remarry, but this is not an absolute command for all widows (see 1 Timothy 5:11-14).

1 Corinthians 8

1Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

2If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;

3but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

The Corinthian culture was very idolatrous and pagan, and the church at times found itself having to deal with the situation of buying or eating food that had been sacrificed to idols. The pagans wanted the blessing of the false deities, whereas believers prayed for God's blessing on food. Did the pagan ritual make the bread uneatable for the Christians? For most believers at Corinth, the food that was sacrificed to idols was not an issue of any real concern. This is because they had knowledge, knowledge that informed them that the pagan deities don't really exist because they are not God. Thus, there has been no harm done to the food because there are no gods to do the food harm. Yet Paul is going to explain that there are those who don't have such knowledge and that, for them, eating this food sacrificed to idols could be a defiling thing for their conscience. Even though they would not actually be doing wrong, they would think that they were doing wrong because of their lack of understanding. This is a destructive experience to their walk with Christ, and thus those who possess the knowledge must not let that knowledge make them so arrogant that they influence a brother without proper knowledge to eat and go against his conscience. If it protects a brother from sin, it is worth not eating the food. Love always edifies the brother or sister in Christ, and it is imperative that love guides one's decision in this matter and in any matter where issues of conscience come into play (Romans 14). None of us know all things, but only God knows all things. None of us are fully advanced or perfected in our knowledge, and so, even those who think they have knowledge need to be careful lest they defile their own consciences because of arrogance and pride. Knowledge is a good thing, and we should keep seeking it, lest we get led astray (Hosea 4:6). Yet, love must guide our pursuit of knowledge, and knowledge should move us to love others and consider their well-being ahead of our own. Our boast is not to be defined by what we know but that God knows us and loves us. And God loves our brothers and sisters as much as He loves us, so we must respect their needs and where they are at in respect to spiritual maturity.

4Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.

5For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,

6yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

7However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

8But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.

There is only one true God Who has created all things, food included, and we exist for His glory. Our lives are hidden with Christ in God for the purpose of bringing glory to Christ. Christ holds all things together. Since there are no other deities that are true, even though men have many gods and lords that they might worship, the food sacrificed

to idols can be eaten by believers. The problem is that some believers who had formerly worshipped idols can't eat the food which has been sacrificed to idols without feeling guilty as if they are participating in their former sin once again. Of course, if they truly understood things, they should be able to freely eat. Yet this is not where they were at spiritually, so for them, eating would be sin because it would not be from faith (Romans 14:23). What is important to remember here is that eating this food is not something that commends us to God. Eating the food is not a required command of God. If we don't eat it, we don't do any harm. If we do eat it, we might do our weaker brother some harm. But there is no glory necessarily in choosing to eat it. So the issue of the most importance in choosing whether or not to eat this food ought to be the state of our brother.

9But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

10For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?

11For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

12And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

13Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

Paul's conclusion is that if we might stumble our brother into sin by influencing him to eat when his understanding in his conscience tells him that he should not, we do wrong. We are better off not eating for the sake of our brother. To sin in this way would be to sin against our brother and against Christ because of the weakness of his conscience. For him, eating is sin because it goes against what he knows and senses in his conscience as far as what is right and what is wrong. He lacks the knowledge that could set him free, and in the meantime, eating for him is sin because it is not from faith. There is no glory in ruining a brother for the sake of eating some food. He is so much more important, and we should remember that Christ died for him as well. So Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians is not to go into the temple of idols to buy or eat food not because it is inherently sinful but because it could lead a weaker brother astray. The strong need to learn to limit their freedom when others who are weak might be watching and, as a result, be prone to follow in their example and be stumbled into sin.

1 Corinthians 9

1Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

2If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3My defense to those who examine me is this:

4Do we not have a right to eat and drink?

5Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

6Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

Paul defends his freedom in Christ and his rights as an apostle, though he does not choose to use them (v. 12). He is an apostle because he had seen the risen Christ firsthand and had been commissioned by God to build the church and take the gospel to the Gentiles. Thus, as a minister of the gospel, he deserved to be financially supported. He had a right to have the means to eat and drink, to take a wife who would also be supported (as Peter and the other apostles did), and to refrain from working because his work was as a missionary and steward of the gospel. The Corinthians should know firsthand that Paul was an apostle because he went to them with the gospel before any others. In that sense, their conversion proves his commissioning and apostleship. Thus, of all people, they should understand that he would have some God-given rights as a minister of the gospel, namely to be financially supported.

7Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

8I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?

9For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING " God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

10Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

11If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

12If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

Soldiers get reimbursed for their service. They are fed, they have a place to sleep, and often times they are reimbursed financially so that their families can be supported back home. Those who plant a vineyard eat some of its produce as their reward for their labor. Those who tend a flock take of some of the milk for themselves. Even the secular world understands the idea of retribution for services rendered, and it is true that even the Law implies that those who work should be paid for their labor. God doesn't want the apostles or any who serve Him as a full-time occupation to be "muzzled" by undue financial burden such that they are unable to do the ministry to which they have been called. It is very difficult to support oneself and do ministry full-time, and God doesn't expect this of His servants. As an apostle, Paul had the right to hope for financial help from those for whom he labored for the sake of the gospel. He sowed spiritual things and had the right before God to reap financially or materially from them in order to have the basic needs of life met. It is possible that the Corinthians were supporting some of the leading brothers at their fellowship, and if so, certainly they should understand Paul's

right to be supported, given that he first took the gospel to them and continues to pray for them and serve them. Yet he explains that he has never used this right to take financial support from the Corinthians lest it become a hindrance to his ministry (he did take support from at least some other churches- Philippians 4:15-16). He didn't want the Corinthians to say that Paul preached for the financial gain it brought him. Paul wanted no one to be able to bring a charge against him, albeit false, that he was doing what he was doing because of money. Thus he endured all things, working as a tentmaker in addition to doing ministry, so that none could give a credible accusation against him of exploiting his right in the gospel.

13Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?

14So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

15But I have used none of these things And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.

Those who performed the temple services in the Old Testament were supported by taking a portion of the sacrifices given. If the people stopped giving to the Lord, those in the service of the Lord suffered. Thus, in the New Testament, the Lord desires that those who proclaim the gospel get their living from the gospel. They should not have to labor in the gospel and still have to try to do something else to provide for themselves and their family. To have to do this is a great burden, and it detracts from the quality and quantity of ministry that a servant of God is able to do. A pastor should not feel guilty for taking of the tithes and offerings for himself or his family, but he should not take more than needed in addition to making sure that those in his care are getting their needs met first. Paul, however, decided not to take money, and this was his choice before God. It didn't make him extra-righteous, but it merely served to keep him from being falsely judged. He explains that he doesn't want the Corinthians to start giving him money, for that is not why he writes what he is writing. His purpose is simply so that his life does not bring a hindrance to the gospel of Christ (v. 12), and for him to start taking money now would be to undo something he has worked hard to accomplish. The Lord had enabled him to live this way, and there was no reason to change things now.

16For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

17For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

18What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Paul does not pat himself on the back for preaching the gospel because he is simply doing what is required of him and what God has called him to do. He does not gloat in his service for Christ as if he is doing something above and beyond the call, but he recognizes that as a believer, this is who he is and what he is expected to do. He knows

that if he did not preach the gospel, he would be judged by God accordingly. Thus, there is a sense in which he was compelled to preach the gospel, and the same goes for us. Yet Paul is not saying that he preaches against his will, though if it came to it, he probably would. Paul preaches voluntarily, and a willing heart which is dedicated to serving God brings eternal rewards. To do it because he has to but not because he wants to would merely be a discharge of a stewardship. But to do it because he loves the Lord is worthy of a reward. Motives matter in kingdom service. Paul's reward was not any money he would get from preaching the gospel. His reward was to be able to simply have the chance to preach the gospel and to do it free of charge. For him, being a preacher was a privilege and an honor, and he enjoyed the fact that he did not need to take up an offering for his service. This was a privilege Paul had, but it is not required of all ministers.

19For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

20To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;

21to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

22To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

23I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

Paul takes no financial help not because he doesn't have a right to it but because he doesn't want to come across by those who might falsely judge him as having secondary motives or a hidden agenda of making money. He has chosen to be a slave to all people, even though he is free. In other words, he sacrifices some of his rights so that he can go above and beyond the call of duty to bring the gospel to those whom he loves. He doesn't want to lose any potential converts simply because they see him take up an offering. Such he would be free to do, but he chooses rather to put the interests of the listeners ahead of his own. When he preached to the Jews, he acted as if he was under the Law, though he wasn't under it. He didn't have to keep the feasts or wear the garb and so on, but he would have done all that he could to not make an issue out of things that weren't the primary issue. Surely, he wasn't afraid to speak of the limitations of the Law and of Christ Who had fulfilled the Law. That is why the Jews tried to kill him on so many occasions. His message wasn't easily received, but his lifestyle certainly wasn't to blame for his rejection and persecution. He didn't attack the Jews for being Jews, but he made the issue that of their rejecting the Messiah. To the Gentiles who didn't have the Law, Paul didn't try to force the Law upon them before he gave them the gospel. He still believed in the Law of God, and he practiced the law of Christ, loving God and others. Yet his purpose was to share the gospel and not get distracted by trying to change the Gentiles into Jews, for such was not the mission of the gospel. The issue was the state of the heart of the Gentiles, and they needed to come to know Christ first and foremost, not to become scholars of Old Testament Law. Never is Paul saying that he lived lawlessly or disobediently in order to better relate to the pagans. He never changed his theology or

compromised his morals. His point is merely that he limited his freedom so that nothing he did became a hindrance to his reasoning for preaching, which was to win more as the gospel went forth. He became all things to all people to try to win some, and he did this for the sake of the gospel. Sin, Christ, and repentance unto salvation were the issues at hand for Paul, not other secondary cultural issues that could be reformed later if necessary or left alone if morally neutral anyway. Paul preached because he wanted to be part of God's will at work in the world in bringing people to Himself. His fervency in preaching the gospel was also further evidence of his apostleship and having been changed by Christ.

24Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

25Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

26Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

27but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Paul was driven and passionate to see as many people saved as possible which requires him to preach the gospel boldly and to as many people as God gives him opportunity. Whether in jail, before a civil leader, in a synagogue, or on the streets, he preached because he ran the race of life in Christ to win. This is not to say that those who don't preach as faithfully lose, but the point is that we are all to run as if we want to win. That is, we are to do all that we can according to our gifting and according to the opportunities God gives us to advance the kingdom. We will be held accountable for how we use what God entrusts to us, whether health, time, energy, money, opportunity, gifts, influence, etc. The Greeks held the Olympic games and the Isthmian games. The Isthmian games were held in Corinth, so this was a ready analogy for the spiritual life which the believers there would have understood. Those who train for such events have incredible willpower and self-control. Their discipline and training is very rigid, and this is what is required in order to compete and win at the highest level. The spiritual parallel is that we must be diligent and disciplined in our walk with Christ in order to win rewards in heaven. The athletes ran in order to receive a perishable wreath, whereas we run for the sake of the gospel for eternal rewards that never rust or die. Paul doesn't live his life half-heartedly or carelessly but purposefully and with a clear aim. He is not like a runner confused as to where the finish line is or a boxer who throws punches that never land. He wants his punches to land, and he wants to be the first across the finish line. In order to do this, he disciplines his body (which is still vulnerable because of the sinful flesh) such that it is made subservient to the will of God. Paul is not speaking of some kind of self-abasement but of one who learns to present his members as members of righteousness (Romans 6:13, 19) as he walks by faith and lets God take control of his will and desires. He is not going to let his bodily impulses lead him into temptation, but he takes thoughts captive unto obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Paul was tempted like we all are and certainly wasn't without error, yet he steadfastly served Christ and lived victoriously because of the prize to come (Philippians 3:13-14). The last thing Paul wanted to do was

to preach the gospel of confessing and repenting from sin (1 Corinthians 15:34) and then to sin himself. To live a double-life is to disqualify oneself from ministry because it renders one untrustworthy and hypocritical. Thus, Paul strove to live out what he preached so that he would not be disqualified from laboring for Christ and storing up eternal rewards. If we keep our eyes on the prize, we are much more likely to stay disciplined and not get disqualified by giving into temptation. But we must keep fighting and living by faith. We must also train ourselves in the Word so that we are adequate and equipped for every good (2 Timothy 3:16-17) work which God will give us opportunity to do (Ephesians 2:10).

1 Corinthians 10

**1For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;
2and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
3and all ate the same spiritual food;
4and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**

Paul speaks of some of the commonalities of the Jewish people, he being a Jew himself. They all wandered in the wilderness with God leading them by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day (Exodus 13:21). They all followed Moses as their leader and received the Law of God from him. They all ate manna and drank from the rock which miraculously gave forth water (Exodus 16:15, 17:6). The Rock which followed Israel was Christ, He being God. The pre-incarnate Christ was there with Israel in their wanderings looking out for them and providing for them.

5Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

6Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

7Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY."

8Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.

9Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.

10Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

11Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Most of the Israelites who had escaped Egypt ended up dying in the wilderness because of their lack of faith to go into Canaan and take it. Others died at various judgments of God along the way because of their evil and disobedience. We are to be mindful of how easy it is to fall into temptation and that God disciplines His beloved children when we sin (Hebrews 12:6). Sin has consequences, and we must take sin seriously. Quoting from Exodus 32:6, Paul explains how the people were idolaters and immoral. They did

their sacrifices in the morning and then went to play, which implies sexual immorality. Their minds were set on evil, and their hypocrisy didn't bother them. After the immoral idol worship and orgy in Exodus 32 at Sinai, God killed 23,000 of the Israelites, 3,000 at the hand of the Levites (Exodus 32:28) and presumably the other 20,000 by divine destruction (Exodus 32:35). The Levites were the only ones recorded to still be for the Lord, but as usual, there was a faithful remnant. The lesson is to be faithful so that we don't try the Lord with sin, lack of faith, disobedience, or grumbling and complaining. The Israelites died of fiery serpents (Numbers 21:6) because of complaining against Him, and they died at the hand of the destroyer, an angel of God, because of rebellion (presumably referencing the plague of Numbers 16). All of this should serve as an example to remind us how to live and to teach us to fear the Lord. The Scripture is written for our instruction in this time. As Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." God always proves Himself to be powerful, sovereign, and faithful. There is no need to test His anger when we can be sure of His love, goodness, and the hope and joy that comes from serving Him.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

Korah's rebellion recorded in Numbers 16 speaks of 250 men who took their stand in defiance against God and were swallowed up by the earth. They thought they could stand on their own against God and win, but they were wrong. They wanted to worship God their own way, but God is firm in how He is to be worshipped. They fell, but we need not to fall if we learn from their example. Rather than rebel and test the principles of the Lord, we should believe every Word of it and obey it. If we become self-sufficient or arrogant, we make ourselves prone to a great fall. It is imperative that we guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Proverbs 4:23, Philippians 4:7).

13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

When we are tempted, we ought not to be surprised by the fact. Temptation is common to man. We are going to experience it; even Christ experienced it. Yet we don't have to give into temptation, for God is faithful, providing a way of escape. It is not as if we are going to experience a certain kind of temptation that will be so strong and so severe that God's faithfulness won't be enough to enable us to resist and flee. We can always win and cause the devil to flee (James 4:7), but we must believe God and resist the devil by faith in His Word. We can always endure a temptation without giving into it if only we will trust the Lord. Never will we be given more than we are able to handle with the help of our Lord. The same Jesus Who withstood all temptation while on earth is within our hearts to help us live in victory. Some temptations are extremely appealing and aggressive, but, even if it is an intense battle of faith, we can endure and win. In light of God's promised victory, we must flee all sin. In this particular instance, Paul is

concerned that the Corinthians flee idolatry rather than mix and match some idol worship with the worship of God.

15I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.

16Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

17Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

18Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

19What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

20No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

21You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

22Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

23All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable All things are lawful, but not all things edify.

Paul is going to reason with the Corinthians as to how they should live when it comes to coming together for worship. It appears that some were trying to merge pagan feasts and rituals with the observance of the Lord's table, mixing the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. This cannot be done unless we want to rouse the Lord's anger and jealousy and risk experiencing judgment as Israel did. God is not to be trifled with or tested as if we are stronger than He is. He will always win and have the final say. When we take communion, we share in the body and blood of Christ in that we remember what He has done for us. We confess that we are His, and all who are part of the body of Christ are welcome to the table and to share in the one bread. When we take communion, we share not just in the food but in the worship of God. When Israel ate of the sacrifices of the altar, they jointly professed worship to God. When the Gentiles sacrificed their food to idols, they sacrificed it to demons and worshipped them. Paul wasn't concerned about the corruption of the food as if it was cursed, given that idols are not living. His concern was that, for all intents and purposes, the believers, by drinking of the cups that were offered to demons, were, in effect, participating in the worship of demons. It is not like they just walked into the pagan temple and bought some food to take it home and eat before God. It seems that they were actually somewhat participating in the pagan rituals and not making it clear that the cup of Christ has nothing to do with the cup of demons. The dividing line was not clear for them or for those watching. Their actions might have even seemed to grant approval to the demon worship because they didn't condemn it or clearly separate themselves from it. Their worship may well have become a polytheistic, syncretistic practice, merging beliefs and religions into one assembly and process. When we take of the Lord's table, we are not to be jointly taking of things given to demons. The Lord demands exclusive worship, and communion is a time for reflection, introspection, remembrance, and worship.

24 Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

It might have been convenient to get supplies or food from pagan places, but Paul's admonition is to think of the pagans as lost souls who need the gospel. The Believers needed to be thinking of the lost, and therefore they needed to show them the jealousy and holiness of the Lord, which they were failing to do.

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;

26 FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.

28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;

29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?

30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Paul further illumines the Corinthians as to what he is actually, practically desiring them to do. He has earlier said that it is acceptable to eat food from the meat market even if it has been sacrificed to idols. This is because God is the one true God Who owns everything. They need not feel guilty for eating of this food, but they can go and buy it and eat it at home freely. If an unbeliever invites a believer to the market, the believer can go and eat the food with them. They don't have to feel guilty for being in the market because they are not actively sinning or leading someone astray by doing so. After all, their God is the real God, and they don't need to be intimidated or afraid of false deities. But if the unbeliever or anyone mentions that the food has been sacrificed to idols, then the believer needs to abstain. He must do this because to eat publicly after all in association are aware that the food has been sacrificed to idols is to communicate an acceptance of idol worship. It communicates that God doesn't care about idol worship as if it is not an offense to His holiness and jealous nature. For the sake of the conscience of the one who informed the believer and any unbelievers in association, the believer must abstain. It is not that his conscience is bothered, for he knows he is free to eat the food. It is for the sake of the others who would see it as participation in idol worship that the believer must abstain. They don't understand that the idols aren't real, so their consciences say something much different about eating of the food. It is important to take a stand against the idol worship in such an instance, albeit respectfully. Hopefully, a stance against participating in the evil deeds of the culture will open a door for the gospel. Surely, not taking the stance closes the door. When the believer is on his own or in the presence of other believers (as long as their consciences are knowledgeable to understand their freedom to eat), then they can be thankful for the food which God has provided, and they can eat it with thankfulness. Believers shouldn't slander one another for this. The point is that God gets the glory in all things, even in eating and drinking, which He wouldn't get if unbelievers thought that a believer worshipped their idol.

**32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;
33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.**

In abstinence from the meat sacrificed to idols, it is important for believers to be respectful in how they decline the hospitality of the unbelievers. They must explain in love and grace why they must do what they do so as not to cause any needless offense. The offended party may still get angry or hurt, but it is necessary for the sake of the gospel. The church should also not offend one another by causing a weaker brother to stumble, and they must not needlessly offend the Jews by flaunting their freedom or casting any kind of insult. The point is that Paul desires the Corinthians to follow his example to consistently value the salvation and eternal well-being of others ahead of their own convenience and comfort such that they could be presented the gospel and possibly come to Christ. Paul did all things for the sake of the gospel and for the glory of God, and so should we.

