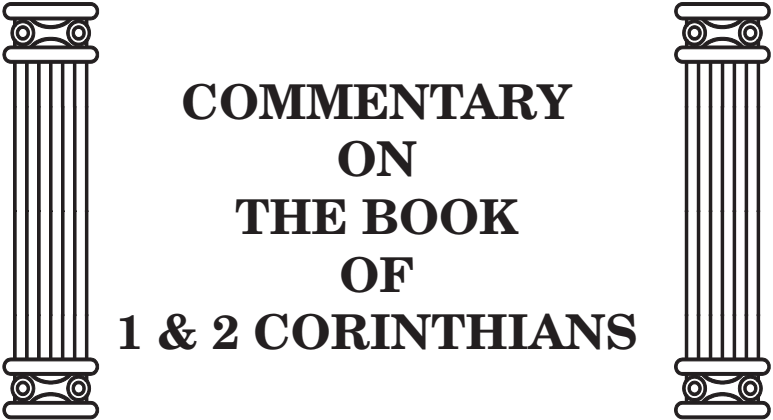


GOD'S MESSAGES BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES

VOLUME 5

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.
(Nehemiah 8:8).



COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF 1 & 2 CORINTHIANS

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Dedication

This volume of the
Bible Messages Commentaries
is dedicated

to

***Two Worthy Women,
My wife and my mother***

Both of whom are described in the
Thirty First chapter of Proverbs.

My mother's maiden name was Bertha Weesner.

She married L.D. Stancliff, a non-Christian.

She brought five children into this world.

All five of them have been baptised into Christ.

One day when I used a bad word,

She washed out my mouth with soap.

Dad used some bad language for many years.

When he also became a Christian I never heard
him curse again

“She washed out his mouth too.”

My wife is just as responsible for this set
of commentaries as I am.

When my faith faltered, she stayed strong.

She gave birth to our four precious children
who have all become Christians.

That thirty-first chapter of Proverbs states,

“Who can find a worthy woman?”

“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.”

She will do him good and not evil
all the days of her life.

I thank God for blessing me
with **two** worthy women!

~ Leon Stancliff

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Introduction

The Strategic Location of Corinth

The city of Corinth was located at a very strategic position. Greece was separated into two major sections which were connected by a very narrow strip of land. The northern portion of Greece was called Macedonia and the southern portion was known as Achaia. The isthmus connecting them was about four miles in width.

There were two gulfs on the opposite sides of the isthmus. The Saronic Gulf lay on the northwest and the Gulf of Corinth was on the southeast. The city of Corinth was situated between the two gulfs on the isthmus.

It was extremely dangerous to sail around the lower portion of Greece. It was said that, "He who would sail around Malea should first make out his will." One could either sail the two hundred dangerous miles, or try to cross the four mile strip of land. Thus, sailors would drag small boats across the four mile isthmus to avoid the trip. The boat would be unloaded on one side and both the boat and the cargo would be transported to the other side where the boat would be reloaded and launched.

And so the city became critical in the movement of traffic from the north to the south and vice versa. In addition to the north and south traffic, it also carried goods from Asia to Italy and vice versa.

Corinth was also the site of the Isthmian Games which were second in importance only to the Olympic Games. This also added to the notoriety of the city.

A highway which was collonaded at certain points stretched across the isthmus. Along the highway three smaller towns were found. These towns were named Cenchrea, Lechaemum and Schoenus.

The History of Corinth

Corinth was a very old city when the apostle Paul first arrived there. Some believe it was begun by Doric settlers. Thucydides reports that the first ships were built there in 664 B.C.

There were violent times in ancient days. Corinth survived two major wars and became very prosperous and powerful. The historian, Strabo, spoke of its great wealth. It became the head of what was called the Achean League.

Port cities often become very wicked. Corinth was no exception. Far up on the top of a mountain overlooking the city, a temple was built in honor of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. According to Strabo, there were one thousand prostitute slaves of the goddess, all sexually available to the citizens and visitors of the city. Some of the prostitutes were male.

William Barclay provides a quote from the times of Corinthian glory that, "It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth." Corinth became so noted for its wickedness that when it was desired to talk about one who lived in debauchery, it was common to call him a "Corinthian."

The wealth and wickedness, drew a population of over one half million people. This placed Corinth among the larger cities of the world at that time. Athens and Alexandria would have been competing population centers.

Destruction and Rebirth

The Romans had set out to conquer the earth. The Greeks were their main opposition and Corinth was a leading figure in that opposition. Lucius Mummius, a Roman general, conquered Corinth in 146 B.C. He left her in a state of almost complete ruin.

Some one hundred years later, in 44 B.C., Julius Caesar rebuilt the city. After that she was made the capitol of the Roman colony of Achaea. The new population was very diverse in nature. Among the citizens were retired Roman soldiers, freed slaves, sailors, Jews, Greeks, merchants and prostitutes.

The Canal

The difficulty of dragging ships and cargo across the isthmus caused Nero to start work on a canal. Malaria hindered the work and the project was abandoned. The canal was not completed until A.D. 1893. It is very busy today, with many good sized ships navigating it. It is, however, narrow enough that an athletic man could almost throw a stone from one side to the other.

Corinth Today

The area is earthquake prone. Corinth has been destroyed by earthquakes in 1858 and again in 1928. Its population has shrunk to about 18,000.

Some reconstruction has been done. This is made much easier there than it is in some ancient landmarks because of the fact that there are no homes presently built over the old city.

Paul and the City of Corinth

Paul moved from Athens to Corinth about A.D. 50 (Acts 18:1). While there, he dwelt with Aquilla and Priscilla who were tentmakers, as he also was (Acts 18:3).

He first preached in the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:4). Then, when Silas and Timothy arrived, he continued his preaching of Jesus as the Christ. When the Jews resisted and blasphemed, he went to the house of Justus to preach there (Acts 18:7). His preaching resulted in many converts, including Crispus, chief ruler of the synagogue. Altogether he spent about eighteen months in the city (Acts 18:11).

We are able to date the book quite precisely because Paul was brought to the judgment seat of Gallo (Acts 18:12). The reasoning is as follows:

1. Seutonius tells us Christians were banished from Rome in 49-50 A.D.
2. Aquilla and Priscilla were Christians who had been in Rome.
3. Claudius sent greetings to Delphi in A.D. 52-53.
4. Gallo became governor in A.D. 52.
5. Gallo refused to intervene, but Paul did depart from the city.
6. Paul then visited Jerusalem and later went to Ephesus for about two and one half years.
7. It was from Ephesus that he wrote the Corinthian letters about A.D. 54-55.
8. This date is secure enough to be used as a base date for other events.

Problems Paul Faced

1. Worship of Aphrodite

Because of the worship of Aphrodite, the city was riddled with venereal disease. Many felt perfectly justified in visiting the prostitutes.

2. Worship of Aesclepius

Aesclepius was the god of healing. Models of diseased parts of the body were presented to Aesclepius that they might be treated. This was true of genitals as well as other parts. Healing through Aesclepius was said to be a combination of medicine and superstition.

3. A host of other gods and goddesses

A temple to Apollo had been erected.

Meat was regularly sacrificed to a sizable variety of false gods.

4. Existence of Social Classes

Part of the difficulty in the abuse of the Lord's Supper was due to elitism among various social levels. One class was too good to eat with another. We might note that this is often true when great wealth is prevalent in a society.

5. Corruption in the Church

Wherever the church has been found, in that age or in this, the wickedness of the surrounding society infiltrates the saints to some degree. Division and jealousy existed in the church at Corinth. There was fornication and even incest among the members. Marriage relationships were being abused. The

resurrection of Christ was being denied. The worship was disorderly and chaotic.

6. Doubts about Pauls Authority

It was necessary for Paul to spend more time than he would have liked in justifying his authority to give spiritual directions.

Authorship and Authenticity of First Corinthians

It is conceded by almost all that Paul the apostle wrote both of the letters to Corinth. Clement of Rome quotes from First Corinthians as early as A.D. 95. Agreement in style and in the description of places and events leaves little doubt as to its Pauline authorship.

How Many Letters

There is also general agreement that First and Second Corinthians are not the only letters the apostle Paul wrote to Corinth. In I Cor. 5:9 we read, *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to keep company with fornicators.* There are those who believe First Corinthians is actually a combination of two letters. I do not hold that view. Without further evidence, I believe we have the following series of events.

1. Paul founded the Corinthian church and later went to Ephesus.
2. He wrote a letter of instruction, which no longer exists, to the Corinthian Christians.
3. The Corinthian Christians then wrote Paul with certain questions.
4. About that same time Paul received some disturbing news from the household of Chloe

about the church at Corinth.

5. He then wrote the First Corinthian letter in response.
6. Later, Paul received word through Titus that conditions had improved.
7. He wrote Second Corinthians as a follow up.

The Importance of Proper Hermeneutics

We cannot simply study the letters to the Corinthians as if every word were written to us. We must be honest in our decisions as to which of Paul's directions are applicable to Christians today, and which apply specifically to the Christians of Corinth in the first century. Greeting one another with a holy kiss would have been quite appropriate at Corinth in the time of Paul. On the other hand, it might be better to shake the hand of another today.

Nevertheless, when properly studied, the books of First and Second Corinthians reveal that much which needed attention in that age also needs attention in our ours.

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**The Book Of
FIRST CORINTHIANS**

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Chapter 1

1CO 1:1 Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

It was very important to Paul that he establish his authority to preach the Word of God. He did not take the initiative in his change from an enemy of Jesus Christ to a dedicated supporter. He made the change as a result of the appearance of Christ to him during which time he was charged to serve as the major apostle to the Gentiles.

Every Christian has been called. This calling is not some mysterious better felt than told experience. It is the natural result of coming face to face with the evidences of Christianity. It is a consequence of gladly receiving the Word of God through the Holy Scriptures. However, Paul was called in a unique manner for a very special service. He never forgot that responsibility.

Sosthenes was one of Paul's traveling companions. Most of the time Paul did not travel by himself. Timothy, Silas, John Mark, Barnabas and several others were fellow travelers at various times. On some occasions there were half a dozen or more working in unison.

1CO 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

There are several names given to the people of God. Terms used at various times to identify them are: The Church of God, The Church of Christ, Brethren, Disciples, Saints and others. At this time there was probably only a single congregation in the city of Corinth. Thus, the letter is addressed to the church rather than to the churches.

There is a dual calling when men come to God. First, God calls upon them to hear. Then, when they recognize their needs, they call upon him for fulfilment of those needs.

Jesus Christ is not the Saviour of a select group of persons. God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son. Christ died to save every man who will hear and heed his voice.

1CO 1:3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle well knew how important the grace of God is. He could not pronounce a greater blessing upon these people than to plead for peace and grace from both the Father and the Son.

Grace is that which God provides for us beyond that which might be expected. John tells us Christ was full of grace and truth, and that grace and truth came by him (John 1:14-17).

The peace Paul called for is not peace with the world. Christ indicated the preaching of the gospel would set at variance members of one's own family. Christ said the world had hated him, and it would also hate the apostles. The peace mentioned is inner

peace. It is the peace of knowing all is right with the soul in the sight of Jehovah.

1CO 1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

Yes, it was Paul's God. By no means did Paul mean the Lord refused to offer himself as the God of all men who will hear him. I also thank God on behalf of my fellow Christians for the wonderful grace which he constantly pours out upon them. Once one has tasted of the heavenly gift he should not rest until others share it with him. When they do share it, the joy of every Christian is increased.

It is true that God sends his rain upon both the just and the unjust. Nevertheless, there is a special dispensation of the grace of God to those who come to him through Jesus, his Son.

1CO 1:5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

Outside Jesus Christ one may search a lifetime without finding the essence of life. The accumulation of knowledge is fruitless unless that knowledge is given purpose through Christ. We may well have a silver tongue and be able to sway men into action according to our will. But, if Christ is not the center of such activities, all will be hollow and vain. As Solomon put it, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

In Christ, all of life comes into focus. Both the mind and the tongue are consecrated to holy ends. Eternal

spiritual goals replace those which are doomed to corruption and decay. Without doubt, life becomes full and rich.

1CO 1:6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

Notice that this verse does not say the testimony of Christ was confirmed **to you**. It says the testimony of Christ was confirmed **in you**. Many Christians during the lifetime of the apostles received special miraculous power to heal the sick, to speak in tongues, to prophesy, etc. These gifts supported the claim that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that his teaching should be received as divine.

Today, the confirmation of the Word takes different form. History proves it has had power such as no human wisdom could produce. Every Christian is a temple of God. Having experienced the joy, peace and love of the Spirit of God, the Christian has the testimony of Christ within himself or herself.

1CO 1:7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The Christians at Corinth could not complain that other regions had received more miraculous spiritual gifts than other regions. They had a sufficient supply of this divine power that they should have been solidly committed to the authority of the Word of God.

We should not feel neglected today if we are not able to raise the dead and heal the afflicted. We also

are thoroughly furnished to every good work, and are properly prepared to finish our course as we look forward to meeting Christ in judgment.

1CO 1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The confirmation which God has provided for all men is so abundant that we have no excuse for meeting him in a filthy condition. Many of the Israelites in the wilderness fell before they reached the promised land. They neglected to place their faith in Jehovah. We must do better! If we will trust and obey, God will continue to provide us with every necessity for maintaining our purity unto the end.

1CO 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Men often fail us. They make promises which they either did not intend to keep, or were unable to keep. It is gratifying to realize God is not subject to such frailty. With him there is no shadow of turning. He is not slack concerning his promises. He is both true and able.

We have been called unto the fellowship of Christ. That is not to be snuffed at. Men often take great pride in belonging to various social clubs. Such fellowship is nearly meaningless when compared with the blessings of fellowship in Christ. Fellowship has to do with sharing. The fellowship of Jesus

Christ has more to share than all other organizations combined.

1CO 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The fellowship which Paul cherished so much had been marred by conditions in Corinth. This entire letter is devoted to bringing harmony out of chaos. They were not speaking the same things. They were not perfectly joined together. There were extremely serious divisions among them.

What a terrible loss! Joy was being crowded out by bitterness and jealousy. Productivity was being paralyzed by wasting energy in backbiting and conflict.

Paul said, “*I beseech you.*” Beseech is a strong word. It displays Paul’s deep concern for their spiritual welfare. His beseeching is not in his own name. It is in the name of Christ. It was not Paul who was being torn to tatters. It was the body of the Lord himself.

1CO 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

It was Jesus who taught that one should be careful not to accept the word of one witness. Great care is

to be taken not to receive gossip as truth. It must have been extremely clear to Paul that the things he had heard from those of the household of Chloe were true.

When he was forced to conclude there were such contentions among his brethren in the congregation at Corinth, it must have brought sorrow to his heart. The work of Christ would be hindered and souls would be lost.

1CO 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

Now we begin to see the nature of the contention. It dealt with preacheritis. Their affections had been captured by men rather than by the Son of God. Some supported Paul, some Apollos, some Peter and some Christ. Each group, no doubt, saw the others as inferior.

It is not difficult to imagine how the conversations might have developed. Those following Paul would have pointed out that he was an apostle. Those following Apollos would have been awed by his oratorical power. Peter's followers could have bragged about him having preached the very first sermon on Pentecost. It is interesting that those who were following Christ are lumped in with those following each of these men. I am led to believe they were following Christ as a man rather than as the Son of God.

At any rate, division destroys strength. No congregation can be pulling in multiple directions and move effectively in any one direction.

1CO 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

No, Christ is not divided. Had he been divided he would not have accomplished the works he did while fighting fiercely against the principalities and power in dark places, including Satan himself. In fact, Christ informed us that a house divided against itself cannot stand. If Satan were to fight against Satan, his house would collapse. This is also the case with the Church. To accomplish that for which it was established it must be united in service.

How terrible that any of the Corinthians would follow Paul. He was not the one who died upon the cross for them. They had not been baptized by the authority of Paul.

Nor are men baptized today through the authority of any man. The authority to command baptism comes through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Like the Corinthians, we would do well to remember that.

1CO 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

It was unimportant to Paul whether any particular person or persons had been baptized by his own hands. The important thing was that they had heard the gospel of Christ, had been baptized in His name and were following His principles.

1CO 1:15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

The apostle definitely did not want them to place him upon a pedestal by saying they had been baptized into him. That would not benefit them in any way. It would destroy them.

1CO 1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

He mentioned Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas. This is perhaps less than a dozen persons. Paul had no long list which he carried around as a token of his achievements.

1CO 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Christ had not sent him to total up such a list. He had been sent to preach the Word of God. If he faithfully attended to the preaching of the gospel, Paul knew the baptisms would follow.

He was not diminishing the importance of baptism. He knew the power of the cross. It was that power of the cross which he depended upon for the conversion of men from Satan to Christ. If I am correct, Paul was not a powerful speaker. He did not depend upon either his vocabulary or his logic in his preaching. If he had placed his preaching upon such a feeble

foundation as his own ability, the cross would have been unnecessary. He dared not to entertain such thoughts.

1CO 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Those who are so wise in their own eyes as to shunt the cross to one side and follow weak and frail men are doomed to destruction. By neglecting the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, they continue to wallow in their own sins. However, for those who see the sacrifice of Christ as the supreme example of unselfish love for God and man, the cross will be an inspiration to follow the instructions of the Saviour and walk the straight and narrow way to life.

1CO 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Those who follow men follow blind leaders. Blind leaders and their followers will both fall into the ditch. It is extreme folly to ignore the wisdom of God. He is able to bring the wisest of men to absolute confusion. He did just that to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. True wisdom and understanding begin with the acknowledgement that there is a God in heaven who directs the affairs of men.

Today's world has ignored Christ. They have turned to their own ways and have attempted to solve

their problems through their own wisdom. They will not succeed. They are sowing the wind and they are already beginning to reap the whirlwind. May they soon come to their senses.

1CO 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

There have been many who took pride in mocking Christ. One by one they have fallen by the wayside. It is not possible for man to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). For the moment it may lead to power and influence. In the long run, it will turn to horror. Only God can see the end from the beginning and point the way to eternal life.

1CO 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

In his own wisdom God has allowed men to have freedom of choice. Rather than choosing to follow God, men throughout history have become filled with pride and attempted to build their own righteousness. Therefore, God made provision through Christ that men might turn from their confusion to clarity.

The preaching of the cross is God's own means of turning men from torment to glory. Such preaching will always be foolishness in the eyes of pride filled humans. But, to those who have spiritual ears, this

preaching will be the sweetest music this side of heaven.

1CO 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

It had been a common thing for God to provide a sign of his authority to prove his leaders were acting through his authority. Elijah prepared a sacrifice and then fire came down from heaven and consumed his sacrifice. Jonah tried to flee from God. A great storm came and Jonah had to be thrown overboard from the ship on which he fled. Fire and brimstone from heaven demolished the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now, the Jews expected Paul to provide some heavenly sign that he spoke through the power of God. Paul had performed a number of miracles, but they were deemed insufficient by the doubting Jews. They did not receive the sign for which they were looking. A man who was so weak as to be crucified in ridicule was not strong enough to be their Messiah.

The Greeks were seekers after wisdom. To this very day, the Greeks are noted for having stood apart from all other nations in their admiration for logical prowess. Among their heroes were Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Thales and others. To them, a man who was so foolish that he could not evade the death of the cross was not intelligent enough to lead them anywhere, certainly not to a city in the sky.