1 Corinthians 11

1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

In all things, as far as Paul imitates Christ, the believers were to imitate him. It is imperative that a shepherd not only teach the truth but live it. Paul then praises the Corinthians for keeping the traditions, one of which he says is the wearing of headcoverings during prophesy and prayer. Paul's praising of them for keeping this tradition is to be contrasted with their failure to handle the Lord's Supper properly, and in respect to that, Paul does not praise them but corrects them (v. 17, 22). It appears that they have kept the tradition of headcoverings well given that Paul says in verse 16 "if one is inclined to be contentious." In other words, generally speaking, this is not a contentious church when it comes to this tradition. They are keeping it, but perhaps they don't know fully why they are keeping it. Thus, Paul explains the reasons why this tradition should be carried on.

3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Paul gives some fundamental principles about God's ordained hierarchy of authority. God is the head of Christ who is the head of man who is the head of woman. This doesn't mean that the woman is any less valuable; it simply means that, in the marriage relationship, this authority structure must be honored. It does not mean that women should submit to every man at all times and in all places as if they are an inferior sex. They are simply a different sex, and in the home and to an extent in the church, there is a proper role for them to play as distinguished from the men. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 we learn that they are to keep silent in the church, implying that they are not to usurp the

authority of the elders or teach the men (1 Timothy 2:12). We learn in Ephesians 5:23 that the husband is the head of the wife. This does not make her a doormat, but it simply means that where women long for affection and love, men need respect (Ephesians 5:33). This is simply how God wired us; men and women are different. Paul's point is going to be that this difference must be honored in the church in this tradition which he is about to explain.

4Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.

5But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

6For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

From verse 4 and 5, we must notice several things. First, this tradition only applies during times of praying and prophesying. Prophesying was a specific gift, akin to the Old Testament gift and office of prophet. It was speaking forth the truth of God with the idea of having new revelation from God and the ability to reveal mysteries and foretell future events as God enabled. This is what Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 14 and what he says will one day cease in 1 Corinthians 13:8. Since we have the full revelation of God in His Word, this gift is no longer needed to give us the revelation of God (with the possible exception being in areas where the gospel message has yet to penetrate). Thus, in our time, we don't have to worry about applying the principles regarding headcoverings to times of prophesying given that the gift is no longer in effect. Even during this time in which Paul writes, since women weren't allowed to prophesy in the church assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), this would only have applied to the times outside of that context where God spoke prophetically through women. It would be reasonable to conclude, however, that when a man teaches the people of God from the Word of God that he should not have his head covered and that when a woman teaches the Word of God to other women that she should cover her head. This is because prophecy communicated God's Word before it was written down, and now when the written Word is communicated, it is reasonable to suppose that there is a parallel intention of honoring the principles of subjection as symbolized by headcoverings. The second occasion for applying this tradition is during prayer. I don't believe that Paul is saying that the headcovering should be worn every time a woman prays (for then she might as well wear it all the time as we are to pray without ceasing- 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Clearly, the teaching from this passage is not a requirement for women to cover their heads at all times and for men never to cover their heads. There are set times when this needs to happen, and they are during the preaching of the Word and during prayer, specifically when the church assembles itself together for worship. (Paul spends the rest of the chapter speaking of another corporate tradition, the Lord's Supper, so it makes sense that he also has the corporate assembly in mind here.) There are times of prayer when the church is not gathered together that the woman does not need to cover her head or when a man might pray with a hat on, say if it is below zero outside. Thus, this command is not made to be fashioned into a legalistic ritual, but the intention is, under normal conditions

and during the set time of corporate worship (traditionally Sunday mornings but could also include other organized church gatherings- the Spirit must lead, and grace must rule), that this principle of honoring the authority of God and the headship of man needs to be honored. The heart issue is always more important than a piece of fabric.

If women do not wear a headcovering and honor this tradition in these instances, they may as well have their head shaved. Women generally take pride in their hair, and longer hair tends to be a symbol of beauty and womanhood, no matter the culture or time (see v. 6). It is her glory, according to verse 15. Paul's point is that wearing a headcovering is so important that going without one is akin to showing up in public with no hair, which would be a great shame to a woman. Some make the connection to various cult prostitutes who shaved their heads in their pagan worship and immorality, symbolizing radical feminism and rebellion. Regardless of the reason, if either one or the other or both, the command is that women honor the tradition.

7For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

8For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;

9for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

10Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Man is the image of God, as is woman (Genesis 1:26), but only man is the glory of God. This doesn't mean that women can't be glorifying to God or that they cannot reflect His glory or house it with Christ in their hearts. It is simply that woman is the glory of man, and Paul is making the point of differentiating these two glories. He does this because man does not originate from woman but woman from man. He is referencing the creation account in which God created man first, and He then made woman from out of Adam by taking his rib. God had said that it was not good for Adam to be alone, so He made a helper fit for Him (Genesis 2:18). The woman was made for the sake of man because he needed her. He wasn't made for her according to the creation account, though since she is a suitable helper, she was made for him. It is simply that God made man first and fashioned woman from man to be in the role of the one who is subject, respectful, and complementary. It is in the fact that woman was made for man as his helper that she is his glory, and it is because of this fact she is to have a symbol of authority on her head. Notice that the headcovering is not a symbol of weakness, lesser value, or cruel subjection. It is a symbol of authority because of the angels. The angels are not weak beings who have no value. They are extremely important, being ministering spirits of God and to man (Hebrews 1:14). They are also extremely powerful. Yet the angels understand their submission to the authority of Christ and the Father. They didn't go along with Satan and those angels who fell with him because they honored God as the ultimate authority. They accepted their role and thereby found the greatest satisfaction and worth. In the same way, women are not inferior, but there is a spiritual hierarchy which must be respected. The angels do it, and for their sake, women should do it as well by submitting to God. In this particular instance, the woman honors God and the angels

by submitting to her husband symbolically (and by obvious inference in her heart spiritually) by covering her head. This symbol of authority, the headcovering, is honoring to her husband, to the angels, and to God. It shows that she has accepted her role as God designed it. The word for authority here literally means “power of choice.” It is in her power to make the choice, and God’s will is that she would choose to submit and honor God and the angels by wearing the headcovering.

11However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

12For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

Lest some of the men take the particulars of this teaching too far, Paul reminds them that there is an interdependence between man and woman. Eve originated from Adam, but the human race, men included, are born through the woman. Lest man become arrogant, he must remember that God’s plan also requires that he be born through the woman. He needs her, and she needs him. God made both because He loves both and values them both equally. They both ultimately originate from His mind, heart, and creative purpose.

13Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

14Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,

15but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

Returning to his logic in verse six, having explained a related issue in the previous verses, Paul points to the natural way that man and woman grow their hair. From culture to culture, by and large, women have had longer hair than men. At times, men wore their hair what we might consider long, but women’s hair was generally even longer than this. The Nazirites such as Samson were required not to cut their hair, but this was an exception to the general population. Hence, this part of their vow set them apart. Absalom, the rebellious son of David, had long hair, but there is nothing in the Scripture to indicate that long hair (long being relative to the length of women’s hair) was standard practice, even though it may have been longer than the general hairstyle of men today in our culture. The images of Roman emperors reveal short hair, and certainly the citizens would have mimicked their emperors. The point is simply that even nature, something inherently within man and woman, tells us that men should have short hair and women should have long hair. This is one way to tell the difference between the sexes, and women do tend to view their hair as fundamental to their external beauty. Long hair on a man is a dishonor to him while long hair on a woman is her glory. This is in the Bible, and it is also written on our consciences. This is the natural and God-desired way of being. Simply put, God made us this way, and there is no reason to go against His design by choice.

God has given women long hair for a covering. The word for covering is important because it is different than the word Paul has been using for covering up to this point. Here he uses the word *parabolaion* which means “a covering thrown around,” which fits what hair does. Previously, speaking of the additional headcovering, he uses the word *katakalypto*, meaning “to veil or cover one’s self.” The clear message from the context and from the change in words used is that the covering of a woman’s hair is not the same as the covering that she is supposed to wear when she prays. Her hair is a glorious cover thrown around her head, but the headcovering to be worn while praying in the corporate assembly is to be a symbol of authority that spiritually covers her entire self. Physically, it only covers some part of her head, but spiritually it covers her entire being in reverence to God and out of respect for the angels.

16But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

Paul is adamant that this tradition be upheld (and one could argue that he is also emphatic that the practice that women have longer hair while men have shorter hair be upheld) which is that men have their heads uncovered when they pray or teach God’s Word in the corporate assembly and women have their heads covered when they receive the teaching of the Word and pray during the corporate church assembly. If Paul was not speaking of an additional headcovering besides just the hair, reasoning backwards, men would have to shave their heads in order to comply with the commands in v. 4 because no other covering could be considered. Obviously, this is not what Paul is saying or what God is intending. There is a secondary headcovering that women need to wear at the described times in order to honor God. Paul is saying that upholding the tradition of headcoverings is the way that all of the churches of God are presently operating. This tradition is not a mere cultural anomaly in one province or city while it is absent in all others. In other words, Paul is not just making this command to Corinth or to his present generation. It is not a command for one culture and not for the rest of the church’s time on earth. According to Paul, if one is contentious about the matter, he must be told that there are no other options. Headcoverings are the God-honoring tradition that the church must keep at the proper times (prayer and when God’s Word is being taught) and in the proper way (the external action being accompanied by an internal heart submission).

The kind of veil that should be worn should not be a legalistic matter, where the church measures out certain requirements for length, width, composition, and so on. The material doesn’t matter as much as its purpose. However, the covering is not to be distracting, attention-getting, vain, or overly complex. It can be something that compliments the appearance of the woman but without drawing undue attention to the woman or to the object itself. I don’t believe that the headcovering is a veil that covers the entire face and head except for the eyes. This would be distracting, and it communicates that there is something wrong or evil about seeing a woman’s face, which there is not. She is the glory of man, and the physical glory of her face can be seen in addition to her spiritual glory of submission and holiness. Whether by wearing some kind of hat, a specially-designed piece of fabric, or something else, the point is that women honor God by keeping this tradition of covering their heads.

How important is this tradition? It is important enough that Paul nearly seamlessly goes on to speaking of another corporate tradition, namely, the Lord's Supper, which is obviously very important.

17But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

18For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.