1CO 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

The Christ Paul preached was a stumbling block to the Jews because he lacked power. He was a fool to the Greeks because he lacked human wisdom. Who would follow such a man?

1CO 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Who indeed! Those who heard the voice of the Great Shepherd and realized they were unable to find their way alone would follow him. The wisdom and power of the world are not enough for those who catch even the faintest glimpse of the glory of God through Jesus the Lord. Whether they are Jews or whether they are Greeks, such persons will leave all behind and take up their own cross to follow him.

1CO 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The idea could not be expressed any more clearly. Take the wisest of men and place his wisdom side by side with the most foolish thing ever entering the mind of God. The contrast will be infinite. Truly, there is no foolishness in the thought of God. That which Paul calls the foolishness of God is only foolishness because men think of it as that. Men see the death of Christ as foolishness and weakness. In truth, it is divine wisdom and infinite power.

What a piteous thing it is that men will not open their eyes, unstop their ears and throw the door of

their hearts wide open to the stranger who stands knocking and waiting.

1CO 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

The wise men after the flesh see no need to accept the wisdom of God. They feel they are doing very well without it. The powerful and influential among men do not hear the voice of the Shepherd because they do not see themselves as lost. In order to be called by the Son of God, one must first recognize the pasture Christ offers is richer and greener than the one in which one is presently feeding. The wise, the rich and the powerful see no need to lift their eyes to the green hills and the still waters from which the Saviour beckons them.

1CO 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

There is an amazing thing about the gospel of Christ. As weak as it may seem to the mighty and the noble, it has conquered the hearts of millions. No book has ever been more influential than the Bible. No man has ever come close to the long lasting influence of Jesus the Christ. No organization has ever had members as dedicated as the members of the Church of Christ.

Many a man who has traveled the way of the

world has been met head on by humble Christians who knew precisely what life was all about. I have seen more than one wise and powerful man turned in his tracks by the realization that he was headed to a fate he would not relish. A weak but godly woman is capable of converting a man of great physical strength and powerful intellect. The reason is that she allows herself to be a channel for the wisdom and power of God, and he is no match for that.

1CO 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

In the early days of Christianity, Christians were mocked, tortured, deprived of the necessities of life and even murdered because of their faith. They were considered by many as the scum of the earth. Yet, within about three hundred years, the Church grew from Christ and the twelve apostles to such power that Constantine, the emperor of Rome found it expedient to declare Christianity the religion of that empire. Christ had conquered the greatest empire the world had ever seen.

1CO 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

A basic problem in the church at Corinth was that men were filled with pride. They hungered for glory in the sight of men. Paul was making it clear that although they might glory in the sight of men, they had no right to glory in the presence of God. Compared

to God's wisdom, his power and his glory, all men fade to insignificance.

1CO 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

Those who are baptized into Christ have that which far outweighs the glory of men. They possess the wisdom of God. They have escaped the guilt of sin. They have been set apart for the service of the eternal God. They have been rescued from the clutches of Satan.

1CO 1:31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Who should be glorying? Not the wise and powerful of the world! The ones who truly have the right to glory are those who glory in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are the heirs of all things. They have the example of perfect love. They are led by the Spirit. They rise above the kind of jealousies and contentions of men which threatened the spiritual welfare of the saints at Corinth.

Chapter 2

1CO 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

The apostle is not saying he was handicapped in speaking ability. There are those who think this verse is proof that Paul had a speech impediment. That is not the thrust of his words here. Paul had no respect for preachers who preached themselves rather than Christ. It is a serious matter when men fail to hide themselves behind the cross. Silver tongued oratory and complex human reasoning are no substitute for the Word of the Lord.

It is interesting that some manuscripts have “martyrion” and others have “mysterion.” There is no problem. The gospel is both the testimony of God and the mystery of Godliness (Compare I Cor. 1:6 with I Cor. 2:7).

1CO 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Is this a reaction of Paul to disturbing results in his preaching on Mars Hill. He had been quite philosophical in that sermon. Certainly not! The statement in this verse is not due to a change in his approach. The cross of Jesus was always in the forefront of his presentations. The determination to know nothing among them other than Christ was made long before the sermon on Mars Hill. Notice his

statement to the Galatians. “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you*” (Gal. 3:1).

1CO 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Paul's trembling, fear and weakness was due to his inability to depend on his own personal power. However, he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him.

The Corinthians were elevating men to great heights of admiration. Some leaders might revel in such glory. Paul did not! He fully recognized the danger of accepting praise and glory which was due only to Christ. He had come to the Corinthians in extreme humility. There was no reason for any man in the church at Corinth to follow Paul in place of Jesus.

1CO 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

The words of men might be attractive and also moving. But Paul was not interested in using such methods. I have no reason to think Paul's preaching was crude or simple. His letters certainly do not indicate that. The drawing power upon which Paul depended was not a result of his training at the feet

of Gamaliel, or any other human teacher. The power of his preaching flowed from the unlimited wisdom of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Remember that Paul had the power to do wondrous miracles through the Spirit of God. These should have separated Paul's preaching from any human efforts. I think it still holds true that careful men can distinguish between the preaching which is founded upon the inspired Word of God and the fables and sophistry of men. Many of today's sermons are eloquent and well ordered, yet quite powerless!

1CO 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

There was a tremendous temptation for the Corinthians to be awed by the wisdom of the Greek philosophers. Our faith can be no more solid than the foundation upon which it is built. If it is built on the power of the cross it will withstand every shaking.

1CO 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

The Corinthians may have felt their wisdom was very near complete. Many today feel that way. If that was the case, it is not too difficult to understand why many of them might have decided to line up behind the very eloquent Apollos. These deluded persons could have seen the preaching of Paul on the cross as being unpolished.

1CO 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

There is a mystery of salvation which had been hidden from before the world was ever created. That wisdom was demonstrated through crucifixion of the Son of God. God had planned from the beginning that this wisdom would be revealed, and that it would bring glory not only to him, but to all who preached it faithfully.

It is well to compare Ephesians 3:2-12 here.

EPH 3:2-12 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities

and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

1CO 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

I cannot help but be reminded here of the words of Christ upon the cross, when he said, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* They no doubt knew they were defying Christ. But they had blinded their eyes and stopped their ears to the truth of his Messiahship.

If many of the millions of persons throughout the world who presently deny Christ would open their minds to the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Christ, they would reel back in horror over their desperate condition.

1CO 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

This is an indirect reference to Isaiah 64:4. The actual words of Isaiah were as follows:

ISA 64:4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath

the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

The words were intended as a reference to the wonders of the Christian age as compared with earlier days. Nevertheless, they apply very well to the eternal reward awaiting the faithful Christian. The service and the waiting are very much worth while dear reader. God owns all things, and we are the heirs of salvation, joint heirs with Jesus who has gone before us. It is impossible for men, by themselves, to transcend the limitations of finite flesh and comprehend the fulness which is to be found in Christ.

1CO 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Although man, by his own efforts, is unable to find his way to the riches of the treasury of Jehovah, we have been blessed with a revelation given to us by the Spirit of God. This assures that we have not deceived ourselves through human frailty. If the Corinthians were searching for true wisdom and for deep and mature truth, they were looking in the wrong place when they placed their dependence upon the insight of mere humans.

The Spirit of God is able to search the mind of God and reveal all that man is capable of receiving in the flesh. These things have been revealed directly to the apostles and in a secondary sense, they have been revealed to all men through the teaching of the apostles.

1CO 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Just as man has a spirit which understands what that man is doing and why he is doing it, God has a Spirit which understands what God is doing and why. Now unless the spirit of a man chooses to reveal what he knows about the man, no other man is capable of possessing that knowledge. It is the same with God. No man can penetrate the depths of the mind of God unless the Spirit of God reveals its contents.

1CO 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Neither Paul nor the other apostles received the information which they preached from the minds of men. Because they received instruction directly from the Spirit of God, it was possible to know the will of God. Any minister who bypasses the Spirit of God and preaches from his own mind is a very foolish man.

1CO 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Perhaps the word “comparing” in this verse is not the best possible translation. I believe what is meant

is that one cannot reveal spiritual truths satisfactorily through the efforts of human wisdom. The revelation of God's will requires that it be presented by the eternal Spirit. When Paul spoke, his teachings were not his own. They were those of God.

1CO 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

This verse has been badly abused by those who believe man can do nothing at all in the salvation of his soul. Such persons render man a complete robot who must await the power of God to save him. According to them, before he is saved he is absolutely corrupt. There is no good thing about him. Only when God acts upon his mind can he understand spiritual matters.

Such a position makes God a respecter of persons. Only those men upon whom God decides to act can ever come to him. This is irrational. God desires that all men come to him and that no person perish.

The natural man in this verse is the one who still places the things of this world and the wisdom of this world above the purposes and wisdom of God. As long as a man fastens his affections on this world, he cannot receive nor know the spiritual truths God has made available to him. But, he can begin to know those spiritual truths as soon as he comes to the realization that it is the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God."

Paul is telling the Corinthians that in spite of

the fact that they were capable of demonstrating supernatural gifts granted them by the Spirit of God, they were still acting as natural men who valued pride and reputation above service to Christ.

1CO 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Men are improper judges. The natural man who depends upon his own wisdom, or that of other men, can never correctly judge another man. However, the spiritual man, who has been instructed in the truth of the doctrine of Christ, has a proper perspective by which he may know the fruits of others. No mere man can condemn him. Yet he is able to judge all men through the Word of God.

1CO 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

There is no man who has plumbed the depths of the mind of God. The Corinthians who felt they could ignore the teaching of the apostle Paul were sadly mistaken when they set out to teach contrasting views. Men are not capable of teaching God.

Paul was not saying the power of his own mind was equal to that of the Son of God. He was saying the preaching he did came from the mind of God and was true to the mind of God.

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Chapter 3

1CO 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

We will find this picture of immaturity over and over again throughout the entire book of First Corinthians, and extending even into the second letter. The bickering and pride which they manifested were not the characteristics of spiritual men. They had been baptized into Christ. They had put on Christ. But they were still acting like squalling babies whose entire focus was upon themselves.

This was utterly disgusting to Paul. There was much he needed to teach them. However, under the present conditions there was a great deal to be done before they were ready for that which he could have offered them. Most preachers will understand Paul's feelings. Men fritter away their years in many frivolous things. The result is that when a topic of some depth is presented from the pulpit or in a Bible study class, they are unable to appreciate it and are quite bored.

1CO 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

The milk of the word has to do with faith, repentance, confession, baptism, the elements of Christian giving, etc. There is much much more. One can explore prophecy, the nature and relationship of the three persons of the Godhead, the providential

care of God for his own and many other things. The Corinthians had been incapable of digesting such meaty spiritual food in earlier days. Paul was very disappointed that they were still not ready.

1CO 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

What was his evidence that they were still spiritually immature? The evidence lay in their attitudes and behavior in their personal interrelationships. They were selfish. They were obsessed with following men rather than following Christ. They were allowing themselves to be led by human wisdom instead of divine wisdom. One who is carnal is one who attends to affairs of the flesh. Paul had much to say about that in the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. We may follow either the flesh or the Spirit. Those who follow the flesh are carnal. As he remarked before, they are natural men.

1CO 3:4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

It is interesting that he mentioned his own name first here. It seems extremely distasteful to him that some of the Corinthians were following **him**. He also mentioned Apollos. He could no doubt have extended the list. It does not matter who the man is, or how great the man is, it is simply

unthinkable to rest our eternal hope on the back of human abilities.

1CO 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Although a great man, Paul was only a man. Although a fine orator and teacher, Apollos was only a man. Both of them were but servants, working under the direction of their Master, Christ, and tending to the needs of those to whom they preached the Word.

Paul and Apollos could do no more than God gave them the ability to do. It happened that both of these men were highly intelligent, and that wonderful opportunities and responsibilities were placed before them. Neither of them would have been pleased by being made an object of adoration.

1CO 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

The church at Corinth was compared to a garden or a vineyard. The crop was begun when Paul preached the Word of God which is the seed. When that seed had been sown in the receptive soil of men's hearts, it began to spring up, but needed watering for further development. Apollos had come along and watered it by encouraging Christian growth. Neither Paul nor Apollos would have been able to accomplish anything without the power of God. Men can sow seed, but God must cause it to germinate. Men can water plants, but

God must provide the vital force of life. It is true with every farmer. It is also true with the preaching of the gospel.

1CO 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Some of the great preachers of years gone by have baptized thousands of persons. They had every right to rejoice in such harvests of souls. But, if they were wise, they were obligated to remember how useless their efforts would have been without the power of the gospel. Most of them gave the glory to God.

1CO 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

It is not proper for men to wrangle over the efficiency of their own efforts. They are all working toward the same end. The one who sows the seed and the one who waters the seed must both look to the same harvest. A fine harvest should cause delight upon the part of both of them.

This verse is one of several in the Bible indicating there will be differences in the rewards given in heaven. Some believe there will be no degrees of enjoyment in heaven because we will all be surrounded with the same spiritual environment. It goes deeper than that. One who has prepared

himself well on earth through faith and labor of love will be in condition to appreciate heaven more than one who has not done that. God will see that every man receives a reward—according to his **own** labor.

1CO 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

What a beautiful thought. We are workers together with our Father. I remember the first days of hard work I did on the farm on which I grew to manhood. My father was a hard worker. He expected the same from his sons. However, when he and his boys went out into the hay field together, there was a sense of togetherness which I did not feel at any other time. It was a pleasure to work shoulder to shoulder with dad.

It is an even greater pleasure to realize that as I work together with my brothers and sisters in Christ, that we are fellow laborers with our Father in heaven. We sow the seed. We water the tender plants. He does the rest.

Now, as this verse closes, Paul was ready to introduce another figure of speech. He had been talking about cooperation in God's field. Now he spoke of cooperation in constructing the mighty temple of which each of us is not only a builder, but also a part.

1CO 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-

builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

The apostle had been provided plans for the building of the temple of God. He was not the architect. God was the architect. Paul envisioned himself as a wise master builder. He was the one who had supervised the initial activities among the Gentiles as they began to come to the Lord.

It was not possible for Paul to construct the entire temple. He served as an evangelist who introduced men to the Son of God. Then he moved on to other territory to repeat this introduction. Behind him there were others who continued the work which he had begun. As he had mentioned before, he was only a fellow laborer with other Christians and with the Lord himself. It required a cooperative effort to get all of the work done.

It was vital that every man who entered into the building process be careful to build according to the directions. The wrong plan, or the wrong materials could bring disaster.

1CO 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

One serious danger was that the builders might choose to use the wrong foundation. Jesus had warned against this at the close of his sermon on the mount. He spoke of two builders. One built his house upon the sand. The other built his house upon the rock. When the wind blew and the floods

came, the house which was built upon the sand fell, and the fall was terrible. When the wind and the water beat upon the house which was built upon the rock, it stood. The foundation upon which the entire house of God must rest is the life and teachings of Jesus. When Peter made the confession that Jesus is the Son of God, Christ informed him that it was upon the rock of that confession that his church would be built.

We need to come back to the basic problem Paul was addressing. The Corinthians were following men. They were making an attempt to build upon human foundations rather than upon that which is divine.

1CO 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Building upon the wrong foundation was not the only danger. It was also possible to damage the building by using the wrong methods and materials. There is some discussion here about whether the problem lies with the builders or with the calibre of Christians which were incorporated into the building. Either of these things could bring serious consequences.

Gold, silver and precious stones will withstand fire. In fact, fire is used to purify such materials. In contrast, fire will destroy wood, hay and stubble. Paul warned the Corinthians that the Lord did not expect his building to be constructed with stubble.

Preaching false doctrine and practice could be referred to. If that is the case, we are seeing a picture of false teachers laying spiritual lies upon the pure truth which Jesus laid for a foundation. Any man who does this will answer to God in the judgment. Much of the New Testament warns against either teaching the doctrines of men, or believing such doctrines when they are taught by others.

The verse could also refer to the inclusion of inferior half converted Christians who fail to maintain their fidelity when the winds of trial and tribulation begin to blow. I have a little more difficulty harmonizing this view with the general tenor of the context. I find it difficult to believe God would hold one responsible for the failure of his converts to continue in the faith. Yet, it does seem related to the fact that each of us is a living stone built upon the chief cornerstone which is Christ.

1CO 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

I am not certain Paul is talking about the judgment here when he uses the term "the day." Certainly the judgment will be the final criteria. But, the passage of time will reveal the durability of the workmanship. If the work is poorly done, the fires of persecution will make its inferior nature evident. If it is of excellent quality, it will withstand the heat.

1CO 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

This reward is enjoyed both on earth and later in heaven. It is a most rewarding experience to go back to a place where one has worked in the past and find the converts spiritually healthy and the congregation growing and faithful.

However; the reward here may be that which comes after the judgment. If the efforts have been strong and the results of one's labors are durable to such degree that a number of others are in heaven as a result of his work, the reward will no doubt be very great.

1CO 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Following the same multiple line of thought as in the previous verse. The fires may be the fires of trial and persecution here on earth, or they could be the fire of Gehenna which is never quenched.

I think it is more reasonable to see this fire as that of trial and tribulation on earth. It is during time on earth that the man or woman is proven by responding to the call of the gospel and puts on Christ. That person then becomes a building block in the temple. If he or she falls short and is ultimately burned, the one who converted them will suffer loss, but will not be lost themselves. The temple will be damaged. The builder will be safe.

1CO 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

The point here is that God's Spirit communes with men within the church. Each individual, each congregation and the church as a whole are expected to be an acceptable habitation for him. The verse does not say **how** the Spirit dwells in the Christian. It simply says he does dwell in him. Some attempt to say he only dwells in a Christian through the Word. I do not equate the Word with the Spirit. The Word is the sword of the Spirit. I take the verse to mean precisely what it says. The Spirit of God dwells in a true Christian.

1CO 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Now Paul is getting back to his main theme. Some of the Corinthians have been attempting to build the temple of God with inferior methods and incorporate inferior materials. To do that is to defile the temple of God. There are two passages which come to mind. One is the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem by our Lord. Christ was not a violent person. He was known for his gentleness and dignity. One of the rare times when he exhibited the other side of his personality was when the merchants and profiteers had defiled the temple by making it a den of thieves.

The other passage is Jesus reference to the second chapter of Daniel and Psalm 118, when the

Lord said that he who would fall upon the chief cornerstone of his temple would be broken himself and would be ground into powder (See Matthew 21:42-44)

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

1CO 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

Any man who considers himself wise enough to neglect the revelation of God has truly become a fool. Such a man needs badly to humble himself and recognize his dependency. Only when a man realizes how little he really knows will he be in a position where he can expand his knowledge. I have crossed paths with more than one so-called preacher of the Word who had ceased to learn new truth because he felt he already had complete control of the Scriptures.

The mighty and the noble do not come to God. They are too busy admiring themselves.

1CO 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

How ridiculous it must appear to God for a mere man to believe he is independently wise. It just is not true. I suspect the attitude of God toward such a man is somewhat similar to that of Albert Einstein helping a four year old learn to count. The medical doctor, the lawyer, the theologian and the doctor of philosophy are all ignorant men before the Almighty. Job wished to speak with God, but at no time felt that he had the power to debate with him.