19For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

20Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

21for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

22What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

Before giving instructions about the Lord's Supper, Paul exhorts the believers at Corinth to get some things right. They need to get rid of the divisions and factions so that unity can be regained. Yet Paul thinks that the factions (defined as a sect within a group) are there to show who is truly of the Lord and faithful and who is not. When certain ones remain faithful despite the chaos and moral deterioration around them, it proves that they are of the light. The church as a whole, however, has people preoccupied with selfish agendas and power plays, trying to show themselves superior to others. Thus, they meet corporately not first and foremost to eat the Lord's Supper but to eat their own suppers. They come hungry, and they casually perform the Lord's Supper while eating their own food. This irreverence is even accompanied by the sin of drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18). Paul is appalled, for eating should be done at home, and drunkenness should never happen. This attitude is one that despises God and His church for which He died. Rather than remember the sacrifice of Christ in humility and thankfulness, they scorn it and Him. Their coming for gluttonous purposes also shames those who come hungry and in need because they are neglected. There is no way that Paul can praise them for this utter deterioration of corporate worship.

23For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

25In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Paul heard from the Lord and had earlier on explained to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper. They had not obeyed his teaching, and so he needed to give it again. On the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas, He gathered the disciples in the upper room and broke

bread, thanking God and telling them that it is a symbol of how His body will be broken for them. He instituted the Lord's Table so that we would remember His sacrifice for us and be grateful and introspective (v. 28). He also took the cup of wine and explained that it symbolized the pouring out of His blood for the church on the cross. His death also instituted a new covenant in which man could approach God directly (Hebrews 4:16) as a priest of God (1 Peter 2:5), becoming the temple of God himself (1 Corinthians 6:19), and being redeemed and forgiven of sin through faith in Christ's work on the cross (Romans 3:24). The shedding of blood was required in order for the new covenant to be established (Hebrews 9:17-18). The church is to take time when it gathers to remember the Lord's sacrifice by breaking bread and drinking of the cup. This serves to proclaim the fact that we are Christ's and that Christ died for all men. We are to do this until He returns again. (see Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:17-20, and John 13:2 for the gospel accounts of Jesus' institution of this ordinance)

27Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

30For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

31But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

32But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

God takes His Son seriously because He loves Him dearly, and God will discipline those who take His Son's body and blood lightly. The time at the Lord's Table must be reverent, introspective, and focused rather than lackadaisical, careless, or combined with evil practices. To be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord is to profane the sacrifice of Christ by being irreverent in the time of remembering it. It is to mock Christ and God in a very serious way such that those who are not introspective prior to taking the bread and wine are subject to severe chastisement of the Lord such as illness or even death. The purpose of God's judgment is so that we are refined and take Him seriously. God loves His children, and just as an earthly father disciplines those children whom he loves, so, too, does our Heavenly Father. The fact that we are disciplined demonstrates that we are indeed sons and daughters of God, but we shouldn't want to bring His discipline upon ourselves, given that the consequences are severe. God desires His church to be pure, and imposing divine punishment for sin is one way to purify the church. This is all the more reason that we should judge the body rightly and confess any sin which the Spirit reveals to our hearts. We cannot spurn the Table of the Lord as if it is mere feasting time, an empty ritual, or a boring task. God takes it very seriously, and His children ought to as well.

33So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

34If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

The process of participating in the Lord's Supper is a corporate thing where all gather and purpose to remember, reflect, and confess any outstanding sin. Once all are ready to participate, then the group can eat of the bread and drink of the cup. If any come hungry for a meal, they need to go home and eat. The Lord's Table is not for feasting but for remembrance. The church should come together for worship, not to eat and drink judgment to itself. God sees all and knows all, and He desires His church to be holy and pure. The Table is a time to reflect and make sure that our hearts are right before God. The Corinthians apparently had some other questions regarding traditions or church practices, and Paul said that he would set those in order when he came personally to them.

1 Corinthians 12

1Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.
2You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.
3Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

The pagan religions in Corinth involved drunkenness, orgies, and various hypnotic chants and ceremonies. They tried to communicate with pagan deities in these ways, and they also sought to practice divination, the process of trying to see the future with the help of the demons. These false spiritual experiences led the Corinthians astray into sin, evil, and error. They followed the demons rather than the one true God. But once they found Christ, they found a new direction, and they needed to understand what true spirituality was all about. The important thing was that they be led of the Spirit of God rather than the demons. It was thus important for them to be able to identify the work of the Spirit in their lives as opposed to the false experiences around them. The phrase "spiritual gifts" literally means "pertaining to the Spirit." So Paul is going to communicate what pertains to the Spirit and what does not. That way the Corinthians wouldn't be ignorant as to what is being led of the Spirit and what is counterfeit and pagan. First of all, no one curses Jesus if they are led of the Spirit because God is not going to blaspheme Himself. If any acknowledge Jesus as the apostles define Jesus as the one true God and Lord of their life, then they are led of the Spirit.

4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.
5And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.
6There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.
7But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

The same Spirit of God is behind all gifts, so all the gifts will lead to glorify God and to create unity and edification in the church. Yet there are a variety of gifts in the church, gifts being understood to be special divine empowerment to accomplish true spiritual ministry. And of the varieties of gifts, there are varieties of ministries, and of these

ministries, there are a variety of effects. The same God is Lord over all, and the same God works all of these gifts. How God enables a person to serve Him, bring Him glory, and advance His kingdom differs greatly from person to person, based upon how God has gifted each. Gifts from one person to another vary because God works in very individualized ways, though that is not to say that there are some general categories of gifts, which Paul will explain shortly. The purpose of gifts is always for the benefit of the church and those outside of the church.

8For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

Some gifts include the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. Other gifts are listed in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, namely serving, teaching, leading, mercy, exhortation, giving, pastoring, and evangelizing. V. 28 adds in helps and administration as well. Each of these has its own individual effects and is given to accomplish a particular work which God has ordained for the individual believer (Ephesians 2:10). Gifts are different than mere natural abilities because of the spiritual nature of the gifts. They require the Spirit and certain extraordinary, divine empowerment to make them function. We can be sure that God will prepare us and equip us to do His will His way in His time by His Spirit. If we surrender to Him and let Him lead us by His Word and fill us with His Spirit, He can do things in and through us that we know we could have never done on our own. They may relate to what we think we are good at, or they may not. But the bottom line is that we and others will know that God is doing something extraordinary. When the church begins to lose the extraordinary, miraculous, and a healthy dependence on the Spirit for ministry and for life, it will gradually die and have very little impact on society. But where the church is humble and using its gifts, much good can be accomplished.

It is less important to try to decide which gift a person has (and all have at least one- Romans 12:6) than to trust God to supply the power and divine ability when we need it. When God gives us a task to do, He will grace us (i.e. gift us) in order to be able to do it by His power and strength. When we obey and trust God to do what we think is humanly impossible, He will gladly give the supernatural strength to make things possible. This is His way because otherwise we would glory in our own ability and strength. God wants the glory, and thus spiritual ministry is accomplished by spiritual means by spiritual power. True kingdom advancement is never natural or of human talent but of the Spirit of God. Where we are weak, God can show Himself strong (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Paul will explain the specifics and purposes of tongues and prophecy shortly (see v. 28 and chapter 14). Miracles, healing, faith, and discernment (or distinguishing of spirits, the spirit of truth versus the spirit of error- 1 John 4:6) are all fairly straightforward as to

what they imply, though they would have been awesome to see in practice. And God still heals and works miracles. He still gives faith and discernment, but there is reason to believe that the degree and quantity of miracles and healings were much greater in the early stages of the church. The greatest miracle of all is having the Word of God given to us. If the world rejects that, no sign or miracle will matter anyway (Luke 16:29-31). But we would expect Jesus to come with miracles, and He did. We would expect His apostles to perform miracles, which they did (2 Corinthians 12:12). Yet the greatest miracle that the church must not lose sight of is the written Word of God. As Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." With the completion of the Scripture and the dying off of the apostles, the quantity and degree of miracles passed away rather quickly, as church history indicates. Perhaps some of this was due to lack of faith, but more of it was due to the fact that the foundation of the church had been laid by the apostles (Ephesians 2:20). Now, the Word could do its job along with the gifting of the Spirit to keep building the church. It is just that some of the gifts were no longer active or needed, though that is not to say that God might not use them in places where the Bible has yet to reach. It was inevitable that some gifts would pass away because such was God's plan (1 Corinthians 13:8).

As far as the word of wisdom, it is the spiritual gift to be able to aptly apply truth to life. It makes God's Word practical and timely, and as such, it is still very much needed today. It is possible that there was a way that this gift along with the word of knowledge were for revealing truth about God before the Word of God was written, but we are not to add or take away from what has been written (Revelation 22:18-19). Thus, if the gifts of the words of wisdom and knowledge are still active, then they don't involve the giving of revelation, and they do involve growing deeper in understanding of God's Word and in applying it and helping others to understand and apply it. 1 Corinthians 13:8 also indicates that the gift of knowledge will cease in some way, so perhaps this is indeed referring to the revelatory aspect of the gift of knowledge.

11But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

It seems that God gives gifts as we need them and that they might change over time as we grow and as God's call on our lives changes. There are different purposes that He has for us along the way. Some things might require supernatural wisdom, whereas others require that we are able to teach. When we need a gift, if we are in God's will, He will give it. That is not to say that each person may not have a set gift or gifts which God will use and develop over his or her lifetime, but it is to say that how God uses us over time might require different gifts or gift combinations. God gives to each as He wills, which is always for the good of the individual and of the body. Thus, it makes no sense to envy another person's gifting because they are gifted not for themselves but for the body. Gifts are from the same Spirit, and they are always for the building up of the body of Christ. We must always be sure not to take credit for the work that the Spirit does in and through us as if we could have done it in our own strength. As Zechariah 4:6 says, "Not

by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.” Apart from Him we can do nothing of any spiritual value (John 15:5).

12For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14For the body is not one member, but many.

Christ is the head of the body, and we who are His children are all part of His body. The body has many members and pieces, each which have a specific purpose for which God has designed them, but they are all working together as one whole with Christ directing all that goes on. The body has many members, and all of us were made a part of it when we received Christ as Savior. It doesn't matter which people group we belong to or what our earthly status was, but what matters is that we are His. Thus, we have a job to do which the Spirit will enable us to do if we let Him have His way in our hearts.

15If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

16And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

18But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

19If they were all one member, where would the body be?

20But now there are many members, but one body.

The foot is a part of the body, and it cannot all of a sudden decide not to be a part of the body. Just because the foot is in charge of the walking function and it doesn't do the job of the eye, for example, doesn't mean that it isn't needed or is less important. The body needs the foot, and the foot must cooperate so that the rest of the body can function. When one part of the body ceases to function because of disobedience, self-righteousness, or jealousy, the rest of the body suffers. In the same way, the eye cannot decide not to be a part of the body. It cannot remove itself from the body and try to be its own body. It is merely an eye which cannot survive alone or accomplish anything on its own. It needs the brain to interpret the images and the muscles surrounding it to move it to see things. The body needs the eye just as it needs the foot and every other part. We must be careful that we don't cease to function because the rest of the church needs us, and Christ desires to use us. The body needs the variety of parts because of the importance and distinct purpose of each individual part. The eye can't hear, but the ear hears. The ear can't see, but the eye sees. The eye can't smell, but the nose can. Each has a purpose, and in the same way, each believer has a purpose and a specific function for which God has designed him or her. Rather than try to be something we are not, we will be happiest if we who are noses do the job of a nose and if we who are feet start doing the job of feet. If we were all eyes, the body wouldn't be much of one. Thus, we

need to all accept that we are made differently for different tasks, all of which fit together into a coherent whole within the local body of Christ and among the church as a whole.

21And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

22On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;

23and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,

24whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,

25so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

Just as it doesn't make any sense for the eye to tell the hand that it is no longer needed or for the head to get rid of the feet, each believer needs the other. Fortunately, our head, Christ, desires to use us, for He knows our purpose and designed us to be who we are and how we are. There are some parts of the body that are readily visible and which get a lot of attention such as the eye, the arms, the hands, the ears, and so on. Yet there are other parts that are unpresentable such as the stomach, the intestines, and so on. Yet these have incredible value and an extremely important function. Yet their work is behind the scenes, and they don't get a lot of credit or renown. There are other parts which are "weaker" such as tendons, white blood cells, and so on without which the body wouldn't even hold together or stay healthy. Whether a "weak" part or a more hidden part, every part matters. In the end, it may be that those parts which get no notice or recognition end up with the most rewards in heaven. The key is that we are faithful in whatever role God gives us. God honors all parts of the body and will reward every part that is faithful. We must understand this so that we don't neglect or look down on the less visible parts of the body and treat some gifts as if they are superior or more desirable than others. If we do this, there will be division as there was at Corinth, and the church as a whole will replicate the mistakes that were at Corinth by following men instead of God.

26And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

If one part of the body is injured, suffering, or enduring a trial, the rest of the body ought to take note and support that part. When the human body gets an injury, all focus goes to that part. The same should be in the church. Rather than neglecting the injured part as if it is "weak" and not holding its own, the body needs to support it and help it heal so that it can do its part. When a person in the body of Christ is doing well and rejoicing, the rest of the body should also be happy. We are not in competition with each other, but it is to our advantage to have the rest of the body be healthy so that we can do our job proficiently. As Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

28And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

29All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

30All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

31But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

Having just emphasized that no gift is better than another, just different, Paul lists out some gifts that are in the church. There are apostles, which were those commissioned of God who had seen the risen Christ and who had performed signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12). This list included Paul, Matthias (who replaced Judas- Acts 1:26), and the twelve disciples. Others served as apostles in an “unofficial” sense (apostle simply means “sent one”) such as Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 2:6), and others (Romans 16:7, 2 Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:26). The official apostles served as the foundation of the church, receiving revelation from God and directing and establishing churches as to how God desired them to function. Prophets were those who declared the Word of God by expounding upon the Old Testament revelation but in the particular sense that they gave revelation for the church in this time. They also predicted the future in some instances as the prophets of old did (Acts 11:27-28), but their main job was to declare the Word of God to the church (Acts 13:1), which had not yet been written down. The church needed apostles and prophets in order to know the desires and will of God and to fully unlock the meaning of the Old Testament. Teachers helped others understand the Word of God, whether publicly through the office of pastor (Ephesians 4:11) or through other means of teaching. Then there were those who worked miracles and who performed healings, and there were those who had the less “flashy” gifts of helps (service), administration, and various kinds of tongues. Administrators can help lead and direct a church to make it function effectively and efficiently, while helpers are the people who make the church work, doing a lot of the tasks that others overlook. Tongues involved speaking in other languages so that others could hear the gospel in their own language (Acts 2:8).

Paul’s point in listing these gifts was not to rank them but to further the point he has already made that gifts are individual. The body needs them all, and none are superior in value or worth to the other. They are merely different. The Corinthians were not to value some gifts as “greater” than the other. But there were things greater which Paul is about to show, explaining about faith, hope, and love, the greatest of which is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Rather than get caught up with gifts and who has what gift, love must prevail. If the Corinthians could learn to love, the church could be healthy and the divisions could be fixed.

1 Corinthians 13

1If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

It is easy for believers to get caught up with gifting and to forget that love is so much more important. In fact, without love, the gifts are pointless and fruitless. Somebody could speak all kinds of other languages with the help of the Spirit, even an angelic language, and still it would be meaningless without love. Such giftedness is akin to an annoying, banging noise like a gong or cymbal. It is a self-centered distraction that creates division and irritates others in the body. If a person had the gift of prophecy and if he knew all mysteries and all knowledge, being able to unfold the truths from the Old Testament, it would be of no value without love. Even if that person had faith such that could move mountains as Christ had spoken of (Matthew 21:21), still his labor in the Lord would be in vain because of his lack of love. He might think highly of himself because of all of his knowledge, but in God's eyes, he is nothing who is accomplishing nothing of spiritual value and adding nothing to his spiritual account in terms of eternal rewards. Even if a person was generous enough to sell all the he had so that he could feed the poor in an act of tremendous charity, it would have no eternal profit because there would be no love backing the action or motivating the decision. Love is driven by a desire to please God, not to draw attention to self. Even if a person was martyred for the sake of Christ but did so without love, it would be of no eternal value. It does no good to stand for truth and hate the opposition. We must love all people, both our brothers and sisters in Christ and our enemies. To love is the greatest accomplishment in Christ and the greatest gift one can experience or give.

4Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

The Corinthians needed love to rule in their fellowship such that the divisions would come to an end. They needed to be longsuffering with one another, not eagerly taking vengeance but rather bearing with one another. People are fallible, and even in the church, people do hurt one another, sometimes purposefully and sometimes unknowingly. We must be merciful in how we treat others, and they need to be merciful with us. Sin does need to be confronted, but it must be done in gentleness and compassion. Love is kind, valuing the interests of others ahead of one's own and being eager and ready to forgive (Ephesians 4:32). It is not violent or cruel, but it is peaceful, gentle, and peacemaking. Love is not jealous in that it does not envy what others might have or be. It rejoices with the rejoicing of others and mourns with their mourning (Romans 12:15). Love is not in competition with other believers but in a compassionate cooperation. Love does not boast or draw attention to itself because it is interested in being the servant of all. Neither does it boast about vain accomplishments or take glory in self-achievement. It seeks to encourage others and to draw attention toward God.

5does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

Love understands that to be a child of God is to be one who lives in holiness, generosity, compassion, care, and selflessness. To act unbecomingly would be to live as a child of the devil rather than as a child of God. Love moves a person to live as Christ would have them live, abhorring evil and clinging to what is good (Romans 12:9). Love does not seek its own agenda or selfish ambition, but it is looking to God for direction and viewing the well-being of others as a more important ambition than that pertaining to self. Love does not throw gasoline on the fire of somebody else's aggression, mockery, or insult. It responds with a gentle answer to turn away wrath rather than stirring up the person's anger even more (Proverbs 15:1). Love is not pugnacious, seeking a fight or conflict. Love doesn't enjoy conflict, but it would rather be a peacemaker as much as is possible (Romans 12:18). Love is quick to forgive and forget, not holding grudges or being quick to remind people of their past failures and offenses. Love does not revile in return when it is reviled (1 Peter 2:23).

**6does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
7bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

Love abhors evil and the ways of the world, taking no joy out of seeing sin or sinning. Sin grieves those who are controlled by love. Love takes its joy in the truth and in the advancement of the principles of the kingdom. It rejoices to see a person come to faith in Christ, and it is glad when relationships are restored and conflict is resolved. Love enjoys seeing the truth set people free (John 8:31-32). Love bears all things, meaning that it is willing to cover the transgressions of others in that it doesn't shout their failures to the world. It protects the dignity of others who have confided in them. It doesn't break trust, but it always seeks the restoration and welfare of others. When others offend, love does not take things personally, but rather it begins praying and desiring the other to be forgiven and to see the truth. Vengeance is left to God as it should be (Romans 12:19). Love puts utmost confidence in the Word of God and His eternal truths, holding to them in fervent faith. It also thinks the best of others, giving them the benefit of the doubt and not being unduly critical. Discernment and a forbearing spirit ought to go hand in hand. Love continually looks forward to the coming of Christ, and love keeps believing that God is still at work, able and willing to do great things in life while on earth. It doesn't give up on people or lose faith, but it keeps hoping to see the power of God at work. When things are rough and persecution comes, love endures. It does not revile at the persecutors when ill treatment comes, but it trusts that God is in control and that there is blessing in suffering for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:10). Love does not give up hope during the trials of life, but it keeps doing what it can to demonstrate the character of Christ to a world in need and to a church which needs good examples.