1CO 3:20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

To be vain is to be empty and useless. As men, our thoughts are incomplete. They are based upon finite logic and finite experience. There is no way to make a comparison between the product of an infinite mind and that of one which is limited. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).*

1CO 3:21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

The man who glories in men has deprived himself of the complete wisdom and power which is only

found in the Godhead. The man who glories in the Lord has made himself heir of all things. He may not have access to these riches until he leaves this world behind. But his faith will not be in vain.

1CO 3:22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

Anything which Paul had to offer, the Christ could claim as his own. Anything which Apollos or Peter could offer was the same. The true Christian is in complete control. Everything on earth and in heaven is his through Christ, for Christ is the Son of the God, and God is the owner of all.

1CO 3:23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

What a powerful set of arguments the apostle Paul brought forth to counteract the foolishness of the carnal minded Corinthians. They had chosen incorrectly. Their emphasis upon the glory of men had led them into Satan's hands. They quarreled and fought like babies. Paul had to spend much energy and labor on them as he sought to lift them from their childishness to some degree of spiritual maturity.

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Chapter 4

1CO 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

We are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Paul was very careful to keep that principle in mind. Although he was perhaps the most influential among the apostles, he never seemed to seek personal adoration from men. He was but a minister serving Christ and the brethren. He was merely a steward, caring for that which God had placed within his supervision.

The mysteries of God were those truths concerning the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles through Christ. Paul did not originate them. He only witnessed to that which had been revealed to him by the Father and the Son. It was not his desire that any man followed him, unless he first followed Christ.

1CO 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

No steward is worth his salt if he misuses his master's goods. Paul knew he had a great responsibility to please him who had committed so much into his hands. It was his desire that above all things, Christ would be pleased with him.

1CO 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

Men are not capable of judging other men, except through the application of the Word of God. The Corinthians had been making judgments about the apostle. Unless those judgments were based upon his adherence to the statutes of God, he was not concerned over their analysis of him.

Not only were they not qualified to make personal judgments about him, He was not even able to make accurate judgments about his own usefulness. It might well be that he was accomplishing either more or less than he knew. Only the Lord is able to see the ultimate consequences of any man's thought, speech and deeds.

I would add one more observation here. It is not right to dismiss completely what men think of us. If we were to do that we might offend the conscience of another Christian who is not as strong as we are. I do care what men think of me, and I know from other teachings of Paul that he cared also. The point here is that when men make such accusations as these Corinthians had been making about Paul, it is best to ignore them and go about the business of pleasing the one who really matters, that is Christ our Saviour.

1CO 4:4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

No man knows anything without the assistance of the God who made him. It would do neither Paul nor any other man any good to make self judgments,

apart from the principles revealed in the will of God. Rationalization is one of the greatest weaknesses of men. We tend to justify ourselves with improper evaluation. This holds true with that which we do and also that which we fail to do.

If you or I, or any other man is to be found just, it will be the Lord who must declare it. He is the only all wise and entirely dependable analyst.

1CO 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

It is entirely too early to make the kind of judgments to which Paul and others were being exposed. When Christ comes, all men will be judged according to his standards and not by those of men. He is able to discover the things which men keep hidden deep within their hearts where it impossible for other men to see.

I may appear to other men to be pure and holy. Inside, where only Jesus can see, I may be filthy and hypocritical. Some of the most wicked of men have spent years successfully deceiving those with whom they have associated. Others who have been maligned and persecuted as heretics have been far more pure of heart than those who attempted to judge them.

1CO 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to

Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Paul had talked about himself and Apollos, and had used illustrations to make his point clear. He had talked about builders and he had talked about husbandmen. The things which he had said about them could have just as well have been applied to other Christians. We have different talents. We have different tasks. Each of us must fit into the entire process if the work of Christ is to prosper.

For men to be jealous of each other and to despise one another only hinders the work which could be done if all were to unite their efforts. All that Paul had said was in the interest of setting up the proper judgment criteria. Those criteria are spelled out in the scriptures. If men would adhere to them, the puffed egos and hateful actions would soon cease to be problems.

1CO 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

It was not they who had been responsible for the differing gifts which they possessed. The Holy Spirit had dispensed these gifts as he had seen fit. Yet the individuals who had received them were acting as

if the gifts were a direct consequence of their own spiritual character. Since they had received these abilities, they ought to be careful about glorying and boasting over them as though they, and they alone, were responsible for them.

The lesson is there for us today. Some have great intelligence and others have a meagre amount. It is unwise for the one who has been blessed with strong intellectual ability to act as if he or she alone developed it. It is true that one may whet and tone the intellectual skills. But if there is little to whet and tone, there will be limits. God can make use of every man who will commit himself to service in the kingdom. Apparently God can use varying degrees of skill and ability or he would not have created such a variety of men. Let each of us do all we can with what has been afforded us and thank God. Let us measure ourselves by our degree of commitment rather than by the level of skill.

1CO 4:8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

I believe Paul turned a little sarcastic at this point. Some of the Corinthians thought they sat on top of the world. They surveyed their little domain as if they needed nothing from outside of themselves. The message Paul had for them was hardly necessary as far as they were concerned. They could do nicely without his interference..

He wished very much that they were as well off as they thought they were. In that case he could rejoice heartily with them in their condition. He would join them in their rejoicing and urge them on. This was not possible. Their estimate of their condition was far from accurate.

1CO 4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

The apostles had not been able to sit in luxury and receive the admiration of those around them. Their lot had been exactly the opposite. They had suffered and had been brought low in the sight of others. Someday they would be first. But for the present they were last.

Were they appointed to death? I think so. Every one of the apostles except John is said to have been murdered for the cause of Christ. From the angelic world, to the Christian family, to the world outside, all were able to see the difficulties faced by these faithful men. Both their suffering and their victories could be observed by everyone.

1CO 4:10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

Many a man has been considered a fool for bearing the cross of his Lord. This is because the

world looks through sin stained glasses. They do not know true wisdom from foolishness. They do not know true strength from weakness. Therefore they honor the dishonorable and despise the honorable.

These Corinthians thought they were wise, strong and honorable. Instead, they were foolish, weak and despised in the sight of the one who really matters.

1CO 4:11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

This picture is nearly unbelievable. Remember what Paul had left behind him to follow the commandment of his Lord. He stood in the first rank of the Jewish scholars of his day. The priesthood had it made. They were supplied with all the material needs. They were respected by their fellow Jews. One who stood at the top, as Paul did, could revel in much comfort and little fear.

Many times Paul had found himself hungry and thirsty. He had been cold and had been beaten. Like the Lord who had no place to rest his head, he had moved from place to place dependent upon the good will of those to whom he preached the gospel.

1CO 4:12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

Paul was not just talking about himself. It seems that all of the apostles suffered much. Concerning John the baptist, Jesus once asked the multitude if

they were looking for a man who wore soft clothing. If so they ought to be searching in king's castles rather than in places where John was likely to be found.

It is no shame to work with one's hands. Jesus was a carpenter. Peter, James and John had all been fishermen. Paul was a tentmaker. The real Christian is a servant. Jesus did not come to be served while on earth. He came to serve. So did his apostles.

1CO 4:13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

They were called fools, scum, garbage, etc. When one gets through cooking food, the peelings are fed to the dogs. In the eyes of the high and mighty, the apostles were no more than beggars. In Athens Paul was called a "babblers." It had been true from the time they began their ministry. It had continued until the very day Paul wrote to the Corinthians. In fact, the Corinthians had joined in the mockery.

1CO 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

They should have been ashamed. The things they had done were certainly worthy of shame. But Paul was not interested in seeing them humiliated. He had converted many of them. He loved them and did not wish to see them destroy themselves. Therefore, he warned them of the terrible danger

they were facing if they continued in their pride filled wickedness.

1CO 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Though they had been exposed to a number of Christian teachers, Paul felt he had as much respect and concern for them as any man could have. He was the one who had persuaded them to obey the gospel. He had planted the seed which had germinated in their heart and brought them from darkness to light. It would be difficult for any other to have the same feeling for them as Paul had.

There is a special bond between a preacher and those whom he has influenced to become children of God. The pride one feels about these Christians is akin to that of a father of the flesh. But, since spiritual life is far more important than physical life, the concern for the converts may sometimes exceed that for one's children in the flesh.

1CO 4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Does this seem strange to you coming from the lips of the one who had earlier condemned the Corinthians for following Cephas, Apollos and himself? He is not contradicting himself. There are two walks of life. One is self centered and self

serving. It is the way of the Devil. The other is self sacrificing and outgoing. It is the way of the Spirit. Paul had followed Christ in the latter path. Now, he urged the selfish and childish Corinthians to follow the way of humility and loving service.

1CO 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

Paul still felt the necessity to remain in Ephesus for a while. He did very much wish to visit personally with those in Corinth. However, in his estimation, he could not leave his present activities to come to them. In place of a personal visit, he sent Timothy whom he loved as his own son. Timothy was trusted and true. He would refresh them with respect to the things Paul had taught while he was with them. These were ways of life which he had received from the Lord himself. They were the ways he had urged them to follow while with them, and the ways which he taught others wherever he traveled.

1CO 4:18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

The proud among the Corinthians were saying he would not come. He had not come before as he had promised and he would not come in the future. They could forget him. He talked big while he was

on the other side of the Aegean Sea. It probably would be a different story if he did actually come to see them.

1CO 4:19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

He indicated they would be much surprised when he did come. It all depended upon the will of God. If God allowed him to come, he would be there. If not, he would go wherever God wished. What they had to say about it would make no difference.

But if he did come, he would check out the boldness of those who had been running him down before the church. He would find out then if the power of these mockers was able to match up with the power granted him through the Spirit of God.

1CO 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

The power of the gospel is not in words alone. It makes itself known in the lives of men. In the days of Paul, the miraculous was an integral part of the preaching of he and the other apostles. God would provide him with whatever demonstrations of power were needed to humble the selfish boasters who opposed his Lord.

1CO 4:21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

The choice was completely up to them. He could meet them in gentleness and tenderness, or he could meet them with a rod of punishment. If they continued in their present ways, it would be the rod of punishment. If they would repent and grow up, he could come to them with a meek and quiet demeanor.

Chapter 5

1CO 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

In the first chapter Paul had received word through the household of Phoebe that there were divisions among the Corinthians. Now he has heard a report that there is a serious case of fornication corrupting the congregation. Since Paul warned about idle words more than once in his letters, we may rest assured that he did not take premature action in these matters. These problems were not irresponsible tales borne by gossip mongers. They were very real and very serious.

In the case of the fornication, a worse situation can hardly be imagined. A man was having sexual relations with his father's wife. This probably means his stepmother. I think the statement would have said "his mother" if that had truly been the case. At least my stomach is less nauseated if it was his stepmother. Even so, it was such a filthy mess that even those who had no commitment to Jehovah would have found it such a shame they would not have even wanted to talk about it.

The shame and reproach such actions bring upon the church are hideous. Non-Christians watch like hawks for the slightest slip on the part of a Christian. To give them a chance to justifiably criticize the church is inexcusable.

1CO 5:2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

We might expect a call from the congregation for the sinful man to repent of his filthy life. That was not the way they reacted to it. Instead of mourning that the man had dropped to such a level of sinfulness, they were finding it food for wicked conversation and enjoying the whole mess.

I remind you that many of these church members had only recently escaped the darkness of Satan's kingdom as they were converted and became members of the church. Corinth was filled with corruption. In their daily walks of life, they rubbed shoulders with some pretty wicked people. They had lived in an environment where blushing was outmoded.

1CO 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

It was true that Paul was writing from quite a distance. He could have ignored the entire repulsive mess. That was not Paul's style of preaching. There was a serious need of correction. Paul would tend to that need. He might be absent in body. He certainly was not absent in spirit.

He had determined the man was guilty and the congregation was guilty. He did not have to be present to know things must change. Therefore, he issued a call to action.

1CO 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul did not merely say he personally found the sins of this man to be personally outrageous. It was Christ who had been offended. Thus, he would call upon them through the authority of Jesus Christ to remedy the wrongdoing. As a congregation they must take action. Paul would be with them in spirit as they deliberated about the man's correction. They could also know the power of Christ was available as needed. We are talking about miraculous power such as that which caused Ananias and Sapphira to drop dead when they lied to the Holy Spirit.

1CO 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

This is harsh medicine. Harsh medicine is sometimes necessary when the sickness is as serious as this one was. The entire congregation was at risk. Immediate and drastic action had to be taken if others were not to be destroyed by the same sin which had infested the man who was committing the fornication.

He was to be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. We must understand that the flesh was not simply the meat which covered the man's bones. The flesh, as used here, is the sinful self which declares its own will to be more important

than the will of God. The entire eighth chapter of Romans urges men to follow the way of the Spirit of God rather than the way of the flesh.

Now what is meant by delivering this flesh to Satan? It was the cutting off of fellowship between the faithful Christians and the fornicator. Fellowship is the heart of Christian life. Within the body of Christ, the Christian finds companionship and support which are found nowhere else. There is an interflow of information as the Christian teaches others and is taught by others. There is also material support as those who have in more abundance freely share that abundance with those who have less. There is emotional support as each Christian rejoices with others and also grieves with them. There is approval for a faithful life and disapproval of a life contaminated by sin. Now when these blessings are withdrawn from a brother or sister, the shock can have quite an impact. It may not be as visible as when the medical doctors use an electrical shock to bring a failing heart back to a rhythmic beat, but it is just as traumatic.

This remedy is not cruel and unusual punishment. We live in a world today that looks upon most punishment as unnecessary. Withdrawal of fellowship is considered to be very inconsiderate and ineffective. It is not! God knows the prescriptions for spiritual maladies far better than we. This is the remedy he has prescribed for cases such as the one we are examining. It had better be respected and applied!

One last point. The withdrawal of fellowship does not work if a congregation is not pure enough

to make it work. If a large enough segment of the congregation is sympathetic to the one who is being corrected, that individual will not turn from the sin. The congregation will become stagnant.

1CO 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

I was raised in the state of Michigan. In our old house we had a basement where we stored our potatoes through the winter. As long as all of the potatoes were well preserved, everything went well. However; if a single potato rotted, those surrounding it in the pile soon rotted also. The rot would spread out until it engulfed the entire heap.

Paul used the figure of leaven. Leaven is used in the scriptures to teach both positive and negative lessons. Leaven works quietly behind the scenes. It is often not noticed until its results can be seen. Therefore, it can be either highly useful or highly dangerous. In Matthew 13:33, Jesus compared the activity of the Kingdom of Heaven to leaven. From the teaching of that small band of thirteen, consisting of Jesus and his twelve apostles, the good news of salvation was to be spread unto every creature in all the earth. But Jesus also taught his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Their teaching was as deadly as his own was constructive. In the case of the congregation at Corinth, the influence of the fornicating man could well infest every member of the church.

1CO 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

Sinful teaching and actions are negative leaven which should have been left behind when the Corinthians had become Christians. They were to be free from such influences within the body of Jesus Christ. Any leaven which worked in their lives at the time Paul wrote to them was to be the positive leaven of the Kingdom of Heaven, not the negative leaven of sin.

What does he mean by mentioning Christ as a passover which was sacrificed for them? We must trace our way back to the escape of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. The last plague which was brought on the Egyptians was the death of the firstborn. Every house which did not have the blood of a passover lamb sprinkled upon the doorframe saw the death of the oldest child in that house. Those Israelites who kept God's command to sacrifice a lamb, eat that lamb and place some of its blood upon the doorframe of their house protected their firstborn. The passover lamb was a type of Jesus Christ. One who has been cleansed from sin through the blood of Christ has escaped from the bondage of sin.

Since the Christian has been purged from the leaven of sin, he or she ought to avoid any further contamination with it. They are a new lump, without those old influences.

1CO 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Israelites were commanded to remove all leavened bread from their homes at the time of the escape from Egypt. After they had crossed the Red Sea and were no longer captives of the Egyptians, they began to observe the Passover Feast. The bread eaten during that feast was to be unleavened bread. This was to cause them to remember that they had left all the horrors of Egypt behind.

Paul used that fact to show the importance of keeping clean after having become a Christian. We have escaped the bondage of sin. It is unreasonable to attempt to feast upon the blessings of Christ if we are going to carry the leaven of sin within our souls.

1CO 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

It is clear from this verse that the letter which we call First Corinthians was not the first Paul had written to these members of the Church. He had formerly commanded them in a letter not to associate with those who committed fornication. They had not obeyed that instruction. They were now keeping company with such a person, and actually seemed a bit puffed up about it.

1CO 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous,

or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

The apostle is now ready to make a contrast between Christian behavior toward those who who commit fornication outside of the church and those who commit it inside the church. If the Christian cuts himself or herself off completely from all communication with those who sin outside the family of God, there is no means of converting them. When Jesus was accused of keeping company with publicans and sinners, he said it was the sinners who were in the greatest need of a spiritual physician.

At the same time, Jesus never condoned entering into sin with those sinners, nor approving of their sin. Any association was to be for the purpose of turning them from the ways of Satan. If the Christian is to cause the good leaven of the Kingdom to spread, he must come into contact with those who need teaching.

1CO 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

Withdrawing company from a brother or sister who is going back into sin after having once left it is a different story. This time the person committing the sin is fully aware of the filth to which he is

returning. Such a person becomes like a cancer in the body of Christ. No other part of the body is safe from the pain and suffering which he can bring about.

It is therefore necessary to perform surgery upon the church. The offending member must be cut off from the benefits of the body in order to be shocked into spiritual reality. Sometimes such a procedure works. Other times it does not. It is, however, God's own last resort and it must be applied when conditions demand it.

1CO 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

Is the cutting off of the sinful person judging? After all, we are told "*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*" There is a difference between judging men through our own standards and recognizing them by their fruits. We are also told, "*By their fruits ye shall know them.*" When the standards which God has set up are applied in love, the action is approved by him. When our own standards are applied in hypocrisy, God will judge us by the same measuring stick which we have used on others.

The refusal to keep company with members of the church who are fornicators, liars and drunkards is righteous judgment. That is expected of us.

Those who are not members of the church will most definitely be judged. But the same methods are not to be used with them. Paul had not commanded the Corinthians to stay away from them as a means

of correction. They must first be taught about the nature and consequences of sin. If then, after they had come to Christ, they returned to their wallowing in the mire, they must be refused the company of faithful brethren.

1CO 5:13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

God has his own ways of judging those outside the body of Christ. He knows what punishments are needed in their case. He will punish as he knows best. The Christian is to teach that person and allow God to chastise in whatever way he sees fit. In the meantime, the Corinthian Christians must withhold companionship from the fornicator who was within their midst.

Chapter 6

1CO 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

The apostle had now dealt with two major problems in the church at Corinth. In chapters one through four he had written concerning division and following of men rather than Christ. In chapter five he attended to the matter of fornication, and the difference in dealing with those within the church and outside the church. Now he turned his attention to a third concern. This time he is concerned about Christians not having enough confidence in their own brethren to trust them with handling differences between brethren. The word “dare” is a strong word. Use of the word is an indication that Paul had intense feelings about this procedure. He found it hard to believe brethren would take their differences before the civil courts, or other third parties, rather than turning to fellow Christians.

He called these non Christians “the unjust.” If one will visit the courtrooms of the land for a few hours the reason for referring to these individuals as unjust will become evident. As an example of my point I would like to cite a case in which I was called up for jury duty. The man on trial had crossed the center line of a highway and had collided head on with another car. Three persons were killed in the accident. He admitted he had been drinking. During the questioning period to select the jurors, one of the lawyers for the defense asked if I was a “tee totaler.” I assured him that I did not drink any

alcoholic beverages. He then asked if I considered a drunk man responsible for the actions which he took while under the influence of the alcohol. I replied that the man very well knew the effects of alcohol before he drank it. Therefore, he was responsible for the actions he took while drunk. It took very little time for my name to be crossed off the juror list. I went back to the courtroom to listen in on the case. The man was found innocent. In my opinion, a man responsible for the death of three young college students is still driving his automobile on the streets and endangering the lives of other people. I am not surprised when Paul spoke of taking Christian problems to the “unjust” for solutions.

1CO 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

A time is coming when the saints will pronounce judgment upon those who have ignored Christ, or have rebelled against his teachings. When and how will this judging take place? In one sense, the saints are judging the world today. That is a primary reason for some of the animosity toward the church. When a holy life is placed side by side with an unholy one, the contrast is glaring. Sinful persons are very much aware of the difference between their manner of life and that of faithful Christians. They are made uncomfortable by that difference and the defense often takes the form of

sarcastic comments. Often it goes further in efforts to find flaws in the Christian's lives.

The passage is probably talking about final judgment. When the books are opened in that final hour, each of us will have to face our record. It is likely that when the reprobates who rejected divine authority through their lifetime are reminded of their many sins, they will attempt to defend themselves by saying the requirements were impossible. The reply to such excuses could very well be that multitudes of men and women did live such lives as were acceptable to God. In this manner the saints will most certainly judge the world.

1CO 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

In a similar manner the saints will have the capacity to judge angels. The Bible speaks several times of angels who rebelled against the will of God. When they are called upon to face their punishment, they will have absolutely no recourse. If humans were able to please the Creator, there is no reason why the angels could not have done so.

If there are other senses in which men will judge the world or the angels, I do not know of it. My understanding of the judgment is that God the Father and Christ the Son are the ones who will actually sit on the judgment seat in the last day.

1CO 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

The contrast here is between the judgment to come and the judgments which occur in this life. This certainly looks as if the judging of the world and of the angels is somehow tied to the final judgment.

At any rate, the assignment of judging angels and the worldly would require more ability than the judging of the brethren with respect to minor matters of Christian life. Even the least able of the Christians ought to be capable of settling these conflicts. Yet, the Corinthians were taking their grievances against one another to the civil authorities for settlement. Such actions did not speak well about their confidence in their Christian brothers and sisters.

1CO 6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

Something was very badly wrong. Either the entire congregation was so immature that there really were no members who could render a fair judgment, or there were such persons, but the others would not trust them sufficiently to put the case before them. Either way, it was a shameful situation.

1CO 6:6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

Oh yes, it does happen. It happened in Corinth,

and it happens yet today. I know of a case in which a lawsuit was brought before the civil courts over whether the elders of a congregation, or the trustees of the congregation had the authority to make decisions concerning the spending of the money. The charges flew fast and furious. The local newspapers ate it up. The resulting stench was so foul that even the sectarian world began to be embarrassed over the reputation of the Christians. That is not the way the world will be won to Christ. Jesus prayed that his followers might be one that the world might believe in him.

1CO 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

Paul's case had been made. They were absolutely wrong in going before the courts of the land to settle congregational problems. It would be far better for them to suffer loss at the hands of their brethren than to air these things in front of unbelievers. Christ's teaching was that the Christian is to turn the other cheek when slapped. Retaliation is not the mark of the dedicated child of God.

Jesus himself led the way. He could have called legions of angels to defend him from the suffering of the cross. What is the end of turning the other cheek? It may even be death. But humiliation, pain and death are not the end of all things. Heaven lies just beyond.

1CO 6:8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

Not only were they unwilling to endure some suffering and the possible loss of possessions at the hands of their brethren, they took the opposite road and some were attempting to get what their brother had. You cannot get any farther from the footsteps of the Lord than that.

1CO 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

This is quite a list of sinful ways. The wicked ways of the Corinthians were being classified side by side with some extremely disgusting practices. Fornication is illicit sexual relationships. Adultery is just one form of fornication. Idolatry places some created thing before Jehovah. The effeminate are men who wear women's clothing and attempt to take on the manner of women. Abusers of themselves with mankind are homosexuals who carry on sexual relationships with other men. None of these types will find entrance into the final bliss of heaven.

1CO 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

The list continues. Thieves steal in and take

that which belongs to others. Covetous persons would do so if given the opportunity. Covetousness is actually a form of idolatry. A desire for the material possessions of others replaces the desire to find eternal life. Such persons are apt to find that which they seek and lose that which they have neglected.

1CO 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

These were members of the church whom Paul was writing to. They had escaped from the pollution of sin. They were expected to remain pure after having been sanctified and justified.

The words, sanctified and justified are two very important words. When one is sanctified, that person has been set apart for the service of God. A vessel which was to be used in the temple services in the time of Solomon had to be sanctified before it could be placed in use. That was one reason the drinking orgy of Belshazzar in the days of Daniel was so hideous. The king had decided to use the vessels which were sanctified for use in the temple of God to drink themselves into a stupor.

Justification occurs when God has forgiven the sins of a penitent person. After the person has heard about Christ and believed in him as the Son of God, then repented of his sins and been baptized for the remission of those sins, God sprinkles his heart with the blood of Jesus and he is justified. Justification results in God looking upon that person as if he

had never sinned. Sadly, there were Corinthian Christians who were like the dog who eats his own vomit and the sow who has been cleaned and then goes back to wallow in the mire.

1CO 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

It is quite possible the statement “All things are lawful.” was a common saying among the Corinthians. If that is the case, Paul may have been aiming their own gun at them.

Many activities are right and proper within themselves, yet when abused they become wrong. It may be that the Corinthians were saying their fleshly appetites and lusts were a natural part of their make up, and thus gluttony and sexual gratification would be lawful. In that case, Paul was informing them that when under control these actions are lawful. But, when these same activities take control and dominate the life of the person, they become sinful.

1CO 6:13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

Yes, certainly the belly was created with an appetite for food. And in reverse, food was created to fill the belly. The time will come, however, when

both the appetite and the food will no more exist. Both of these are temporal.

Neither does their argument hold for fornication. The body does have a natural sexual appetite. But that appetite is not to be filled through fornication. Nor did fornication ever hold the same relationship to the body that food does to the belly.

The entire body is involved in acts of fornication. The proper relationship for the body is as follows. The body is provided to us for the service of God. The Lord is also for the body in the sense that he constantly provides for its needs. Both the appetite of the stomach and the sexual needs have been provided for. When these needs are properly dealt with, the body is for the Lord. When gluttony and fornication take over, the body is not for the Lord.

1CO 6:14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

Unlike the fleshly appetites, the body will be raised in the resurrection. The same power which raised the body of Christ will also raise the body of the Christian. When that takes place, if the body has been dedicated to the Lord, it will be united with Christ for eternity. If it has not been for the Lord and has been devoted to fulfilling fleshly desires, the condition will be most unpleasant.

1CO 6:15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take

the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

Both our bodies and our souls belong to Christ. They were purchased with his blood. They are members of his great spiritual body. It is utterly ridiculous to take one of the members of Christ's body and join it to a harlot. "God forbid." is the phrase Paul uses when he considers an action to be absolutely incredible or incomprehensible. He used the same phrase in the sixth chapter of Romans to discourage the return to sin after having been cleansed by the grace of God. He said, *Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid!*

1CO 6:16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

The reference here is to Genesis 2:24. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife : and they shall be one flesh.* If a man is one with Christ and then makes himself one with a harlot, he pretends to make Christ one with a harlot. This is inconceivable.

There have those who wondered if this verse implies that a young man who has joined himself to a girl in sexual intercourse on what is sometimes called a "one night stand" is actually considered to be married to her in the sight of God. We are taught to obey the laws of the land. If the state issues a marriage license and the couple has not obeyed that law, it seems that God would consider

the union as fornication, not marriage.

A true marriage is more than sexual union. It involves physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects. I am caused to wonder if a woman who has not left her father and mother but must go back to them every time some unpleasantness arises between she and the man she pretended to marry has truly married him. She may have become one flesh. She certainly did not become one spirit. Of course, the same observation holds for the man who still clings to his parents rather than leaving them and cleaving to his wife.

1CO 6:17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

He who joins himself to a harlot merely becomes one **flesh** with the harlot. No spiritual unity exists. However, when united with Christ, the unity is not simply that of the body, but also of the **spirit**. Remember that the spiritual part of man is the part which outlasts time. Even the resurrected body will be a spiritual body. It will need to be with Christ in eternity—not with a harlot.

1CO 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

This is a difficult verse. The first two words are crystal clear. Get as far away from fornication as you can. The rest of the verse is hard. Why are all

other sins not against the body, while fornication is against the body? Our first consideration is that many sins are sins of the mind, such as malice, envy, and lying. But, there are numerous other sins which do damage the body. For example, the gluttony just mentioned by the apostle. Surely drunkenness or suicide also damage the body.

I can only conclude that the sin of fornication is far more damaging to the body than any other. The diseases which result from such activity are deadly, but they are usually suffered over a long period of time. They eat away at the strength and vitality of the person.

1CO 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

This is the second time Paul has said the Holy Spirit dwells with Christians. In the third chapter of this book he made a similar statement which then applied to the congregation. This time it applies to the individual. When a person hears the gospel, believes Christ to be the Son of God, repents of sin, confesses Christ before men and is baptized for the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit is given to him to dwell within him. From that time on, the Spirit will continue to dwell within him unless he defiles himself to the point that God gives him up and the Spirit departs.

Since each individual Christian is a temple of God, it follows that an entire congregation is also

the temple of God. The bodies of Christians are really the property of God. They are provided for us that we may serve him. Any other use is rebellion against the true owner.

A temple is a building where God and man come together for communion. The most majestic buildings ever constructed have been edifices dedicated to the worship of God. They are beautiful both outwardly and inwardly. They are kept clean and orderly. The body of a Christian ought to be treated in like manner. It should be kept healthy and attractive. God lives there!

1CO 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The price with which we were bought is the precious blood of the Son of God. Having paid such a price, God has the right to require that his possession be used as he desires. He desires that both our bodies and our spirits be used to magnify his glory.

Christ plainly showed the attitude of God toward improper use of his temples when he drove the money changers and their animals out of the temple of his day. We can be certain that the same attitude exists today. The Corinthians could say whatever they pleased about the soul remaining clean while the body sinned. God lives in that body. He does not wish to have it united with harlots. The body was made for God and not for fornication!

Chapter 7

1CO 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

This marks a major division in the book. Paul will now discuss a number of questions.

Not only had the apostle written a previous letter to the members at Corinth. This verse makes it clear that they had written a letter to him asking for a response to some questions. One of these questions had to do with whether or not it was best for Christians not to marry.

I once had a very dedicated young man ask me if the Bible taught that one could be a better servant of God by remaining single. He had read this verse and he also had his eye on a girl he was considering asking for a date. If the Bible taught that he could be more pleasing to God by remaining single, he would not even initiate a minor relationship by asking her to go out with him. My reply to the young man was that I could not advise him as to whether he would be a better Christian as a single man. I informed him that in my own case, my wife caused me to be more efficient.

Later in the chapter we will find that Paul's answer to the question about whether or not to marry was conditioned by what he called the "present distress." Under those conditions, it would have been preferable for a man not to marry. If Paul had taught it wrong to marry at all, the writer of Hebrews would have stood in contradiction. See Hebrews 13:4. *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but*

whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

The word touch is **aptesqai**. It is a stronger word than mere touching. It carries the idea of clinging to. In a number of places it has to do with marriage. See I John 5:18 and John 20:17.

1JO 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

JOH 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

1CO 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

Even with conditions as they were, if persons found themselves unable to control their passions and drawn to fornication to satisfy them, it was much better to marry than to commit fornication. Thus, it was not wrong for Christians to marry.

The verse speaks of one husband and one wife, not a plurality. It was God's plan from the beginning that there be one man and one woman for one lifetime. One should be enough. One husband should have one wife. One wife should have one husband.

1CO 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

Due benevolence is the fulfilment of the needs of one's mate. The focus here is sexual, however, there are other needs also and these are all to be cared for. In the east, during the first century, women were passive. It was only the men who were thought to have needs. This passage is ahead of its time with respect to the needs of women. Once one enters into the marriage relationship, such needs are to be respected.

1CO 7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

The sexual needs are best filled by the husband or the wife. This would be particularly true once the marriage bed had become a normal part of life. At that time, both the husband and the wife would suffer deprivation if the mate were not available. Both the husband and the wife become more complete persons through the assistance of the mate. A man can play the body of his wife in an even more meaningful way than a master musician plays his instrument. A woman can do the same with her husband. Each has power over the other that is only possible through the marriage bed.

1CO 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

This verse begins with a present imperative in the Greek. “Stop defrauding the other.” It is very possible this had already been taking place. Some of the Corinthians may have decided it was more holy to abstain from sexual intercourse, even if one was married. This would create serious problems for the mate who was left to “burn.”

At the time of the writing of First Corinthians, society had placed limits upon the amount of time a man could leave his wife and his bed. For manual laborers this was a shorter period than it was for scholars of the law. For the latter, it might be as much as thirty days.

If there was an agreement between a husband and his wife that they would refrain from sexual activities, it should be for an agreed period of time. It should be for the purpose of worshipping God, and the two should reunite to prevent Satan from leading them into fornication. It is not hard for us to see that an agreement of this kind might also be arrived at during the loss of loved ones when grief would overcome passion.

1CO 7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

Paul could not quote a direct commandment from Christ. He did, however, speak as an inspired apostle.

1CO 7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

The present distressful conditions caused Paul to believe others would find it easier to live the Christian life if they were not married. To be as Paul was, meant to be single.

At the same time, the apostle knew that all persons do not have the same sexual drive. Every person would have to evaluate his or her own position and make a determination as to whether they could remain single without falling into fornication.

1CO 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

His advice then is for those who are not already married to remain single. Those who have not yet married were advised to stay single if they could control themselves. Those who had previously married and had lost a mate would also be advised to refrain from remarrying. Marriage under the conditions existent when Paul wrote would make the Christian life more difficult.

1CO 7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Each unmarried person, whether never having married before, or having married and lost a mate, would have to carefully consider their own sexual needs. If they were convinced they could not remain unmarried without constant discomfort and temptation, they should marry. It would not be wrong. However, this new marriage was to be to a person who was **in the Lord** (See 7:39).

1CO 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

Now that he had addressed the condition of the unmarried, he turned his attention to those who were married. Apparently, in the letter they had written to him, they had asked him if becoming a Christian meant that a woman must leave her husband and devote all of her time to Christ. His answer to that question is, No. She is not to leave her husband.

This time Paul had a direct command from Christ. In verse six this was not the case.

1CO 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

His point in this verse is that Christianity was not to be used as an excuse for leaving one's mate and looking for another. He knew that there would be some who wished to be loosed from their husband in order that they could marry another man. Becoming a Christian did not pave the way for divorce and remarriage. If a woman left her husband, she must stay single, or go back to him.

This verse may address itself to the woman whose husband physically abuses her, or makes it completely impossible to live in the same house with him. If she found it necessary to leave her husband in order to protect herself or her children, she was to stay single.

Is it different for the husband? No! He is told not to

put his wife away. The language used for the woman is similar to that in other passages. She does not put away her husband. She “departs from him, or leaves him.” When the husband acts similarly, he is said to “put away” his wife. I am assuming that the same advice given to the wife applied to the husband. If a wife made her husband so completely miserable that he could not live with her and he found it necessary to put her out, he also was to remain unmarried or take his wife back. Becoming a Christian did not provide him an excuse for casting her aside and finding greener pasture.

1CO 7:12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

There is still another group Paul had to deal with. What is to be done if the Christian is married to an unbeliever? Does the fact that there is a yoke between a believer and an unbeliever give the Christian a right to leave the unbeliever, or to put the unbeliever away? The difference in this group and the previous group is that this applies to a special situation of the married rather than to all married Christians.

We are taught not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). There is no tighter yoke than marriage. Should the one who became a Christian divorce the unbelieving mate to avoid such a yoke?

Paul's answer is “No!” If a man became a Christian and his unbelieving wife desired to continue her

marriage with him, he was to honor her wishes. He was not to put her away.

1CO 7:13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

The same thing held true in reverse. If a woman who became a Christian was married to an unbelieving husband and he desired to continue that marriage, she was not to leave him. Becoming a Christian did not demand separation from either an unbelieving wife or an unbelieving husband.

1CO 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

The apostle gave the reason why the Christian should not leave an unbelieving mate. By living a Christian life, it was possible that the unbelieving husband or wife might be converted to Christ. In addition, the children were to be considered. By living a dedicated Christian life before the children, they might be brought up to be Christians. If the Christian were to leave the mate, the children might never be made clean through the purifying blood of the Son of God.

1CO 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under

bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

Paul had advised the Christian to stay with an unbelieving husband or wife if they wished to continue the marriage. What was the Christian to do if the unbeliever decided to leave them or put them away? There was little that could be done. They must be allowed to depart.

The latter part of this verse has been used by some to teach another exception to the general rule that a marriage is to be permanent until death separates. Jesus, of course gave one exception in Matthew 19:8. *He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.* Adultery gives the innocent party the right to remarry.

The persons mentioned contend that when this verse says a brother or sister is not under bondage in the case of departure by an unbelieving mate, this means the one who has been deserted is not bound to the marriage vows and may remarry. I believe the very last part of the verse helps explain the rest of it. The verse says nothing about remarriage. It says nothing about the dissolving of the marriage. It says nothing about desertion as a justification for divorce.

It says that if the Christian cannot maintain the marriage without pursuing the departed mate,

the Christian is not bound to follow after the mate and bicker with them about returning. The word translated “bondage” here is *douloo*. This is a word which refers to slaves. Neither a Christian husband or wife was ever intended to be a slave to their mate. The word for the marriage bond is *deo*. This verse does not make use of that word.

1CO 7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Verse fifteen was a sort of parenthesis. This verse rounds out what the apostle had been saying in verses twelve through fourteen.

I take this opportunity to discuss the matter of believing men or women converting their unbelieving mates. I realize and do not doubt for a moment the Bible teaching that it is far wiser for a Christian to marry another Christian. Sometimes however, for one reason or another, a Christian will marry a non-Christian. Sometimes the strain is so great that the Christian betrays his or her Lord. But such does not have to be true. Every Christian knows of a number of persons who have been steadfast in their faith and have accomplished precisely that which Paul said might happen.

My own mother married a non-Christian. Life was not easy. Nevertheless, she persisted and ultimately lived to see all five of her children, as well as her husband, baptized into Christ.

1CO 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Here is a main concern of the apostle throughout this section. Christianity is neither an excuse for disrupting a situation which is personally distasteful to the Christian, nor is it a reason for entering into situations in which others might be inconvenienced.

If a Christian has been dealt a certain set of circumstances, let him make the best of those circumstances. Christ accepted the cup he was given. We may have to do the same.

It is true that conversion to Christ is to make a difference in one's life which is like the change from death to life. Yet, there are things which Christianity does not change. If a descendant of Abraham were to become a Christian, that would hardly demand that he deny his ancestry. If a man from the Gentile world became a Christian, he need not attempt to live as a Jew. A Jew will still be a Jew. A carpenter will still be a carpenter. A mother and wife will still be a mother and wife.