8Love never fails;

As believers, we never do wrong to love. Love is the fulfillment of the law of Christ as we value others ahead of ourselves and worship God with all of our being. No person

can force us to not love them, so love is undefeatable. Love also moves people to see their own sin, and so love is powerful (Romans 12:20). If the church loses its identifying mark of love (John 13:34-35), it will lose its impact on society, for the world won't be able to see Christ in it. If it does love, the church will continue to have a powerful effect on a watching world which is incapable of love without the power to defeat love. They will have to take notice of a church which loves one another and cares for those it doesn't even know.

but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

9For we know in part and we prophesy in part;

10but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

11When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

12For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

13But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

There will come a time when prophecy will cease along with tongues and the certain special revelatory aspect of the gift of knowledge. These gifts served the purpose of the church in its founding before the Word of God was complete, and they helped the world to know that God was behind the movement (1 Corinthians 14:21-22). Paul is not telling the Corinthians to ignore spiritual gifts but to use them (1 Corinthians 14:1). All of the gifts he had listed so far were still desirable and active at this point in time. His point was merely that without love, the use of the gifts is in vain. The world doesn't care if a person can work miracles, but they can't get along with their own family. Holiness is the greatest miracle of all, and it must be in place for these other signs and wonders to even matter. At this point, the church knew only in part and could prophesy only in part. With the written Word, we have much more knowledge and understanding from which to teach. Yet we are not perfect; however, the Word of God is (Psalm 19:7). So the perfect Word has come to us in the form of the Bible, and the partial (God's revelation through the interpretation of tongues, prophetic utterance, and words of knowledge) has come to an end. Thus, we must study the Word and grow up to maturity so that we are no longer children who are tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). We should be anchored in truth and in knowledge because of our personal study, the work of the Spirit in our hearts, and the ministry of the teaching of the Word from gifted men of God. The childish ways of receiving God's revelation can be put away because we no longer see dimly but face to face as we open the Word of God and encounter directly God's heart for us. We can know His will and His desires for us outright in His Word (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16-17). We will know fully and have all things pertaining to life and godliness through Christ (2 Peter 1:3) in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). We will be fully adequate and complete for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, we will know fully what we need to know, and the times of ignorance will be gone in the fullest sense (Acts 17:30). God has known us fully all along, but now is our chance to know Him to the full extent of His revelation to us in this time.

Paul's foundational message to the Corinthians is that gifts are fine but useless and worthless without love driving their use. Some of the gifts will even die out, but faith, hope, and love will remain, with the greatest of these three being love. Thus, if the Corinthians can learn to love one another and the world, their testimony will be great. They will see God do great things, and the world will know that the church is of God. The gifts are good and should be used, but love must reign over all.

1 Corinthians 14

1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.

5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

The Corinthians must pursue love above all things, yet spiritual gifts are good and desirable as well, especially prophecy because it edifies other believers to grow in Christ. It gives them revelation of God to grow in knowledge and understanding of God. Those who speak in tongues don't speak to men but to God because no one understands, unless of course it is in their language. But for the believers gathered, a foreign tongue is a foreign language, and thus not edifying in anyway. In order for a corporate gathering to be edifying, there must be understanding, and therefore, the teaching must be in a language understandable by those gathered for worship. Even the person speaking in a tongue does so in his spirit, but the message is mysterious even to him. Yet those who prophecy give understanding to themselves and to others as God speaks through them. The prophets in the early church were there to give God's Word which was as of yet unwritten to the people of God so that they could grow, change, mature, be comforted, and know how to live. Those who speak in a tongue edify themselves only in the sense that they experience a work of the Spirit, for they don't even understand what they are saying. This is why an interpreter is required (1 Corinthians 14:28). Yet those who prophecy build up and strengthen the rest of the body. Thus, tongues are valuable, but prophecy is even more valuable. Paul wishes that all would speak in tongues and that more would prophesy. Perhaps the Corinthians were thinking that tongues were more valuable, and they needed to be corrected so that they put a higher emphasis on prophecy. The priority for the church is edification, which prophecy always did if it was of God, and which tongues only did if interpreted.

6But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

7Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?

8For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

9So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

10There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

11If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

12So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

13Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

If Paul came to visit the Corinthians, he wouldn't be able to profit them at all if he came speaking in foreign tongues, even if it was a miraculous work of the Spirit, unless of course, his speech was interpreted. Paul clearly put a higher value and emphasis on giving the believers revelation from God (which now is fully contained in the Bible) through words of knowledge, prophecy, and teaching (teaching being the only remaining active gift- 1 Corinthians 13:8). Tongues without interpretation are merely like a musical instrument making indistinct sounds such that the melody cannot even be discerned. There is to be some kind of understanding that is given, and that requires an interpreter. Otherwise, the foreign tongue merely evaporates into the air without edifying anyone else. There are a great many languages in the world, certainly many of which hadn't heard the gospel yet or even yet in our time, and each of them have meaning to those who understand the languages (thus, grouping this verse (v. 10) with how tongues were used in Acts (e.g. Acts 2:8), it makes sense that they were not mystery languages or ecstatic babbling speech but actual languages). Communication and edification are only possible if the languages can be understood, and this is what the church needed. Since the Corinthians were zealous for spiritual gifts, a good thing, they needed to focus on using them for the purpose of edification. Thus, if someone were to speak in a tongue, they should pray for someone to interpret (even if it is they themselves), so that they and the others could be edified.

14For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

15What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

16Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?

17For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.

Rather than empty-minded pagan worship which surrounding the Corinthians, Paul emphasized that the worship of God goes through the mind. It is mind-engaging rather than mind-emptying. Prayer is done in the spirit and in the mind as is singing. Prayer that is meaningless ramble with the mind tuned out is not God-honoring. Neither is singing that focuses more on feelings than the message of the words sung. The mind must be engaged in worship so that it can be edified. This is God's desire. He wants the mind to have a fruitful experience in singing and prayer, and in this instance, in the hearts of those who spoke in tongues. Thus, an interpretation was needed. Otherwise, those who were assembled with the one speaking in tongues would not be able to agree with what was said or to bless God along with the one speaking in a tongue. In order for corporate worship to work, everyone must understand what is being said. Paul is not undermining that God is getting praise through the language spoken, but it is just that no one else is able to participate and praise God along with the one speaking in the tongue. This is not right or good.

**18I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;
19however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.**

Paul says that he spoke in tongues more than the Corinthians did, so he is not undermining the value or purpose of tongues in this time. Yet, he is trying to demonstrate that the purpose of corporate worship is for the mind to be edified and engaged, which requires that what is being said is understandable and can benefit others. No amount of speaking in tongues can do this without an interpretation. Thus, the Corinthians needed to start valuing prophecy and teaching more than tongues.

20Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.

Paul wants the Corinthians to keep seeking to grow in their understanding of the Lord, but he wants them to be innocent when it comes to evil. The more we know about sin and evil, the more vulnerable we get. We are best to be ignorant about what sin is like, but we should be knowledgeable about what sin is and what it is not and about its devastating effects. Maturity is always God's desire for believers (Ephesians 4:11-16).

21In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord.

22So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

23Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?

24But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all;

25the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

Paul references Isaiah 28:11-12, though putting it into words God had given him, to explain that part of the reason tongues were given was for a sign to Israel of their judgment. People of foreign tongues would speak to them, which Paul and the church did, and still they would not listen. Thus, their judgment was sure. So this leads Paul to the conclusion that tongues are not a sign to those who believe but to unbelievers. It is a sign of their condemnation for those who reject Christ and a sign of Christ for those who believe. Prophecy was a sign of Christ at work to those who believed, but it was not a sign for unbelievers. Prophecy's purpose was for the edification of the church, therefore showing that the Spirit was alive and at work in His church. The world didn't care to grow in truth which it rejected. But tongues were a sign to them that, when they heard the truth in their own language, they might believe (Acts 2:8). When the church gathers it is for edification, not for a bunch of chaotic foreign speech that no one understands. If an unbeliever or those who had not been gifted with tongues witnessed such an event, they might conclude that the church is full of crazy people. Thus, tongues should be given in an orderly manner with an interpretation, and prophecy needs to be the main event in the assembly of the church. Tongues are for an outward testimony and sign more than for inward edification. Prophecy could also have a benefit for unbelievers because, if they walked into a church where revelation from God was being given in an understandable and orderly way, they could be convicted of sin and call upon Christ. The truth that each person spoke in turn could add up to repentance for the listener, particularly given that part of the gift of prophecy worked to reveal things unknown. Sometimes it might be about future events (Acts 11:28), whereas in this case it might be about some secret sin of the unbeliever who was in attendance. He would hear, be convicted, and call out to God to be saved. Thus, prophecy, though not a sign for unbelievers, could still be used to effectively reach unbelievers with the truth.

26What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation Let all things be done for edification.

What should happen, then, according to Paul, is that, when the believers assemble together, there should be some of each as the Spirit leads, and all should be orderly. There should be singing, teaching (which would have been from the Old Testament), prophecy (which would have given new revelation), and tongues which should be interpreted for edification. When each left for the day, all should leave edified, having grown closer to God and deeper in the understanding of Him and His ways.

27If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret;

28but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

When tongues are spoken in the assembly, there should be no more than two or three total instances. They should be one at a time, and there must be an interpretation for each. Tongues in the church was not a time for incoherent babbling on the part of all in

attendance, but it was done for edification, one by one, and no more than two or three times. If there was no one gifted to interpret, then tongues should not be exercised in the church. Edification is the main purpose, so a person gifted in tongues could speak to himself and to God in the tongue. This would have to be silent prayer so as not to be a distraction.

29Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

30But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.

31For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

32and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

33for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Similarly, there should be no more than two or three prophets which get up and speak the Word of God, exhorting the assembly to truth. The others (presumably the others gifted in prophecy) should pass judgment on what is said to make sure that it is of God, by the Spirit, and in line with what God has revealed up to that point. The one prophesying would stand and speak God's truth, while the others would sit. But if a prophecy came to one seated, then the one standing would defer to him. Prophecy should be one by one so that all can hear, learn, be exhorted, and grow to maturity. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, meaning that God would give coherent and complementary words to all who are of the Spirit. Thus, one can be free to sit down and let another take over. One by one, the Word of God will get delivered in an orderly fashion without chaos and confusion. This should lead to edification, harmony, and unity if done rightly, not discord or division as had been occurring. This was to be the rule in all the churches, which presumably had the same gifts to work with and through.

34The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

35If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

Paul had earlier directed the women to wear headcoverings while praying or prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:5). The reason for this was to be a symbol of their inward desire to be subject to God and to their husbands. Here, his emphasis of submission is the same, just as it was back in the law when Sarah deferred to Abraham, calling him "lord" (1 Peter 3:6). Submission has been God's plan from the beginning, and it must be respected in the coming together of the church. Now, it is true that women had the revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge just as men did as Acts 21:8-9 indicates, speaking of Philip's daughters who were prophetesses. So it is not that women could not prophesy. It is just that they were not to prophesy during the coming together of the church for worship because men were to lead. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 says, "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." The message to Timothy is thus that women need to not teach men or lead in the church. Since a prophet's job was often to exhort the assembly to change, such would involve instructing men, a form of leading.