1CO 7:18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become un-circumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

Paul could be talking about physical circumcision. It may seem strange, but an operation had been devised by which the evidence of circumcision could be covered. This was sometimes done by Jewish males

to avoid identification as a Jew. Jews have not always been the most comfortable of people.

Nor should the Gentiles in Corinth feel it necessary to undergo circumcision, intending to keep both the law of Moses and the law of Christ. The council in Jerusalem, as reported in Acts 15 had established the following instruction.

ACT 15:24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

1CO 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Circumcision at that point in time had no religious significance at all. It was, and is, the keeping of the commandments of God which is important. The circumcision of the heart had replaced the circumcision of the flesh. There is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ.

1CO 7:20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Rather than leaving one's status in life, it was better to continue in that status. Obviously one must not continue in sin. To that Paul had said, "God forbid." But, the other conditions of life were not to be disrupted just because one had become a Christian.

1CO 7:21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

We are not talking about hired maids and butlers here. The word deals with an owned servant. Even though it was highly distasteful to remain as a servant after having been baptized into Christ, this was not a reason to flee from one's owner.

One third of the Roman citizens were slaves. To have urged the slaves to leave their masters would have placed Christianity in an unnecessarily difficult position. Given time, the golden rule would prevail.

To have taught masters to immediately release their slaves upon the master's conversion would have also created some disorientation for both the master and the slave. Christianity works more like leaven than like gunpowder.

There are two possibilities with respect to the phrase "use it rather." It could mean, even if released, you should remain in your condition of servitude and use that service to the glory of God. It could also mean, if you are able to secure your release, use your new freedom in the service of God.

1CO 7:22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

Every person is a servant. We serve differing masters. Some are owned by human masters. Some are not under human bondage but have voluntarily made themselves the servants of Jesus Christ. Let

every man who serves another man remember that Jesus said, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . If the Son therefore shall make ye free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:31-32, 36).*

Some masters are truly in bondage. Some servants are truly free. A proper understanding of this could have an extremely comforting effect upon the slave, as well as a sobering effect upon the master.

1CO 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

If a Christian thinks he is not accountable to anyone, that Christian is deluding himself. Christ bought him, both body and soul, with His blood. We may not do anything we please. We are God's peculiar and precious possession.

The last part of the verse is not encouraging servants to leave their masters. It is pointing out just who our true master is. It is our Saviour. We are not to be menpleasers.

1CO 7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

As he has done several times before in this book, Paul tied several connected thoughts together in a single statement. This time the statement is simple. Let every man abide in the general circumstances of life in which he found himself before his conversion.

1CO 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

Again Paul is speaking from his own inspiration. Jesus did not provide a commandment about the matters which Paul is about to discuss. It is Paul's own judgment. But, we must remember Paul was an inspired apostle.

He retraced his steps a bit to talk again about who should and should not marry. The material from here to the end of this chapter has been misunderstood by many. The misunderstanding begins with verse 25. The word virgin in our day is exclusively used to speak of a woman who has never known a man in sexual intercourse. The word here translated as virgins is **parqevnwn**. It is the root word from which our English word "parthenogenesis" is derived. Parthenogenesis is reproduction without sex. Athens, Greece had its Parthenon. Nashville, Tennessee has a duplicate also known as the Parthenon.

I remind you that the Bible does not always use this word to refer to females. Revelation 14:4 is speaking about male virgins who defile themselves with women.

REV 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

We will need to watch carefully to see if the word is consistently applied to females in this chapter, or whether it may have reference to males who have never been with a woman. It is my own understanding that Paul is, at least part of the time, speaking about the virgin condition of a man in these verses.

1CO 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

You will notice that immediately after saying he was ready to talk about virgins, he said, it was good for a **man** to be so. I take this to mean he is advising men who have never been married to remain single if they are able to control their sexual drive.

He does say that his advice has to do with the present distress. This is a key to understanding many of the thoughts in this entire chapter. Some conditions existed at the time in Corinth which made it difficult to live a married life and rear children. Under those conditions it was better for either a man or a woman to refrain from entering into family relationships.

1CO 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

He continued to give advice to men. If they were married already, they should not put away their wife. But if they had not yet married, they should think very carefully before marrying.

1CO 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Now what about those who had recently married? Were they sinning by having entered into the marriage relationship? The answer was, No. It was not a sin for a man to marry. Nor was it a sin for a woman to marry. I think he is making a comparison this time and the word virgin does refer to a female virgin. Neither a male virgin nor a female virgin would have sinned if they had given up their virgin status. This was especially true if they were unable to control themselves without marrying.

1CO 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

Life is not all that long. Jesus said, **I come quickly.** He also urged his followers to work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work. The time would soon come upon those who had married, that death would culminate the marriage. The person who had not married would find that his days had passed as a weaver's shuttle or like a vapor which appears and then soon passes away.

They would be able to endure the distress which plagued them and marriage would be left behind as they entered into the eternal Kingdom in heaven where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage.

1CO 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

It seems likely that a great amount of grief was present at the time for those who had committed themselves to life in Christ. Weeping seems to have been a part of Christian service. Thus, some of those who were merry at the time would later see that merry heart sobered. Some who wept bitter tears would later find a place in heaven where there are no tears. Those who had money to purchase anything they desired would come to a time when there would be no more purchasing, while those who were in poverty would find themselves rich toward God in the land beyond the blue.

1CO 7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

Adam Clarke supposes the world mentioned in this verse to be the world of the Jews and the passing away would then be the destruction of the Jewish nation. That position is inconsistent with the previous picture. Through these verses, Paul had been talking about the brevity of life. The destruction of the Jewish nation would have little to do with the church in Corinth which was in Gentile territory. The earth itself would someday cease to be. When this takes place, the weeping, marrying, buying and selling will

all be in the past. Life should be lived with a view toward eternity.

1CO 7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

His point is that he does not wish for them to be loaded with unnecessary burdens. The unmarried person does not have the many responsibilities which fall upon the shoulders of the married person. He or she has a degree of freedom which allows them to enter into activities which the married person simply cannot consider.

1CO 7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

Many married persons have found their energies harnessed and directed into activities such as earning a living for the spouse and children, or in the case of a woman, the various housekeeping chores. The one who is contemplating marriage must take these facts into consideration. There are many temporal matters which will demand attention. When the distress which was mentioned earlier is added to this, the cares could become very weighty.

Let us go one more step. Paul is probably talking here about Christians marrying other Christians. The burdens may become heavy. But, this matter of having to make a choice as to pleasing God and

pleasing one's mate reaches even greater distress levels when a Christian marries a non-Christian. The non-Christian often has no sympathy for the mate who devotes energy and time to Christian service. A tug of war then begins which makes the load several times heavier.

1CO 7:34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

The same difference holds for a married woman when compared with a virgin or unmarried woman. The married woman will be burdened with cares related to housekeeping and caring for the needs of her husband and her children. The unmarried woman will not have to carry that load. She can devote her time and energy more completely to the spiritual side as compared with the temporal.

1CO 7:35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Paul did not want them to think he was giving them these instructions for the purpose of making them uncomfortable and dictating to them. He was offering the information in an effort to adorn their

Christian character and work. There was much which needed to be done and Paul wanted to make certain all was being accomplished which could be. Any hindrance which could be avoided would be best removed.

1CO 7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

To me this fits nicely with what the apostle had to say earlier about some having different gifts than others. The virgin here, I believe, is not the man's virgin daughter nor his girl friend. It is his state of virginity. The "she" which is mentioned is due to the fact that the noun is a feminine noun, as we might refer to a ship as she. To pass the flower of her age would be to reach the point where the passions were in full bloom. Some see the word them as pertaining to the young man and his girl friend. I believe the word refers to any or all males who find themselves in need of sexual companionship.

If my understanding of the verse is correct, Paul is saying to any young man who finds his sexual desire has reached such a level that he is burning inside and is in danger of committing fornication that it would be better for him to marry than to burn with desire.

1CO 7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but

hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

Paul believed that there were some who would be able to contain themselves. Those who found they were able to maintain their state of virginity without sinning would do well not to marry in that time of severe distress. The individual, either man or woman would avoid burdening themselves down with family cares and would find it easier to bear up under the difficulties of the time.

1CO 7:38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

To give her in marriage would be to give up his state of virginity and enter into family life. There would be no sin involved in making such a decision. Nevertheless, the one who was able to maintain a single or virgin status would be able to serve better for the moment.

1CO 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

If a woman marries, she is bound by the law of God to remain married as long as they both live. If her husband dies, she is then free to marry another

man. But, there is still a restriction. If she does decide to marry again, she is to marry a man who is in the Lord, in other words, a Christian.

1CO 7:40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

Paul's judgment was that the woman whose husband had died would also find it better to remain unmarried at that time. Again he was not presenting a commandment from the Lord. However, he was advising from a loving heart and an inspired mind.

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Chapter 8

1CO 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

There were two monstrous problems that had to be dealt with in the church at Corinth. They were sexual promiscuity and idolatry. It is not difficult to see why this was true. The city was saturated with both of these activities. It is difficult for people to remain pure when pollutants surround them on every side. Paul had attended to the first of these two in his previous remarks. Now he was ready to turn to the other. He was to continue his remarks on idolatry through the next three chapters.

The word translated “idols” in this verse is *eidolothuton*. Yes, they had more knowledge about idols than was healthy for them. The words “puffed up” are used several times in this book. Previously, the members of the church in Corinth knew one of them was committing fornication with his father’s wife. Rather than bemoaning the fact, they were puffed up about it. Now they find more knowledge. This time it has to do with idols. Again they are puffed up about it. Some of these Corinthians seem to take great delight in knowing about things which corrupted men’s souls.

Knowledge without love leads to egotism and elitism. Knowledge **with** love will build up those around a person. Too many of the Corinthians had knowledge **without** love.

1CO 8:2 And if any man think that he

knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

There are several kinds of men. Among them are:

1. Those who know not, and know not that they know not.
2. Those who know not, and know that they know not.
3. Those who know, and know that they know.
4. Those who know, and know not that they know.

The most insufferable of all men are those who fit into the first group. Some of the recipients of Paul's letter were among that group. They had just enough knowledge to puff them up, but not enough to know how little they truly did know. Otherwise, they would have been more willing to listen to the divine wisdom which was being offered to them. Before the truth can make a man free, he must be capable of becoming a disciple.

1CO 8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Abraham was called a "friend of God." That is the sense in which Paul spoke of being known of God. If we love God we will keep his commandments. This develops the type of relationship which benefits both his kingdom and our own soul. It is far more important

to be a friend of God than to be an A student in theology. If we persist in righteous conduct we will see him face to face and we shall know as we are known.

1CO 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

What they should have known was that eating things that had been offered to idols had no religious benefit whatsoever. An idol was nothing at all. It could not see, hear or assist them in any way. As Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars Hill, he said there is but one God. He is the true and living God in whom we live and move and have our being (See Jer. 10:1-6 and Isa. 45:20-21).

JER 10:1-6 Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD;

thou art great, and thy name is great in might.

ISA 45:20-21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

The eating of things sacrificed to idols was often done in the temple of the idol and in full public view. Idolatry was such a part of the mainstream of society that the elite restaurants were the temples of the idols. Important social affairs such as birthday parties and guild meetings were blended with sacrifice to the idols. The ceremonies were often immoral and licentious. Fornication was not uncommon.

1CO 8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

Calling an idol a god did not make it one. Multiplied thousands of so-called gods have been worshipped in all parts of the world and throughout most of the history of the world. Not a single one has ever been capable of protecting or blessing those who worshipped it.

1CO 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

In the long ago, Jehovah had told his people, *The Lord is one God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* The knowledgeable Christian would certainly know that even the idols themselves were a part of the creation of the one God. Jehovah is the source of all things and also the sustainer of all things.

There are a few passages in the Bible which seem to tell of a division of powers within the Godhead. I leave it to the reader to decide whether this verse says the Father is the source and the Son is the sustainer.

1CO 8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

Many persons among the pagans, and even some among the Christians, did not fully understand the one God.

If a Christian were to eat at a temple feast and thought he was participating in idol worship, his conscience would be damaged (See Rom. 14:22-15:1).

ROM 14:22-15:1 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

The strong Christian has two matters to consider:

- (1) Is this act sinful within itself?
- (2) Will this act damage others?

If the Christian truly loves his neighbor, he will not do him damage.

1CO 8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

Within itself, the eating of this meat which had been sacrificed to an idol was absolutely meaningless. It neither raised him nor lowered him in the sight of Jehovah.

1CO 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

Considered from only your own point of view, you may have a perfect right to either eat or not eat. But that would ignore a second question. Are you tripping up your brother by eating. If so, the act would become sinful.

1CO 8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

You may know full well that **you** are not worshipping the idol or having fellowship with those

who do worship him. Still, the weak brother may see you as actually worshipping the false god. He may then eat as a worshipper, even though you are not.

1CO 8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

Since idolatry is an abomination to God, the brother whom you have caused to worship the idol will be separated from the only true and living God.

Christ died to save the soul of that brother and you will then have led the brother to destruction. That places you in a very undesirable position.

1CO 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

There is such a strong communion between Christ and the other children of God that when you damage one of these brethren you have offended the Lord. He made this very clear in Matthew 25:44-46.

MAT 25:44-46 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

1CO 8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

The apostle left no doubt that he had a right to eat meat which had been sacrificed to an idol. An idol was nothing at all spiritually speaking. The meat had not been tainted with sin because it had been offered.

Nevertheless, he would not eat of it. The reason he would not is that he might cause his less knowledgeable brother or sister to lose their spiritual life. Paul would entirely give up the eating of meat to avoid that happening.

Chapter 9

1CO 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

Paul was ready to unload the big ammunition. He asked a number of rhetorical questions concerning which he felt they would be impelled to answer positively. He was an apostle. He was free. He had seen Jesus Christ the Lord. They were his work in the Lord. In Paul's mind, these were questions which demanded a yes answer.

This is not a break in Paul's presentation. He has asked the Corinthians to have more concern for their brethren. He is going to give a personal example of how this works.

This chapter includes the use of what is called diatribe. One sets up a position and then destroys it to show how weak it is.

He had, through his miracles, provided the signs of an apostle. He had the freedom to do any number of things which he had thought it expedient to do. He was a witness of the resurrected Christ, as recorded in Acts 22:14.

Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

As a witness of the resurrected Christ, he had met one of the major qualifications of apostleship (See Acts 1:21-22).

ACT 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

1CO 9:2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Other persons might deny his apostleship. Certainly the Corinthians should be the last to make such a denial. The very fact that his preaching and mighty works had resulted in their becoming Christians should be overwhelming evidence. A seal was a mark placed upon a message or object proving it had not been tempered with.

1CO 9:3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

His answer to them is his *apologia*. We use the term today in the field of Christian apologetics. Also, a lawyer is said to present an apology in a court of law as he defends his client. Paul had already begun. He will proceed further.

1CO 9:4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

The apostle had just as much right to the necessities of life as any other man. He could have chosen to ask

the Corinthians for food, clothing and shelter. He did not do that because he did not wish them to think he was preaching the gospel for personal gain.

The Greek word **exousia** is used. Paul had the **authority** to ask for food and drink.

1CO 9:5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

Paul noted that several of the apostles were married, including Peter. Paul himself had forfeited the satisfactions of married life in order to preach the Word of God in areas where it would have been impossible to take a family with him.

The brethren of the Lord seems to indicate the fleshly brothers and sisters of Christ. They also are included among believers. This is a change. It was not so before the resurrection.

Here is evidence that Peter was married. It is not a Biblical doctrine to require preachers of the gospel to take vows of celibacy. If they choose to remain unmarried they have not sinned. But if they choose to marry, they are approved before God. See also Mk. 1:30.

MAR 1:30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

1CO 9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

Surely the Corinthians did not believe he and Barnabas were required to work to support themselves when the rest of the apostles were not so required. They had not decreased their authority by choosing to enter into manual labor.

1CO 9:7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

Three separate examples are used to prove their right to be supported if they had chosen that route.

First, Paul and Barnabas were soldiers in the army of the Lord. Soldiers were supported by those who remained at home, or by those whom they conquered.

Second, Paul and Barnabas were husbandmen. They were working in the vineyard of the Lord. It would be ridiculous to maintain that a worker in a vineyard could not eat some of the grapes which he cultivated.

Third, Paul and Barnabas were caring for the flock of God. It would also be foolish to contend that one who fed the flock must not eat of the meat, or drink of the milk produced by that flock.

Barnabas had even sold his possessions.

1CO 9:8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

This information was not just the requests of a man. The law of God agreed with the position being presented. If they were still unconvinced, Paul was ready to cite the law.

1CO 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 25:4. God desires that men have respect for the animals who serve them. Disrespect for the animals is disrespect for God. It is possible to tell much about men by the manner in which they treat the animals under their care. If they mistreat the animals, they are likely to mistreat their fellow humans when things do not go as they wish.

Paul is asking them if such instructions pertain only the beast world? They should be able to see a greater responsibility embedded in the Deuteronomy passage.

1CO 9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

God is even more concerned about men than he is animals. When a man works, he does so in anticipation of reaping from the fruit of his labor. In the present case, the harvest is seen in the souls of the

Corinthians. Paul should be able to expect something in return for his diligent efforts.

1CO 9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. Spiritual things are far more valuable than material or carnal things. Paul had given them much greater value than they would be able to return through material support. Compare Romans 15:27.

ROM 15:27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

1CO 9:12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Someone other than Paul and Barnabas had been receiving support from the Corinthians. We are not told the identity of these persons. It is very likely that it was the false teachers who had come among them as gainsayers and had taken far more from them than they gave to them.

There were also traveling sophists in those days. Paul may be referring to them.

We have come now to Paul's main point. He had

every right to take support, but he did not do so. Rather, he worked with his hands and did without. This was done because he cared so much for others. The implication from this is that if Paul deprived himself in favor of others, the Corinthians should follow suit.

The word Paul used for hinder here is *egkope*. It was used of breaking up a road upon which an enemy might advance. The apostle would place no obstacle in the way which might prevent a clear road for the advance of the gospel.

1CO 9:13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

No Jew would be ignorant of the point being made here. For centuries the priests had special privileges which the common people did not have. A portion of the sacrifices which were offered to God were reserved for the support of the priests. To withhold this support would have been to disobey God. He expects his servants to be cared for.

The priests of whom Paul spoke could have been those serving in God's temple, or they could have been pagan priests. Note Leviticus 7:5-6.

LEV 7:5-6 And the priest shall burn them upon the altar for an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a trespass offering. Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: it shall be eaten in the holy place: it is most holy.

1CO 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

We do not have a record of Jesus speaking these words. However we do have the principle taught in Matthew 10:9-10.

MAT 10:9-10 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

This is a good place to point out the despicable nature of lazy preachers who accept support and then do very little for the flock of God. You cannot fleece God's flock and be acceptable to him. Such is the exact opposite of the teaching and the example of Paul.

Six different arguments have been presented to establish Paul's right to receive material reward for his spiritual work among them.

1CO 9:15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

He keeps hammering his point. More and more, it appears that he and Barnabas have been accused of making gain from the members of the church at Corinth. The truth was just the opposite. The two of them had striven desperately to avoid all appearance

of profiteering. At no time had Paul written to them asking for personal support. He would rather die than be justly accused of such greed.

What glory did Paul derive from preaching the gospel? The glorying was in the salvation of men's souls and the spread of the truth. If he had made gain at their expense, the real gain which he prized so much could have been quickly dissolved. The next few verses will make it clear just what Paul stood to lose.

1CO 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

Paul could not brag about having chosen to preach the word. He had been turned completely about on the road to Damascus when the glory of Jesus Christ appeared to him and compelled him to reverse his ways. Once he found out how wrong he was, it became absolutely necessary for him to honor the commandments of his Lord. Instead of boasting about his accomplishments, he realized that if he did not preach he would suffer great loss.

He had somewhat the same attitude as Jeremiah.

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay (Jer. 20:9).

Christ has laid the same responsibility upon each of those who wear his name. Woe is unto us if we heed not his will.

1CO 9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

Paul could preach either willingly or unwillingly. If he preached willingly, there was a tremendous reward waiting for him in heaven. If he preached because he was forced to, he still had to preach because Christ had commanded it. His reward could then be lost.

1CO 9:18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Paul had a *misthos*, or a reward, awaiting him, whether or not he received any recompense from those to whom he preached. Although not receiving anything from men, he made it clear that he was still expecting his reward. To gain glory from men was inconsequential. But to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ without charge to those who received it was truly a reason to glory. He would never risk the loss of that reward.

1CO 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

There were a number of ways in which Paul could ignore his fellow man. Yet, he concerned himself with all of them. He had voluntarily altered his behavior (became a servant to them) that he might bring them to Christ.

Martin Luther is quoted as having said, “A Christian man is the most free Lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

1CO 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

Paul was willing to modify his behaviour in any matter of indifference, rather than to offend the Jews. There were two incidents in particular which exemplify this attitude. One was becoming involved with those who had taken a Nazarite vow, as recorded in Acts 16:1-3. The other was agreeing to the circumcision of Timothy.

I find it very interesting that although the law of Moses was nailed to the cross, the Jews seem to have been permitted to exercise some of the activities that were originated under the law. They apparently continued to undergo circumcision and also to take Nazarite vows. Perhaps these activities were permissible but not mandatory during the years from the death of Christ until the destruction of the Jewish theocratic government. It is worth noticing that Paul spoke of those who were under the law, even though

the law had been abolished at the time. The question then is, were they actually under the law, or did they just think they were under the law?

1CO 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

Those who were without law surely refers to the Gentiles. They were not subject to the law of Moses. Yet they were under the law of Christ. Paul is apparently saying, he can observe the ceremonies of the law of Moses while he is among the Jews, because he is a Jew, and that he can cease such activities and live as a Gentile while he is among the Gentiles, as long as he is still subject to the commandments of Christ.

1CO 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

If a prospective convert, or a Christian who was not thoroughly knowledgeable, would be offended by an action which was a matter of indifference, Paul would honor the person's conscience and would try to avoid such offense. In matters of faith Paul would stand firm. In matters of opinion or indifference, he was flexible. He was willing to do anything and everything which was right in order that men might be saved.

1CO 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

The purpose of this flexibility was not that he might stand in the favor of all men. It was strictly a means of sharing the rewards of the gospel with as many as possible. The apostle did not wish to go to heaven by himself.

1CO 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

It is a well known fact that not everyone who enters a race receives the winning prize. First, second and third may receive honors, while numerous other runners receive no honors. The same is true of the Christian race. If one is to receive the final reward, it is necessary that one finish the race, and also run according to the rules. It is not Paul's desire that any member of the church at Corinth begin the race and then lose his reward.

1CO 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

The training routine for the runner who is to receive honors for finishing the race is a difficult and arduous one. He must exercise until it is painful at times. He must get the proper diet. He must get plenty of rest. He must avoid those activities and thought patterns which will sap his energy and determination. It is the same with the one who wishes to enter the kingdom of heaven.

1CO 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

Paul had his eye directly aimed at the finish line of the Christian race. His actions in becoming all things to all men were not aimless wandering. Everything he was doing was important in either saving his own soul or the souls of those to whom he preached.

A fighter who is shadow boxing will aim blows in every direction. Paul is not doing that. He directs every action toward the goal.

1CO 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

He did not pamper either his body or his mind by doing any and every thing which he desired to do, such as eating meat when it would destroy his beloved brethren. I “keep under my body” is literally, “I give myself a black eye.” The word in the Greek is *hupopiazo*.

The point is that Paul was willing to suffer discomfort to himself in the forfeiture of his freedom to act at will if such action would allow sharing the blessings of the gospel with his brethren.

The word for disqualified is *adokimos*. It has to do with metals standing the test for use. Paul was concerned that after enduring so much, he might not have stood the test himself. What stronger evidence could there be of the possibility of apostasy?

Chapter 10

1CO 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

The next few verses will point out that just because men begin strong is no proof that they will finish strong. Many, many Israelites started out from Egypt as they departed into the wilderness. Most of them died in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb entered into the land of promise.

1CO 10:2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

This is a very revealing verse. A good deal can be learned about the nature and purpose of baptism. Baptism is an immersion which results in a change of state. The Israelites were slaves of the Egyptians before passing through the waters of the Red Sea. After having passed through those waters they had gained their freedom and set out toward the promised land. The parallel between their experience and the Christian's experience in baptism is remarkable. The Christian is in bondage to sin. After he passes through the waters of baptism he escapes from that bondage and sets out through a wilderness of sin to the promised land of heaven.

I have heard it said that not a hair or a hanky was soaked with the water of the Red Sea and therefore it is ridiculous to say the water of baptism saves a Christian. But notice that we are told they were baptized in the sea and in the cloud. The sea was

beside them and the cloud was above them. They were completely immersed by the combination of the two. An honest person will see that baptism is by immersion, and that the purpose is escape from the slavery of sin. It is not a public demonstration that one has already been saved.

Lest we forget the main thrust of Paul's argument, we are told **all** of the Israelites passed through the sea. There may have been in excess of two million of them.

1CO 10:3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

The spiritual meat which they ate was the manna which came down from heaven. Tasting like honey, it provided a completely balanced diet which nourished them as they traveled through barren territory which could never have satisfied their needs through natural means.

Again the parallel is clear. Christians eat of the teachings of Jesus Christ who is the true bread. As each of us journey through a sinful world, we will need to build our spiritual energy through the Word of God. God provided for them. He also provides for us.

1CO 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Meat and drink are both needed by travelers. God provided both for the Israelites. There was manna

for meat and water from a rock for them to drink. We are not given some of the specifics concerning the water from the rock. How could a rock follow them through a deserted wilderness? We do know that on two different occasions, Moses obtained water from a rock when they cried out for it.

The word **all** is used again. We are not allowed to forget that a vast multitude of persons began this journey.

Our parallel must be followed through this step. Just as they refreshed themselves through the water which provided them physical life, we as Christians drink of the teachings of Jesus which give refreshment and life to the spirit. Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria that he had water which would quench her thirst. It was explained that he spoke of the Holy Spirit (John 4).

1CO 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

After having provided such blessings to the Israelites, God became very displeased with their constant murmurings, doubt and rebellion against the authority of Moses. After the spies came back from their scouting of the promised land and persuaded the people they were unable to take it, God allowed them to wander for forty years until all of those old enough to have shared in the decision died. Only Joshua and Caleb, who felt they could take the land with the help of God, entered the land.

1CO 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Those incidents were not preserved for us so we could have something interesting to read and thus entertain our children in Sunday School. They were given to us that we might place the kingdom of heaven first rather than murmuring, doubting and rebelling. An example is intended to teach. We are to learn lessons from their failure.

1CO 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Even as Moses was on the pinnacle of Mount Sinai receiving the law written by the finger of God, Aaron was molding a golden calf that the people might worship at the foot of the mountain. As Moses came upon them, he found them reveling and partying. We can only guess at the degree of disgust this would have produced in the mind of God.

1CO 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Undisciplined appetites were turned loose in more than one way. They were indulging their stomachs, but they were also rising up from the tables to commit fornication. As a result of this, twenty-three thousand

died in a single day. God is not mocked. As a man soweth, so shall he also reap.

Some are so engrossed in trying to find quibbles in the Bible that they see horrible difficulties in a slight discrepancy in numbers between this figure and that given in Numbers 25:9. I do not see this as a serious problem. The difference between the 23,000 in this passage and the 24,000 in Numbers may be in those whom the judges slew (Num. 25:5).

The Corinthians were getting altogether too close to Israel's pattern of action as they sat down to eat in the house of the idol. Very often fornication was the result of those gatherings.

1CO 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Tempt here is the Greek word *ekpeirazo*. It has to do with testing or trying. In this place it means the Israelites were trying or testing God to see just how far they could go before his longsuffering ended. Since nearly all of them died in the wilderness, the "some of them" must have included a very large percentage of the group.

The account of God's sending of the serpents is given in Numbers 21:6.

1CO 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Some speak of the "destroying angel" of the Old Testament. These exact words are not used. But the

passage does come close. See also Heb. 11:28.

HEB 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

The angel of Revelation 14:19 also comes to mind. *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

1CO 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

The examples given fit the case of the Corinthians precisely. The Corinthians considered themselves so strong they could dabble with sin without getting burned. It was for just such persons as they were that God had preserved these records.

We, as Christians, live in the end of the ages. These are the latter days, the last days, etc. We must profit by the lessons of the divine history book.

1CO 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

It is altogether too easy for a Christian to become convinced that others might fall to temptation, but that he or she is strong enough to flirt with sin and prevail. God declares such an attitude to be deadly.

An important lesson here is to see the difference

between being confident of our present state, and being careless because of overconfidence. One can know that he is living before God in a manner pleasing to God. He can also become foolishly negligent and let this great salvation slip away. Spiritual fall is much too common among the children of God.

As a parent desires to care for his own child who is going out on a date, God seeks to protect his children from disaster.

1CO 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Certainly the temptations in the wicked city of Corinth were many and powerful. That did not mean the Christian must fall to them. Their temptations were the same as those which other men who had remained faithful had faced. In addition, God would be with them if they resisted the temptations. He would make sure they did not face more than they were able to resist. With every temptation, he would provide a means of overcoming it or bearing it.

I believe I see an extremely important truth in this verse. God allows certain trials to come upon his children. There is a difference between bringing temptation upon them and allow them to be tempted. Sin and suffering originates with the Devil. Man has become enmeshed in these things as a result of his foolish ways. God is in the process of saving man

from sin. However; man must be made to realize the terrible power of it and the awful consequences of it. By allowing every man to face the heaviest burden he is able to bear, God brings his child to know the seriousness of sin, and at the same time brings that child to a level of spiritual strength which he would not have reached if not tested.

But God never allows any man to be taxed beyond his ability to bear up under it. He will always rescue him in much the same manner as he provided the ram to replace Isaac when Abraham was about to sacrifice him to the Lord.

1CO 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

The way to escape from the temptation to commit the sin of idolatry is to flee from it. Now that was a bit different situation in Paul's day than in ours in the present culture. Few of us are tempted to worship a wooden, gold or silver image. Unless— that image is on a green piece of paper with a picture of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington or Thomas Jefferson on it. Or unless it consists of covetousness toward the possessions of our neighbors, which God says is a form of idolatry. There are many things and activities which can come between a Christian and God. Any time that happens the thing to do is to flee from the attractive force of the object of that idolatry.

One certainly does not overcome the sin of idolatry by surrounding himself with it every day of his life.

1CO 10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

Is Paul being sarcastic here? I doubt it. He truly desired that they carefully consider the things he was saying. Weigh them carefully and follow the right way.

1CO 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

The word for bless is *eulogeo*. It is used in the same sense in which we say one asks a blessing at mealtime. Two factors are involved. One is in thanking God for the favors he showers upon us. The other is in asking that we might be able to use such favors in service to him.

The cup of blessing of which Paul spoke was the memorial of the shedding of Christ's blood for our sins. He called it a communion. Truly it is a communion. When Christians assemble to pass the cup from person to person, there should be a sense of unity and purpose which binds all of them together in the memory and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the blood of Jesus flowed from his body, his life ebbed away with it. As Christians assemble and partake of the fruit of the vine, spiritual life energizes the entire body.

Just as the fruit of the vine brings communion through the blood of Christ, the bread brings communion with others in the body. My body is a

member of Christ's body. Any time I partake of the bread during the Lord's supper, I am committing myself to harmonious action with other members of his body.

1CO 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

The twelfth chapter of this book and the twelfth chapter of the book of Romans expand upon this truth in much more detail. For the present, Paul is satisfied to simply remind them that the communion has a very serious purpose. It brings Christians together and causes them to realize they are one in Jesus Christ.

1CO 10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

At this time he returns to the use of the Jewish system in which the priests ate of the sacrifices offered by the people. The Jews knew very well that anyone who ate of the sacrifices united himself with the one true God. Those who eat at an altar declare themselves to be in fellowship with the diety they worship.

1CO 10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

It was not the intention of the apostle to lead them into thinking an idol had any significance at

all. Nor was the meat which was sacrificed to the idol anything. Neither of these had any power to assist those who worshipped the idols.

Still, the practice of associating with idol worship was a sinful practice. It could destroy men's souls by encouraging such worship.

1CO 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

The terminology here is the same as that in Acts 17:18 and 17:22. Paul accused the Athenians of fearing demons or *diamonion*.

The question faces us as to whether Paul was talking about real spiritual personalities or just figments of their imagination. It may well be that these demonic objects of worship were real personalities. The principalities and powers are very much a part of the New Testament picture. They are presented as real. Jesus triumphed over them in his crucifixion. They also observe the wisdom of God as demonstrated through the church (Eph. 3:10).

1CO 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. Ye cannot serve both God and mammon. What concord hath Christ with Belial?

He had previously made a similar argument with regard to joining one's self to a prostitute. You cannot join yourself to both God and idols. God will not tolerate being united with either harlots or idols.

1CO 10:22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

We are told, *The Lord thy God is a jealous God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Consider Jehovah's attitude toward Israel when they did turn to the worship of idols.

DEU 32:21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

1CO 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

“All things are lawful.” may have been a byword among the Corinthians who boasted of their superior knowledge. There are numerous things a man might be permitted to do if these things were strictly a matter between the individual and God.

Some of those things must not be done because they could do damage to the souls of other persons. They neither help the one doing them, nor the one who observes. They are best left alone.

1CO 10:24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

This is one of those passages which sounds shocking at first reading. It seems to say exactly the opposite of its true meaning. It most certainly is not urging men to obtain the possessions of another man. It is saying that every Christian will be interested in seeing his fellow Christians healthy and wealthy. Seeking the welfare of one's brother is a unifying theme running through both First and Second Corinthians.

1CO 10:25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

Meat which had been sold in the marketplace, after having been sacrificed to idols, was no different than any other meat. One need not worry about trying to identify it. The conscience need not be affected to the point that one needed to do detective work to determine the past history of the meat.

1CO 10:26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

The sacrificing of the meat to an idol did not make it the property of the idol. It still belonged to Jehovah. We would do well to remember a passage from Psalms 24:1. The verse says something to men of every age.

PSA 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

We are but stewards. That which God owns belongs to him. It cannot be given to any other.

1CO 10:27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

The reader should first notice that there is a difference in the setting this time. In previous discussion the scene was the temple of the idol. This time it is the home of an unbeliever. This leads to different behavior patterns.

What action should a Christian take when invited to eat at the home of a non-Christian, where meat sacrificed to idols might possibly be served?

He may decide to go. If he did decide to go, he was to eat whatever was placed in front of him. He need not question the host as to whether the meat had been sacrificed to idols.

Notice the Christian was not forbidden to eat with the unbeliever. Paul had been sharp in his criticism of those who ate with apostate Christians. But, at that time he pointed out the difference. The apostate Christian was deliberately sinning. The unbeliever might later be converted when faced with sufficient evidence.

1CO 10:28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

One need not ask about the meat which was placed before him. But, if the host told him it was meat which had been sacrificed to an idol, he was not to eat. If he were to eat it under those conditions, the host might be led to think sacrificing to idols was acceptable. It was not.

1CO 10:29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

Paul was not talking about the conscience of the Christian in this case. He was concerned about the conscience of the unbeliever.

As soon as this was said, it became necessary for him to handle another major problem. Why did the Christian have to be concerned about the conscience of another man? Why not just be concerned about his own conscience? This seemed to be an unnecessary restriction on the Christian.

1CO 10:30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

By the grace of God, I have been made free to eat this meat. I am grateful to God and give thanks for it. Why then should I not eat it and forget about that other man?

1CO 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

The reason is that no man is an island. We have constant influence upon other people. It is not ourselves we serve. It is God Almighty. If we damage any of his creatures, we have failed to glorify him.

1CO 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

We offer glory to God when we turn men to him. This includes both the Jew and the Gentile, both believers and unbelievers. We will be held responsible for the spiritual welfare of anyone we damage.

Offenses will come. But, woe to them by whom the offenses come! It would be better for them if a millstone were to be hanged about their neck and they be drowned in the depths of the sea than to offend one of God's tender little ones.

1CO 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Paul would therefore be happy to adapt his actions to increase the welfare of others, even if it cramped his own freedom. The kingdom of God is far more important than one's own pleasure and satisfaction.

Any loss of freedom or comfort would be more than replaced in the eternal home of the soul.

Chapter 11

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

It is logical that Paul make this statement here. Paul has a right to admonish and correct them. He has followed the teachings of Christ and therefore they will not go wrong in following him. If, at any time, he failed to follow Christ, he did not desire that they follow him.

I think we need not restrict this request to the public worship services. It could well be applied to Paul's life as a whole.

This is also an appropriate statement for any Christian to make. Men should follow our example as far as we follow the example of the Lord. If we stray, they must cease following. They are not truly following men. They are following the Son of God.

1CO 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

The ordinances mentioned here are called traditions in some translations. The Roman church uses this incorrectly as support for their practice of adding their traditions to the actual teachings found in the Holy Scriptures.

The word translated ordinances is *paradosis*. It is at times referred to as "the faith", sometimes as "the doctrine" and sometimes as the "gospel." Paul was authorized by the Lord to deliver the divine ordinances of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

1CO 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

The word “head” is from the Greek *kephale*. It is sometimes used to refer to the physical head. In this present passage, as in many others, it stands for authority. Christ voluntarily placed himself under the authority of God the Father. Christ has authority over men, and men have authority over their wives.

There are some who contend the true meaning of the word here is **source** rather than authority. If that were the case, God would become the source of Christ, inferring that Christ is a created being. That is not true.

One must watch in the following verses to see whether it is the literal head or the metaphysical head which is under consideration.

1CO 11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

There are four alternative suggestions as to the nature of the covering here.

1. Some external covering (Traditional position).
2. Covered with hair.
3. The Septuagint has “loose” or “frenzied” hair.
4. The chic appearance of the temple prostitutes.

Burton Coffman has an interesting explanation of this verse. He believes the word means a “hanging down from”, and refers to a man who has long hair like a woman.

1CO 11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

If the previous verse does refer to hair hanging down from the head, this verse would have to do with a woman who had cut her long hair and had imitated the short hair style of the temple prostitutes.

A woman who acted in such manner would have demonstrated disrespect for all men, but particularly her own husband.