Thus, Paul did not want the women to be active in the leadership roles of the church, which included the teaching and prophetic roles. Women were to remain quiet during the assembly and receive instruction quietly. If they disagreed with something said, they needed to speak with their husbands afterward who could then go to the other men on her behalf if needed. If she simply had a question, he needed to be spiritually grounded enough to help answer it. If a woman was single and had no husband, then she would have to approach the elders after the service had ended. It was not that women didn't have a right to participate in worship. It was just that they needed to give their input in the right times and places which would respect God's design and the men. To Timothy, Paul says nothing indicating that the women cannot sing or pray. The implication is simply that they should not exercise authority over men such as calling the church to prayer, leading the church in prayer, or directing the church in singing. If they wanted to see something done differently, they needed to ask their husbands afterward. So Paul's exhortation here to the Corinthians parallels his exhortation to Timothy that women must not take on the authoritative roles over men, they must not teach men, and they ought not to usurp the leadership roles that God has designed for men to have in the church. Women are not to use their gifts of teaching or prophecy in the church assembly, but they need to keep quiet in that respect. Elsewhere, such as when teaching other women or children or when giving prophecy outside of the corporate assembly, they could and should use their gifts. Paul just didn't want women curtailing the service to their will and ways or speaking out of turn or in an authoritative way over the men. This would not be God-honoring. Could they sing? Yes, for God desires both women and men to edify one another in song. Ezra 2:65 recounts that Israel returned to Jerusalem with 200 male and female singers, presumably for worship (v. 70), not for mere social entertainment (see also 2 Chronicles 35:25, Nehemiah 7:67). Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 indicate that the body of Christ as a whole was to sing songs so that each could be edified. Could women pray, just not in a directing sort of way? Sure, because God desires all of His saints to pray (Ephesians 6:18), including the women (Acts 1:14). Acts 21:5 and James 5:16 seem to imply that there was occasion for women and children to pray while the body was gathered. If men lead and give the women permission to sing and pray, then they can do it, as long as they don't do anything to disrespect the men or God. If the men grant permission for the women to share a prayer request, share a testimony, ask a question, or suggest a song, for example, this still respects the authority of the men. The key point is that the service must be led by the men, the women must be submissive, and the service must be orderly. It is not good for women to teach the men, for God calls the men to do this. But it would be a stretch to suppose that God is telling the women not to talk at all such as not to be able to discipline a child who is acting out or to respond if their husbands ask them a question. The message Paul is trying to communicate is not that women can't make noise at all but that they must do all things in a submissive way. If they do this, things will work properly.

36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

Lest the Corinthians fail to cooperate with God's will in the matter of gifts and order in the church, he rebukes them, reminding them that they are not the ones making the rules

but God. God gave the Word of God, not the Corinthians, and God's Word is for all people, not just them. Thus, they must do as God says just as the others churches must. They have no right to set their own rules.

37If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

38But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

Those who are spiritual or prophets must show themselves to be so by obeying the commands of God. If they do not, they must not be considered spiritual or allowed to be a prophet. No man can set up his own rules to defy God and be allowed to do so in the church.

39Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

40But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

Paul sums up his exhortations by reminding the Corinthians to be sure that they are orderly during their coming together for worship. They must do things according to the commands of God, and they must earnestly desire to prophesy because of its edification. Tongues should be allowed, though prophesy is more valuable simply because it is understandable and involves the mind.

1 Corinthians 15

1Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

2by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

5and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

6After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

7then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

8and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

9For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

11Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Paul outlines the basics of the gospel message which he has preached to the Corinthians and which he has hoped saved them unless they had only professed faith without really repenting. It is important to note that this was a church with a lot of sin issues, but Paul believed most of the Christians were indeed saved. This church needed a lot of growth and refinement, but just because a person struggles with sin, does not mean that they cannot be saved. It simply means that they need to grow up and regain a sound testimony so that they are fit to be an example to others. Those who habitually practice sin, however, may not be saved (1 John 3:9). One must be above reproach in order to lead as Paul did in the church, otherwise the church will grow corrupt quickly (1 Timothy 3:2). Such is also the desire of God for all believers (Philippians 2:15). Paul went to the Corinthians not to dance around his reason for coming but to give them the thing of utmost importance in life, which is the gospel. He received it from God, and he was instructed to teach the truth that Christ died for the sins of the world according to the Scriptures (Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22). He was thus a perfect fulfillment of prophecy, and He was God's plan from the beginning (Genesis 3:15, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, Luke 24:27). He was buried because He was dead, but on the third day He rose again from the dead according to the Scripture (John 2:18-22, Psalm 16:10). Jesus appeared to Peter in His resurrected body and to the twelve disciples (John 20:19-20). Christ had also appeared to 500 people at one time (all appearances of the resurrected Christ took place over a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3) and are recorded in Matthew 28:9, Mark 16:9, 12, 14, Luke 24:31-39, and John 21:1-23, although this one is only recorded here), and Paul makes the point that the vast majority of these eye witnesses were still alive. This thus confirms his credibility and the truth of the gospel. 500 eyewitnesses who can tell the same story is undeniable. Jesus then appeared to James, probably His half-brother, given that Paul then mentions that He appeared to the apostles, of which only this James was not one. Finally, He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-8). Paul says he was untimely born in that he saw Christ after Christ had ascended. He had missed out on all of the glorious events of the life of Christ firsthand because he was still a persecutor of the church, not a believer. Because of his past, he considers himself to be the least of the apostles and totally undeserving to be called an apostle because he had persecuted the church. But it was the grace of God which came to him and helped him see, and it was the grace of God that enabled him to be such an effective tool for advancing the gospel. Paul's life was a total testimony of God's intervention and grace, which is never in vain. Paul has worked harder than all the rest of the apostles because of the grace of God. The others had families and other concerns, but Paul began traveling extensively and, by the grace of God, preaching to city after city after city. He was clearly a chosen instrument of God (Acts 9:15). The Corinthians received his preaching as Paul did his part along with the rest of the apostles. Paul, though chosen last, was equally on par with the other apostles as far as authority from God.

12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

15Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

16For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

17and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

19If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

Some among the church at Corinth were falsely teaching that there was no resurrection from the dead. Yet, as Paul just mentioned, Christ Himself rose from the dead in a resurrected body and appeared to many, many people as evidence. But if there is no resurrection, then Paul's preaching is in vain because the gospel is undermined because Jesus didn't really rise from the dead. Then, any who proclaim the gospel of Christ are made to be false teachers because they would be lying. The Christian faith rests upon the resurrection of Christ. If He didn't rise from the dead, we don't serve a living Savior, and God is dead. We would have no hope of our own resurrection into eternal life in heaven, and we are a shameful people. Not only are we liars, but we have no hope and are thus wasting our lives. But, of course, Jesus is alive, seated at the right hand of God in heaven (Colossians 3:1), and thus we do well to put all of our hope in Christ and in the life to come. Sacrificing and serving as Paul did only makes sense if Christ is alive, if the gospel is true, and if eternity is indeed coming.

20But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

21For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

22For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, and He is thus the firstfruits of those who have died in Christ. Through Adam, death came to all men because of the consequence of sin. But through Christ, all who repent and believe in the gospel can be saved and be resurrected from the dead. Death will have no power over those in Christ, just as it had no power over Him. In Adam all die physically and spiritually, but in Christ physical death leads to eternal life and a new resurrected body.

23But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

24then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

25For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

26The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

27For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

28When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Christ was the first to be resurrected and next will be those who belong to Christ when He comes again. Christians alive at Christ's appearing will be raptured, and the dead in Christ will rise (Revelation 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), while those who are saved during the tribulation will be resurrected at the end of that period (Revelation 6:9-11, Revelation 20:4). The millennial kingdom will begin during which Satan is bound (Revelation 20:1-3). He will be released for a short time at the end only to be defeated forever by Christ (Revelation 20:7-10). This is the end of sin and death to the full extent, and Christ can hand over the kingdom to the Father because all rebellious rule and authority will have been subjected to His authority. Christ will reign until all of God's enemies are put under His feet, which will happen. Death is the final enemy to be abolished, and the resurrection of dead believers unto eternal life will be a glorious day. They will be free of sin, the flesh, and the power of death. Unbelievers will suffer forever in the eternal fire (Revelation 20:10-15). The only thing not subject to Christ is the Father Himself to Whom Christ will turn over all authority once He has achieved it. At that point, the Son will be subjected to the Father Who previously had subjected all things to Him so that the Father can be all in all, the final and ultimate authority and God.

29Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

This verse cannot and does not mean that believers should get baptized for the sake of trying to save dead loved ones. The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith and not works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore baptism cannot save the living and certainly not the dead, who are judged on the same basis as the living. What Paul might have in view here is that there were faithful believers who are now dead but who during their lives influenced others to come to Christ. These who were saved were then baptized, and their testimony was that it was the lives of those before them that moved them to such a decision. Their baptism was thus for the sake of the faithful example of faithful believers who were now dead. Those who are dead have hope because they will be resurrected, and those who came to faith also have that same hope and expectation. If the dead had no hope, then there is no reason for the living to want to follow in their steps. This seems to be Paul's message.

30Why are we also in danger every hour?

31I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

32If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.

33Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

34Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God I speak this to your shame.