1CO 11:6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

The shaving of a woman's head has been the means of shaming prostitutes in many cultures through the centuries. This would have been in order if the woman had decided to show disrespect to her husband by cutting her hair short. Simply cut off all of it and let her bald head shine.

It is possible that this verse distinguishes between the hair and a covering, yet see verse fifteen where the hair is said to be given “for a covering.”

1CO 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

Coffman renders this “ought not to have anything hanging down from his head.” Man was made for the purpose of glorifying God. The word glorify means to “give weight to.” Man gives weight to God. God is glorified by man. For that reason the head of the man must not be hidden.

The woman glorifies the man. For that reason, she is to be covered. She is in subjection to him, not he to her.

1CO 11:8 For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man.

The man arrived first. In the beginning, woman came from man, not vice versa. Man came first in time.

1CO 11:9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

At the time of the creation, Eve was created as a helper for Adam. Thus, both by priority in time and by original purpose, the woman was placed in a position of subordination. See Gen. 2:18-22.

GEN 2:18-22 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every

fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

1CO 11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

Because of her time of creation and her purpose of creation, she ought to show subjection to her husband. “Power” is from the Greek *ejxousivan*, which is consistently rendered right, power or authority.

The various interpretations of this word tell something of men’s temptation to twist the scriptures to their own desires. Here are some of the suggestions regarding this verse.

1. The authority is a sign of someone having authority over the woman.
2. The veil is put in place of the authority.
3. This authority is her authority to prophesy, given to her by God.
4. This authority is her “right to choose for herself.” (Do her own thing.)

Those who mutilate the scriptures to the extent that they represent them as saying the exact opposite

of the intended meaning will have to give account one day to the Author of those scriptures.

Angels of heaven are present during worship services. They are aware of the events taking place. They rejoice when sinners repent. If angels once left their assigned estate in rebellion against God, they clearly do not need an example of rebellion from women toward their husbands. The woman who exhibits a desire to step out of her God given role is an encouragement to the principalities and powers in heavenly places to do likewise. See Jude 6. Also Ephesians 3:10

JUD 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

EPH 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

1CO 11:11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

The order of authority does not in any way indicate insignificance. Both the man and the woman are vital. It is true that the woman first came from the man. But, it is also true that every man on earth since that time was born of a woman.

The woman may be assigned a position subject to man. That does not mean she is of lesser value. Christ

has, for a time, assumed a position subject to the Father. That in no way means that he is essentially inferior to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

1CO 11:12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Whatever the role of either the man or the woman, both are subject to God who is the Ruler of all. Angels, men, women, as well as the entire creation must fill the role which has been assigned to them. God knows far better than we how this universe operates. It is extremely wise to allow him to do the supervising of it.

1CO 11:13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

Judge for yourselves. Is it proper that a woman should pray to God with her hair cut off? Surely it is not! In looking for the meaning of this verse I think it is necessary to compare verse sixteen. Social conditions, or customs, make a difference in the message the woman sends.

1CO 11:14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

What is “nature” here? Is it the social customs of the Corinthians?

Most societies do not for any extended period of time encourage their men to wear hair as long as

the women. Long hair can be very easily used as an adornment to make a woman attractive. The Biblical role of the woman as a keeper of the home allows her to maintain long hair without it being a hindrance to her. Long hair tends to give a man an effeminate appearance and also can be dangerous in many of the activities in which men are engaged, such as the operation of complicated machinery.

1CO 11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

The woman's hair is her glory. The woman is the man's glory. The man is God's glory. The woman's hair was deliberately intended to be a means of bringing respect.

Note that the woman's hair **was the covering**. It was not the hat which she wore over the hair. It was the hair itself.

At least in the city of Corinth, it was a shame for a woman to have short hair and for a man to have long hair. A man who had long hair covered himself and failed to give glory to God. A woman who had short hair had removed her glory and failed to give glory to man.

1CO 11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

I have my doubts that this is reluctant permission for any who did not wish to receive the instruction

of the apostle with respect to short and long hair. It may be just the reverse. It may be a strong put down for those who would argue that they wore their hair as they pleased. Neither the apostles nor the church of Christ had any such custom.

I recall one excellent teacher of Bible who said it seemed ludicrous to him for Paul to have spent an entire chapter giving careful instructions and then upset the entire applectart by saying, "If any man seem to disagree with this, do as you please."

Christians must be particularly careful about setting fashion trends and styles. Any trends they introduce should be aimed toward giving glory to God rather than reducing it.

Does Paul's counsel above hold any importance for us in the twentieth century? Yes! It holds importance for every society and for every time. Men and women are not to defy the **proper** customs of their time. A woman who dresses to show her independence from, and rebellion toward men, will give answer to God for doing so. A man who fails to give glory to God will do the same.

1CO 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

Paul is ready to move to another aspect of the worship. There were serious problems concerning the eating of the Lord's Supper. Their worship services were being corrupted by certain practices. What should have been supplying them spiritual strength was instead leading to weakness and death.

The apostle is always ready to give praise when it is due. This time they do not deserve it and he will not give it.

1CO 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

Paul had previously mentioned the division in the congregation when he began this letter. Some were following one man, others another. The only remedy was to follow Christ.

He did not want to believe such schism existed, however he had been forced to accept the fact by the evidence which had come to him. It is always dangerous to take things second hand. Paul must have felt the evidence was solid enough that he had to think there was some truth in what he had been told.

1CO 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Heresies are *hairesis*. The word has to do with proper choosing. The heretics are those who have chosen in opposition to the truth.

Any time heresies appear, they cause the truth to shine out in clearer fashion. It is uncomfortable for the righteous to have to contend with falsehood. Yet their righteousness is made more evident.

1CO 11:20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

The assumed purpose of the assembly was to eat the Lord's supper. But, in reality, they had not assembled for that purpose. Other matters had taken priority.

1CO 11:21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

It was definitely not the Lord's supper. They had made it their own supper. It had become a banquet.

Previously the contrast had been between the informed and the uninformed. Now it has changed to the rich versus the poor.

We should recall 2 Corinthians 8:14. *But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:* The Corinthians were ignoring this principle completely. They were guilty of such gluttony that they had reached a point of stupor. This was probably characteristic of idol worship in the city.

1CO 11:22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

Some are convinced Paul's criticism in this set of circumstances marked the beginning of the end of combining the Lord's supper with a meal. The reader will recall that, at the time Christ instituted the supper, the disciples were concluding observance of the Passover feast.

There is a problem. While this verse seems to condemn the eating of a meal in conjunction with the Lord's supper, a meal was in progress when it was instituted.

One thing is certain. There can be no praise for the affluent who have such disregard for the poor that they would embarrass them in ignoring their lack of provisions. They not only despised the poor. They despised the church of God.

1CO 11:23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

These were not Paul's private instructions. He had received these instructions from the example of Jesus Christ himself. This is likely the result of divine revelation rather than transmission from the apostles.

An issue has been made that the Lord took the supper at night. This has led some to believe it should only be taken at night. The fact that it is called a supper is also considered. As is obvious, there is much in the Corinthian letters to keep the hermeneutics mills grinding.

It may be that Paul is emphasizing the seriousness of the supper by pointing out its institution on the same night the Christ was betrayed.

1CO 11:24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

The word *eucharisteo* is employed here. From this has come the term “Eucharist.” Criticism has been leveled at those who would call the Lord’s supper the Eucharist. The criticism has been that this is an unscriptural term. Actually the word is scriptural. Its use by the Roman church should not sour it.

Common sense tells us the bread is still bread after it has been blessed. However, we must be cautious about the seriousness of eating it. There is spiritual nourishment available to the eater. Those who neglect it may become spiritually sick and weak.

The Corinthians were forgetting the stated purpose of the supper as Christ instituted it. The partaker was to remember the death of Jesus for the sins of the world.

Does the breaking of the bread contradict the meaning of John 19:36 as quoted from Psalm 34:20. Not at all. The breaking of the bread was for the purpose of distributing it to all who were involved in the supper. It did not symbolize the breaking of his body.

JOH 19:36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

1CO 11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This

cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

The Old Covenant was ratified by the sprinkling of the blood of bulls, sheep and goats. The New Covenant is ratified by the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb of God.

When the Christian shares in the taking of the body and the blood of Christ, he affirms that he is a part of the body of Christ, ready to serve. He also affirms that he is ready to draw spiritual energy from the Lord. As the blood of Christ was shed on the cross, his life slipped away. As the blood of Christ is taken during the Lord's supper, our spiritual life is renewed and strengthened.

Neither the eating of the bread nor the drinking of the fruit of the vine is to be done in flippant manner. Both are to be memorials of his death until he returns.

The Lord's supper looks four ways.

1. Backward to the cross.
2. Forward until Christ returns.
3. Inward as we examine our hearts.
4. Outward to the entire church, or body of Christ, today.

1CO 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

This verse does not specify the frequency of partaking. We must consider other passages to determine that it occurred only on the first day of the week.

The memorials of the Bible are critically important. The Israelites were released from bondage in Egypt. The Passover reminded men of that fact until the death of Christ. From the death of Christ until the present, Christians have assembled once a week to remind themselves of that event. There is an unbroken chain of evidence that he died for us.

The other great memorial of the Christian age is baptism. This act reminds us of the fact of Jesus resurrection. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot be successfully denied.

Christians will never lose their hope. The Lord's supper and baptism will forever keep that hope burning with an everlasting flame.

1CO 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Eating and drinking in an unworthy manner was precisely what the Corinthians had been doing. By doing so, they had made themselves just as guilty of the murder of Christ as those who had cried out, "Crucify him. Crucify him", or as those who had nailed him to the cross.

No man or woman is worthy of partaking of the Lord's supper if we consider the sin which infiltrates each of our lives. This verse is not stating that one must live without sin before it is permissible to partake. The verse is talking about the failure to discern the death of Christ while eating and drinking. It must never be allowed to become a

drunken feast during which some are hungry and others are stuffed.

1CO 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

One should certainly look inward to examine himself while partaking. If there are sins which need to be eliminated in order to bring him closer to the purity of his Master, those sins should be removed.

A strange thing has occurred in the lives of some. Knowing that they have sin in their lives has resulted in their refusing to eat of the supper. That is not the proper action. The sins should be abolished so the supper can be eaten with good conscience.

1CO 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

This verse explains the nature of the unworthy partaking. It is primarily the lack of concentration on the death of the Lord. Certainly one should attempt to live a pure life. Certainly one should attempt to eliminate any malicious feelings which might exist between himself and others. Yet the heart of the matter is the discernment of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

I might add that the Lord has a body today, just as he did when he was placed on the cross. His body today is the church. Not only ought one to discern

the body of Jesus then. He ought to be aware of the multiplied thousands, and even millions who make up the present day body of Christ.

The Corinthian Christians were guilty of the neglect of both. They had failed to discern the body of Christ on the cross. They had also failed to realize the importance of being a part of the body of Christ which is made up of many members. The center of the supper for them was their own belly.

1CO 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

I am quite amazed that several commentaries see this as physical weakness rather than spiritual. The Lord's supper is not intended as physical nourishment. If it had been so intended, Paul would not have said, "Have ye not houses to eat in?" The sickness and weakness are of a spiritual nature. Those who sleep are the ones who are in need of spiritual awakening.

1CO 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

The word is *diakrino*. It means to "distinguish." If we were to properly examine ourselves and make the necessary corrections, the Lord would not find it necessary to condemn us.

1CO 11:32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

When men judge themselves, God is enabled to chasten them much more effectively. They can then be brought to a state of higher purity. We are not bastards. We have a spiritual Father in heaven.

The chastening will cause one to withdraw from the disorderly, both in the church and in the world. By coming out from among them, we avoid being condemned with them.

1CO 11:33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

After defining the problem very clearly, Paul prescribed the remedy. Start showing some concern for your brother in the Lord. Wait for one another.

My father at one time criticized the church for being picky on some things and not on others. He said if we were going to be picky on instrumental music in worship, we should be more careful to follow directions and tarry for one another in the taking of the Lord's supper. The bread should be passed out to all and then all should take of it simultaneously. This was an interesting thought, but I believe it is illogical. Paul was trying to remedy a situation in which some were hungry and others were stuffed. He was not attempting to get every person to take each bite at the same time.

1CO 11:34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

When the Lord's supper was begun, the meal had already been concluded. Jesus did not serve another meal, nor did he see the Lord's supper as a sort of dessert. At that point in time, he was dealing with symbolism and not physical hunger. If a man was hungry, his home was the proper place to fill his stomach. Otherwise, Jesus death would be forgotten and the memorial desecrated.

Paul did expect to visit them. When he did visit, he would do whatever remained to be accomplished in bringing order into the worship services.

Blank

Chapter 12

1CO 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

At this point we have another “peride”, meaning “**and concerning**” in the Greek. Paul is ready to reply to another question which they had asked in the letter they had sent to him. The fact that he did not want them to be ignorant of the upcoming material shows the degree of importance he placed upon it.

This is the first of three chapters discussing the nature, use and duration of spiritual gifts. These three chapters are by far the most concentrated discourse in the Bible on these matters.

It is a bit strange that Paul uses the Greek word *pneumatikos* for spiritual here rather than *charismoton* which is used often later in this chapter and in the next two chapters. This could mean he is referring at this point to spiritual things in general rather than spiritual gifts.

1CO 12:2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Paul is addressing Gentile Christians, so far as the flesh is concerned. They had at one time been Gentiles both according to the flesh and according to the Spirit. Now they had become Christians which made them spiritual Jews. Clearly they had not become fleshly Jews.

Allowing one’s self to be transported into some kind of ecstatic state was considered desirable in the

pagan religions. Drunkenness was common in the worship of Dionysius. The Priestess at Delphi went into a trance while producing responses to questions submitted to the oracle. It is not unlikely that some of the Corinthian Christians were attempting to attain some similar psychological condition. When this happened, the person might say almost anything. Such irresponsibility might be encouraged by the priests and priestesses of paganism. It was wrong in Christian worship.

1CO 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

The focal point for Christian worship is God. He is approached through Jesus Christ, His Son. One who was truly speaking through the power of the Holy Spirit would hold up the name of Christ. Anyone who diminishes his name is certainly not speaking through the Spirit of God.

The point being made is not that it is physically impossible to make such a statement. It is that no man could sincerely make a statement of that kind unless he did it with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

1CO 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are a series of three pairs in this verse and the next two. I am convinced the arrangement

contains information about the differing roles of the three persons of the Godhead.

We have

One Spirit various gifts.

One Lord various services
(administrations)

One God various effects (operations)

It may be that verses 28 and 29 of this chapter, along with verses 11-15 of Ephesians 4 could be classified under each of these three headings. I have found such an attempt awkward, yet there may well be something here upon which one could spend valuable time.

EPH 4:11-15 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

1CO 12:5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

Administrations is from the Greek *diakonia*. This word might even more comfortably be translated as “services.” Of course, this was the reason for the coming of Jesus. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto others.

Later, in verse twenty-eight, he mentions “helps.” This could well fit under either administrations or services.

Again, we see the same point which was produced in verse four. One does not brag or boast about his degree of spirituality on the basis of the services he is able to perform. The Lord himself makes each type of service possible.

1CO 12:6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

“Operations” is *energema*. It is easy to see the relationship to our English word energy. There may be differing kinds and degrees of energy available. However, it is the same God who provides that energy in each and every case. Many of the miracles performed by those upon whom the apostles had laid their hands required energy. God was the source.

1CO 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

One either has the Spirit of God, or he does not. All of the conversation about “measures” of the Spirit are unjustified. It is true that Christ had the Spirit without measure, or without limitation. But

that does not justify talking about others having various measures. What we should be talking about is “manifestations” of the Spirit. We do not receive one half, one fourth or one eighth of the Holy Spirit. Nor did they! What they received was the whole Spirit. The Spirit then made himself manifest through the various gifts which he allotted to individual Christians according to his will.

Nor were the gifts given to the person because he or she desired a certain one. They were provided according to the wisdom and will of the Spirit of God.

1CO 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

We now begin a list of nine different gifts which were provided to the Christians by the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, speaking in tongues is at the very end of the list.

The first gift is that of “wisdom.” Notice that it is not just wisdom. It is the word of wisdom, or the “utterance of wisdom.” This must refer to some special skill in gaining and speaking wise things. God provides the wisdom. Man only receives and utters it.

The second gift is the “utterance of knowledge.” Later, in chapter thirteen we will get a clue as to the nature of this gift. It is the ability to understand and make known the mysteries God wishes to be revealed to his people. The two gifts mentioned in this verse are closely related. Normally, we consider wisdom the ability to properly apply knowledge.

1CO 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

The third gift of the Spirit is that of “faith.” This is not the kind of faith Christians possess today. It was faith which allowed the person to perform amazing feats. In 13:2 it is associated with the moving of mountains.

The fourth gift of the Spirit is that of “healing.” Jesus had promised his apostles this gift as it is recorded in Mark 16:18.

MAR 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

1CO 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

The fifth gift is the “working of miracles.”

Since the working of miracles is given to “another”, as compared with the previous gift of healing, this gift must have had something to do with miracles other than healing. Jesus performed a number of miracles on nature, such as the stilling of the storm.

The sixth gift is “prophecy.”

We have some reason to see this prophecy as of a different magnitude than that of the apostles. While

the apostles were acting as channels for the revelation of the plan of salvation, etc. these persons were more likely prophesying concerning special coming events, as Agabus did in warning Paul of the dangers waiting for him in Jerusalem.

The seventh gift was “discerning of spirits.”

In those days, there was a need for Christians to be able to determine whether or not one who claimed to be prophesying the truth of God was a true prophet, or whether he was a liar and prophesying from his own heart. There were some Christians who had the ability to make these determinations accurately. See I John 4:1.

1JO 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

The eighth gift was “diverse kinds of tongues.”

The tongues could be various languages of men, such as those of Acts 2. Later, we will find that they were forbidden to use tongues in the worship unless there was one present who could interpret the tongues. The tongues would be useful in the tremendous missionary effort facing the infant church.

The ninth gift was “interpretation of tongues.”

Further examination proves that even the person who was speaking in strange tongues often did not

know what he was saying. God merely used his tongue. Someone else then made the interpretation, or gave the meaning, as God enabled him.

This concludes the list of nine gifts. There are other lists in Romans 12:6-8 and in Ephesians 4:11-12. The only gift mentioned in all three lists is that of prophecy.

1CO 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

It was unwise for the Corinthians to be egotistic over possessing the gift of tongues. This was a gift. They had not earned it. The glory belonged to God and not to them. Regardless of the nature of the gift, it was the same Holy Spirit who had made the gift possible.

I reemphasize that it was not any high level of spiritual maturity on the part of the recipient which determined the gift given. A common mistake today is to think that the ability to speak in tongues would be an indication of great spiritual maturity.

1CO 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

The apostle Paul was very apt in the use of illustrations. This time he used the human body to make his point clear. He is trying valiantly to impress

the lesson of unity upon the minds of the schismatic Corinthian Christians.

Every member of the human body has its part to play. A body consisting of only one member would be a monstrosity. The human body must, see, hear, think, taste, walk, etc. Each of these functions must be provided by one or more of the members of the body. All of them must work in harmony if the greatest possible progress is to be made.

Leon Morris quotes from a fable presented by Menenius Agrippa.

The members of the body decided the stomach was doing no work in the support of the body. They agreed to starve it by refusing it food. They soon realized they were weakening themselves.