As an apostle, Paul risked suffering, persecution, imprisonment, and even death regularly. He was in near constant danger, and to him this was worth it because to live was Christ

and to die was gain (Philippians 1:21). His purpose for living was to serve Christ, and he knew that when he died he would be resurrected and rewarded. Thus, it was worth it, even to suffer greatly daily and to die to self and the comforts of the world. Paul may have literally fought wild beasts, but it is reasonable to suppose he is referring to the fierce crowd that he faced at Ephesus where he was in danger of his life for the sake of the gospel (Acts 19:23-34). But to put himself through these daily predicaments for the sake of Christ was worth it because of his future inheritance and the promised resurrection. Thus, the prospect and promise of resurrection gives us hope as believers that it is worth it to live for Christ now because of the glory to come. Christ rose from the dead, and He will come and take us also. If this wasn't the case, then, since our faith is in vain, we may as well just live a life of fleshly indulgence. If all life is a short existence on earth and then nothing, pleasure could be justified as the extreme ideal. But, since this is not the case, believers must be careful to not be deceived by the false wisdom in the world, but rather they must follow Christ in obedience and not allow themselves to be corrupted by being unduly influenced by evil people, even immoral Christians (1 Corinthians 5:5). Paul wants the believing to be sober-minded, not carried away with various lusts and corrupting influences. He desires that they stop their pattern of sin for the sake of maintaining a holy testimony before the world. Some have no knowledge of God, and part of the evidence for God is to come through changed people who love (John 13:34-35) and do good works (Matthew 5:16). We have the resources in Christ to live holy lives and walk in victory (2 Peter 1:3), and Paul wants the Corinthians to do this.

35But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

36You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

37and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

38But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

Paul seems to be anticipating a lack of belief and acceptance of his teaching on the resurrection. Thus, he goes on to explain that a new body is given once the old one dies. Just as a seed must die in order to sprout into new life, so too, God has sown in man bodies that will be immortalized in eternity, some to heaven and some to hell.

39All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.

40There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.

41There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

42So also is the resurrection of the dead It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

43it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

44it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

There are different varieties of flesh. There is the flesh of animals and there is the flesh of humans. Paul is concerned with human flesh in this passage, and his point is that there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The heavenly body has a greater glory than the earthly body because it will not be corrupted by sin. Just as the sun, moon, and stars have differing degrees of brightness or "glory," the new resurrected body will surpass the earthy body in glory. It will be imperishable, whereas this body is perishable. It must and will die, but the good news is that a new body will be given to us by God which will be fit for heaven and no longer susceptible to pain. Our bodies will go from dishonor and weakness to honor, glory, strength, and power because of the imperishable nature of our new bodies. While on earth, we have natural bodies of destructible, fallible, sinful flesh. In the coming kingdom, we will have imperishable bodies which will endure forever and will be free of the defects of sin and the fallibilities of the flesh. Finally, we will be free from our vulnerability to sin.

45So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL " The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

46However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

47The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

48As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

49Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

Paul explains from Genesis 2:7 how God breathed life into Adam to make him a living soul. But when Adam sinned, he was corrupted along with his body. The spirit of man endures forever and is purified by Christ at salvation, but the body must be laid aside and changed into a new immortal body. The natural body comes first, and then the new spiritual body. Adam was from earth, and thus had an earthy body. Christ, the last Adam or second man (Romans 5:19, 21), was from heaven, and His resurrected body was thus heavenly. It could still eat (John 21:12) and be touched (John 20:27), for it still had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Yet it could come and go miraculously (Mark 16:12, 14), clearly indicating that it was far different and advanced than the earthy bodies we have as we walk this earth. While on the earth, we have earthy bodies, but when we get to heaven, we will have a new body.

50Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

The earthy body made up of flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is sinful, fallible, and corrupted. It must die, but the new, imperishable, uncorrupted body will be given us to enter heaven.

51Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

52in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

53For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

55"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

57but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul now informs the Corinthians about the rapture of the church which, up to this point, had not been revealed. Thus, it is a mystery which God gave to Paul to share to the church (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 3:10). The second coming of Christ is clearly presented throughout the Old Testament, so this mystery must refer to something different. Not every Christian will die, for some will see the return of the Lord for His own while they are still alive. But all of us will be changed because all of us need new bodies (Romans 8:11). There will be a trumpet sound, and the dead in Christ will be raised to meet Christ with their new bodies. Then, we who are alive and remain will be caught up with them to meet our Lord in the air with our new bodies as well. With so many dying in one day, it is no wonder Christ mentioned vultures would be around (Luke 17:30-37). This will be an instantaneous event, in the time it takes for an eye to twinkle, and those who are Christ's will be with Him before He returns to bring wrath upon those who rejected Him during the tribulation period. Death will be totally defeated at the time we receive our new bodies at the rapture because the grave could not hold those who belong to Christ just as it could not hold Him. Because of sin, we all deserved to die. We had all broken the law of God, but through Christ, we can be victorious over sin and death because He has fulfilled the law on our behalf (Romans 8:1-4). Thanks be to Him for giving us new life and new bodies in the future. We are truly beneficiaries of divine grace.

58Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

In light of Christ's completed work on the cross and promised coming to rapture His church and give us new bodies, we must be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. If we remember what is true and the hope we have to come, it should motivate us to continually walk in obedience and live for the kingdom. Our focus should be eternally driven rather than motivated by temporal gain because of our inheritance to come. If we desire rewards in eternity, we need to do what we can to abound in the work of the Lord while we are yet alive. Our toil, labor, and service are never in vain because Christ will come again (Galatians 6:9). As believers, we have great hope because we have a great God Who will give us an inheritance with Him forever.

1 Corinthians 16

1Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.

2On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

3When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

4and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

The church was to take up collections for the needs of the body (in this case, the church at Jerusalem) and in order to support those who worked full time in the ministry, though Paul excluded himself from this right. Just as he instructed the Galatian church, so he instructs the Corinthian church, being consistent to all the churches because of the consistency of the Word of God. The first principle in giving to the Lord is that it should be a regular putting aside of funds for the Lord. When the church gathered on the first day of the week (Sunday), it was to put aside and save (as a church) for when the opportunity to give would come. This would allow Paul to focus on his reason for visiting when he came, which was not primarily to get money for other churches. So giving is to be regular and according to how a person prospers financially. Each must give as he or she is able to do so joyfully before the Lord as the Lord leads, not under compulsion but freely (Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). If God blesses, we might be able to freely give more. If we are in a tight financial period, we must have to give less. But a good minimal point to set is ten percent, because it is what Abraham gave to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20) even before the Law was given. Thus, there seems to be a tithing principle in the Bible regardless of the fact that we are no longer under the law but under grace. When Paul arrives at Corinth, the Corinthians will select a trustworthy person to be the letter carrier to take the gift to Jerusalem. If Paul needs to go along, he will do so.

5But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia;

6and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.

7For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.

8But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost;

9for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Paul's plan was to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost because the Lord had opened a great door for effective ministry there despite the many adversaries. Often times when there is an open door, there will be challenge from the enemy. But Paul had the courage to press on and keep ministering. After his time at Ephesus, his plan was to go to Macedonia and then to Corinth. He would then send a messenger or accompany the messenger back to Jerusalem with the gift (v. 3).

10Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.

11So let no one despise him But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

Evidently, the churches were prone to disrespect Timothy simply because he was relatively young (1 Timothy 4:12). Yet Paul wanted to make sure that the Corinthians gave him the respect due him as a fellow servant of Paul because of the vast help Timothy could provide them. After Timothy spent time with the Corinthians to encourage and edify them, he was to return to Paul.

12But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

Apollos, the gifted teacher (Acts 18:24-28), didn't want to come and visit Corinth at this time, but he would when he had an opportunity. Obviously, he didn't sense the Lord leading him to go at this point.

13Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

14Let all that you do be done in love.

Paul desires that the believers be on the alert, expecting attacks from the devil. He wants them to stop sinning and to walk in purity, not falling prey to false teaching or bad examples in the church or outside of it. They need to act like men, in that they need to be strong and courageous, standing for truth and being willing to resist the devil. They need to be strong in the Lord by faith because His might is powerful (Ephesians 6:10). As he instructed in chapter 13, love must guide all that is done such that nothing is done that is not motivated by love. Whether confronting a sinning brother, being true to one's mate, not reviling when reviled, ceasing to have divisions, or being careful not to cause a weaker brother to stumble, all issues which he has addressed so far, love must reign supreme.

15Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),

16that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.

Stephanas' household, which Paul said that he had baptized after they received the gospel, were the first conversions in Achaia in which Corinth was located in southern Greece (1 Corinthians 1:16). They were demonstrating the fruit of conversion in that they were devoting themselves to ministry to the saints. Such men need to be respected and honored because of their service as do those who help in the work and labor of ministry. Service is evidence of a devoted follower of Christ, and their example should be imitated. And just because they may not have been in leadership in the church as

elders or deacons does not mean that their insight and opinions should not be respected. Paul affirms that their opinions before the Lord do matter.

17I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part.

18For they have refreshed my spirit and yours Therefore acknowledge such men.

It seems as though Stephanas, Achaicus, and Fortunatus left Corinth to visit and support Paul while in Ephesus. What the Corinthians couldn't do because they were separated from Paul, these three men did in coming to visit Paul and meeting his needs. They were an encouragement to him, and thus to the Corinthians as well. When we serve one member of the body, the rest benefit also. These faithful servants should be acknowledged and appreciated for their service (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13), and the greatest form of appreciation is to respect them and try to learn as much from them as possible concerning the way of the Lord.

19The churches of Asia greet you Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

20All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Paul passes on greetings from the churches of Asia and from Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18) along with the church in their home. Paul extends greetings from all of the brothers who are with him and possibly also any whom he might have failed to mention by name. The point is that the church cares about its own even miles away and in different cultures and countries. The Corinthians were to greet one another with a holy kiss, which was done between men and also between women as a custom of the day, much like our hugs or handshakes of today. There was nothing sexual or immoral about this greeting.

21The greeting is in my own hand--Paul.

22If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed Maranatha.

23The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

24My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Paul signed the end of the letter himself. His conclusion is powerful saying that any who do not know Christ as evidenced by their lack of love for Him are destined to be accursed, meaning that they will be devoted to destruction. Paul says "Maranatha" which means "The Lord will come." Thus, those who do not love the Lord need to remember this and repent while they still have time. For believers, Paul included, the Lord's coming is an event they want to happen soon because justice will finally be served and rewards will be had for the faithful. Finally, he prays for the grace of God to be with them, just as he began the letter (1 Corinthians 1:3), which proves how we are all dependent on the grace of God. Paul expresses his love for the believers and concludes his letter saying "Amen," or "May it be done" or "So be it." What Paul has said he hopes will be put into practice such that obedience is the result of his labor on behalf of the Corinthians whom he loves deeply.

By Brent Barnett of www.relevantbibleteaching.com