1CO 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Through the teaching of the one Spirit we are all caused to be baptized into the one body of Christ. The Holy Spirit was responsible for continuing the teaching which Christ began. All inspired men were moved by the Spirit of God to speak and write the things that they did. As a result of being exposed to the Word of God, we have been baptized into the body of Christ.

The body becomes alive when combined with the spirit. The body without the spirit is dead. Therefore,

the life which is in the Son is found in the body, or the church. After becoming a part of that body, each Christian receives spiritual life from the Spirit of God which inhabits the body. Day by day Christians are invigorated by drinking from the Holy Spirit which is found in the body of Christ. Separated from the body of Christ, there is no spiritual life.

1CO 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

The human body is composed of many members. So is the spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not bode well for any member to ignore the rest of the members. Failure to realize that we are but one of many may bring about isolation, followed by death for the member and a handicapped body.

1CO 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

Our own deluded opinion about our relationships with others does not change the true relationship one whit. Did you notice the envy spoken of here was illustrated by members which perform somewhat similar functions. We are more apt to be jealous of those of similar status.

1CO 12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

Why can we not be satisfied with the functions God had placed before us, and created us to perform? It is not a matter of being worthless, just because we cannot do what some other member is able to do. We need to recognize the contribution God expects us to make and meet our obligations to the rest of the body.

1CO 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

Many different functions must be active before any body is able to effectively operate. This is just as true with the spiritual body of Christ as it is of the human organism. If any of the members of the body fail in their function, the body as a whole is either severely handicapped, or it is completely incapacitated.

1CO 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

It was not the choice of the members which resulted in the particular function which each is allocated. God himself made these choices.

1CO 12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

A spiritual body in which all members did the same thing would hardly be capable of fulfilling any useful purpose. The fact of the matter is that it could not even exist.

1CO 12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

There are an enormous number of members in the body of Jesus Christ. Yet, they must all combine to form a single body with harmonious action.

1CO 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

The members at Corinth who were able to speak in strange tongues were apparently taking the attitude that those who had other gifts, or had no gift at all, were completely useless. That was offensive in the sight of God.

1CO 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

Let us compare the thumb with the arm. The arm is very strong and very visible. If the teenage boy wishes to show off, he may double up his arm and show the large size of his biceps muscle. In comparison, the thumb is nowhere near the size of the arm. It is far weaker. But I am told by persons who have lost a thumb that it required a major adjustment to do the things which could be done before the loss, and that some things were quite impossible. Seemingly insignificant members of the body of Christ are more important than we might think.

1CO 12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

How much time is spent in the decoration of the various parts of the face! Many a young man has been captivated by the cute little nose of his girl friend. We spend much time in making certain the eyes, nose and hair are properly groomed. The liver and the stomach are not the most beautiful members of the human body. Nevertheless, the body would be helpless without them.

1CO 12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.

Some of the prettiest parts of the body are much less useful than other members whose appearance may even be repulsive.

The entire point being made through several verses is that some members of the body of Christ are much more important than one might think. It was, and is, extremely foolish for any member of the Church to have a haughty attitude toward any other member. All are vital to the work of the church.

1CO 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Occasionally we see a person who suffers from cerebral palsy. The members of the body of that person do not work together as they should. Sometimes they even get in the way of one another. It is sometimes like that in the church, or body of Christ. The results of such discord are tragic. The activities of the church are hindered and souls are lost. The proper condition is that every member should work with, and have concern and respect for, every other member..

1CO 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

What a beautiful picture this verse presents! Imagine what the church of Christ could accomplish if such unity prevailed. If any member became sick or found himself in anguish over the problems of life, that member would be assured that all the other members would do anything possible to ease the grief. If any member accomplished something which was admirable, every other member would rejoice along with him. The work of every member would be appreciated and honored by all the other members.

1CO 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Why did Paul keep on hammering on this point? Because the horrible disharmony which existed in the church at Corinth demanded that he get their attention. They had completely forgotten that they

were one family, under God as Father, and with Christ as Brother.

1CO 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Again I suggest a comparison between this verse and verses five and six. Some of these may be gifts, some may be administrations and some may be operations. It would also be well to include Ephesians 4:11-15 in the examination.

One thing, which is very obvious, is that Paul placed the gift of diverse tongues last. Apostleship and prophecy were both placed ahead of tongues. Even helps preceded them.

Probably the main purpose of the list is to show the wide variation of functions in the church.

The word *kubernesis*, which is translated as administrations, is the work of a steersman piloting a ship.

1CO 12:29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

No, all are not apostles, nor prophets, nor teachers. All do not work miracles. Not only do they not all do the same things. It would be ridiculous if they did.

1CO 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

The answer again is, No, all do not do each of these things.

Here is positive proof that not all of the Corinthians spoke in tongues. This means it cannot possibly be a test for having been born of the Spirit. Those who make such requirements are not in harmony with the scriptures.

1CO 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Some of the gifts were superior to others. Tongue speaking was not listed among those.

Verse one of chapter fourteen places prophesying above other gifts. The reason is that it was capable of edifying the body. Tongue speaking required interpretation before the edification of the church could take place.

The more excellent way which Paul was about to discuss is the way of love. The way which they had been following was the way of selfishness. Love is far superior. It is the bond of perfectness (See Col. 3:12-14)

*COL 3:12-14 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, **which is the bond of perfectness.***

Chapter 13

1CO 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

We have arrived at one of the mountain peaks of the Bible. This chapter contains the antidote for division within the family, the workplace, society in general and the church in particular. That antidote is love. If the church at Corinth was to be healed of the spiritual sickness within it, such healing would be accomplished by replacing pride and jealousy with love and genuine concern for the welfare of the church.

This is the second of three chapters which are concerned with spiritual gifts. Chapter twelve had defined the nature of these spiritual gifts. Chapter thirteen will deal with proper attitudes while using the gifts. Chapter fourteen will handle the orderly use of them.

Supernatural spiritual gifts were bestowed on many of the early Christians to establish the divine authority of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. These gifts should have caused a sense of mutual accomplishment among the Christians. Sadly, it had led to some serious problems which the apostle found it necessary to correct.

It seems that the gift of speaking in tongues was prized above all others. Some of those who had received this gift were of the opinion that they were better than others because of their capability in this area. In contrast, some of those who either

had no gift, or had some other gift, felt they were inferior because they were not able to speak in tongues.

Paul would have none of that. To him, the person who had become conceited and looked down on others had made a deadly serious mistake. To speak in tongues without doing so for the purpose of building up and edifying the entire church was to make the speaker into a noisy untuned musical instrument. Musical instruments make beautiful harmony when they are used properly. When they are just “tooted” the effect can be pure nerve wracking noise. Most of us have heard the raucous sound of an orchestra while it is tuning up before performing. It is likely that some of those who were speaking in tongues felt they were speaking like the angels. Paul made it clear that even if one could speak with the tongue of an angel, the person was only making a racket if no love and concern for others was present.

1CO 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

He is not going to stop with speaking in tongues. There were other gifts which were being abused. Some were able to teach the Word of God with great effectiveness. They had an understanding of the deepest mysteries of godliness. You could ask them complicated questions and they would provide

you with a true explanation. Some had a measure of faith which allowed them to accomplish physical things which others could not.

Regardless of these various accomplishments, if love was absent, the person was just a zero. Do not overlook the fact that the word “all” is used repeatedly. Paul is not talking about trace abilities. He is talking about the ultimate in each case. It is “all” mysteries, “all” knowledge and “all” faith. Each time the individual failed to act in love, that individual canceled out any good which might have been accomplished. Everything which was done was being centered on self rather than on God and fellow members.

1CO 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

The Christian religion makes much of giving. This is a powerful grace from God. God gave! Christ gave! We must give! It is a mark of real character to share what we have with others. The child is apt to be selfish. He or she does not relish the idea of another child playing with his toys. We are expected, as Christian, to reach such a state of maturity that we are delighted to be able to offer that which is ours to others who may be in need.

In spite of the importance of giving, it will not be pleasing to God if it is done without love. This goes so far as to apply to death itself. The last thing most of us would think of offering to others

or for others would be our own life. Let us suppose then that a man had actually died in the process of saving another's life. Does that automatically bring God's approval? Paul indicates it does not do so if the death was experienced with some purpose other than sincere love.

You may ask, "What other motive would cause a man to give his life for another?" It is possible that one might do so to write his name in the history books. Men have done strange things to insure their names will be remembered for a few years after they are dead.

1CO 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Love will put up with a lot. A man who loves his wife will overlook many faults because of his love for her. A woman who loves her husband will also ignore many of his undesirable habits and attitudes because of her love for him. The Christian who truly loves God, Christ and the church will forgive those who step on his or her toes. It was Jesus himself who taught us to pray the Father that he forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Envy melts away under the warmth of love. If another has achieved much and has been exalted because of those achievements, the Christian is not to be envious. He is to rejoice in the success of another member of the body to which he also belongs.

The one who truly loves will not lift himself up for the purpose of causing others to glorify him. The Christian at Corinth who used his gift of speaking in tongues to bask in the glow of others adoration was not a proper child of God. The “big head” is not thinking or acting as God would have him. He is ignoring the arms, the feet and the heart.

1CO 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

What is unseemly behavior? It is behavior which is obnoxious to others. It is behavior which cares nothing for the feelings and well being of the other person. Insults, gossip and extortion are all forms of unseemly behavior.

Love seeks to uplift others. The one who loves does not set out to obtain that which others possess. It does not fly off the handle over the slightest mistake of another Christian.

Nor does love spend all of its time looking for the wicked and evil in another person. It will see the good as long as it is possible to see it. There are those who never look at another person to see the good. They are too busy finding fault to ever take note of the positive qualities of others.

1CO 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Having found some fault in another person, the loveless individual will find great joy in that

weakness or sin. There are two ways to make one's self look good. The first is to lift one's self. The second is to downgrade another. The first is God's way. The second is Satan's.

The proper Christian attitude is to be delighted in finding another walking in the truth of God.

1CO 13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

This verse is a sort of summary of what has been said before. Each of these attitudes leads to the maturation and spiritual development of fellow members of the church of God.

I think we can see a detailed description of the troubles which existed in the church at Corinth. Selfishness was making itself known on every side. The blessings which God had made available to them through the spiritual gifts were being used as channels of greed. "I" had become far more important than Jesus.

1CO 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

The time will never come when love is out of season. Solomon said there is a time to laugh and a time to weep, etc. But love is appropriate in joy and in sadness, in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and in health.

There was a time for prophecy. The gospel needed confirmation as the divine word of God. That time would pass. There was a time for supernatural knowledge until the complete will of God had been revealed. That time also passed. There was a time in which tongue speaking was an immense aid to the preaching of the gospel, as it was on the day of Pentecost when Jews from many nations, and speaking many different tongues, were present. Again, that urgent need has been filled with the translation of the Word of God into hundreds of different languages.

After each of those gifts played their role in the establishment and spread of the church of Christ, love plays on. When time is no longer, love will flourish in God's heaven.

1CO 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

Prophecy came bit by bit. One man revealed a portion assigned to him. Another added that which God had given to him.

It was the same with knowledge. Some understood one aspect of the mystery of God. Others had different doors of perception opened to them. Day by day and year by year God used men to bring his revelation to completion.

1CO 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

What is **that which is perfect**? There are those who see it as the return of the perfect Christ to claim his own. Some see it as the perfect law of liberty, completely revealed. Still others believe it to be the glorification of the saints at the time of the resurrection and judgment.

I believe it is short sighted to make a single choice here. Paul is about to bring several imperfect things into focus. Each is to be replaced by that which is perfect. Above all, there was a need for maturity on the part of the members of the church.

1CO 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Remember that Paul was writing to a group of men and women who were acting like a bunch of jealous children. They were spiritually immature. They desperately needed to grow up to match their head, Jesus Christ. I do not think it is possible to understand this portion of the chapter without comparing it to the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:11-15. I include it again for emphasis sake.

EPH 4:11-15 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature

of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

By looking into the perfect law of liberty, the completely revealed will of God which was once for all delivered to the saints, these Christians could see the express image of God through the teaching and example of Christ. They could be inspired to put away their childishness and grow into Christian adulthood.

Here then, is the picture. The spiritual gifts were given to bring about the perfect law of liberty. The perfect law of liberty provided guidelines by which imperfect spiritual children could grow toward the perfect image of God; that is, Jesus Christ. Having properly matured, they would be prepared to meet the perfect Lord when he appeared. They would be ready to receive new and perfect spiritual bodies and to enter into the joys of a perfect home in heaven.

1CO 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

It is my conviction that seeing face to face and knowing as also I am know can only refer to the

condition of the glorified saints who sing the song of redemption around the throne of God and the Lamb.

The scriptures teach that there is a progression, ever upward, from glory to glory. Consider a passage found in Second Corinthians 3:9-18.

2CO 3:9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

2CO 3:10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

2CO 3:11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

2CO 3:12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

2CO 3:13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

2CO 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

2CO 3:15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

2CO 3:16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

2CO 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2CO 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

When Moses came down from the mountain with the tables of stone, his face glowed with a brilliance so great that the children of Israel could not bear to look at him. Moses placed a vail over his face. Paul made use of this to show the inability of the members at Corinth to see beyond the law of Moses to the new dispensation which would appear through the Son of God. There was a great glory associated with the Law as revealed to Moses. It pierced the darkness and gave the Israelites a definition of sin. It also specified the punishment for sin. Both of these things were steps out of the spiritual darkness into the light.

At the death of Christ upon the cross, the new covenant went into effect. The starlight age of the patriarchs and the moonlight age of Moses gave way to the Sun of Righteousness who had arrived with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2)). For those who would remove the vail of Moses and look upon the True Light, a new and greater glory could be seen. The imperfections of the past were being replaced with the express image of God, living with us in the flesh.

Yet Christ did live in the flesh. No man has ever yet seen God face to face. God is spirit. When Jesus died upon the cross, the vail of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom. It is stated that there is a connection between his flesh and the vail of the temple. Christ then rose from the

dead and ascended to the right hand of the throne of God.

Today the Christian must see him through the looking glass of the perfect law of liberty. By carefully examining himself or herself to see how much is still lacking, the faithful Christian moves from glory to glory, until some day the looking glass will give way to the full light of the face of the Lamb of God.

1CO 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

In the age of the patriarchs, in the age of Moses, and even in the present Christian dispensation, we live with three things which outlast the temporal changing world. The three are faith, hope and charity, or love. Let us look at each of the three for a moment as we close this chapter.

Faith is no longer faith when it is seen. One day when the Christian finds himself in the presence of God, faith will be replaced by sight

Hope is no longer hope when it is fulfilled. One day in heaven all the hopes and dreams of Christians will turn to reality.

Why is love greater than either faith or hope? Both faith and hope will last until the end of time. Yet each of them are but steps toward the gates of the city foursquare. Love reaches beyond those gates and into the eternal city itself. The perfect law will have led men to prepare to meet the perfect Christ in a perfect home.

Is it any wonder that Paul pleaded with these bickering jealous Christians in Corinth to grow up?

BLANK

Chapter 14

1CO 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Dioko is to “eagerly pursue.”

Hermeneutics is heavily involved at this point. Are we, in our age, to eagerly pursue spiritual gifts, or were these phenomena limited to the apostolic age? The following must be considered.

1. Spiritual gifts were given to confirm revelation.
2. These gifts were transferred by the laying on of the apostles hands.
3. They do not appear to be taking place to day.

The entirety of chapter thirteen had dealt with the emptiness of the spiritual gifts if they were not accompanied by sincere love of the brethren. This, however, did not mean the Corinthians should ignore the spiritual gifts. They had been provided as a means of confirming the divine message.

But if they were determined to make comparisons among the spiritual gifts, they were making a mistake in placing the ability to speak in strange tongues above the others. Actually, the gift of prophecy was to be cherished more than tongue speaking.

1CO 14:2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Unless there is someone present to interpret what he has said, the man who speaks in a strange tongue during the worship assembly cannot be understood by anyone but God. The man might be speaking through the power of the Holy Spirit and still be completely unintelligible to those who heard him.

1CO 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

In contrast, the one who prophesied spoke in the language of the people in the assembly. Everyone who heard could profit by the experience.

Prophecy was capable of performing at least three functions.

1. Edification
2. Exhortation
3. Comforting

Speaking in tongues could do none of the three if the language was not understood.

1CO 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

I find this to be a very interesting verse. In what manner did the one who spoke in a strange tongue edify himself? If there was an interpreter present, the interpreter could translate for the congregation. If no interpreter was present, even the individual

himself would not know what he was saying, since it was strange to him as well as to the others.

Perhaps there was some type of emotional or spiritual uplift which caused the speaker to be profited. This verse must be remembered when we discuss verse twenty-eight.

1CO 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

Paul was not saying that it was the will of the Holy Spirit that all receive the gift of tongue speaking. The Spirit dispensed as his wisdom dictated. As far as Paul's own feelings were concerned, he would be very pleased if they all spoke in tongues.

Yet he insisted that it would be more useful to the body of Christ as a whole if they prophesied. Again and again he emphasized the matter of edification. That is what the whole thing was about. It was not about selfish demonstrations and boasting.

1CO 14:6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

Even if the apostle himself had come to them speaking in tongues, it would have been of no use to them unless the message was interpreted. Each

of the other functions mentioned would provide understandable information provided in the language of the listener.

There is some reason to think that the gift of tongues was sometimes exercised in private devotion. However, they see Paul as giving instructions concerning public worship in this case.

1CO 14:7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

This is the same point that was made in 13:1. Unless there was some information transferred the hearers could not react to them. Leon Morris states it well when he says, “Aimless jangling means nothing.” That which would be admirable when used in harmony with other instruments might be only a “racket” when used improperly.

1CO 14:8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

A trumpeter has certain information which is conveyed by the pattern of sounds which he plays. He may call an army into battle. He may honor the dead. He may mark the beginning of the day, or the end. But, if he produces no pattern of sound, there will be no response.

In truth, such noise could well do more damage than good. It might confuse those who were waiting patiently for instruction.

1CO 14:9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

This continues the main thought Paul wished to get across. A worship service is for the purpose of praise to God and edification to men. If it does not accomplish those goals, it is worse than useless. One who speaks words which no one else can understand might better save his time and energy.

Some of today's preachers would do well to pay attention to the divine wisdom Paul presented. Use of theological gibberish which might be comprehended in a theological seminary, but is unfathomable to the people sitting in the pew, is just as serious as the condition Paul was condemning.

Right here I must offer an explanation for my own procedure in placing Greek words within this present commentary. There is a reason. The reader will note that in the other volumes of this commentary set the Greek was not used. When this work was first done it was as an assignment in a university class. The instructor made it very clear that he wanted the Greek inserted. I felt that it would break the continuity of the presentation if I were to remove it later. I fully realize that some readers might find the inclusion of the Greek words and phrases objectionable. Please forgive me. I pray that some of the other readers will profit by it.

1CO 14:10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

Here is an indication that the strange tongues about which Paul spoke were not angelic languages. This verse presents them as voices in the world. I take that to mean human languages spoken around the globe. Each of those languages has meaning to those who have been trained in that specific language.

1CO 14:11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

On the other hand, if a person has not been trained in a language, the words spoken will be merely a jumble of sounds without a message. The Greeks looked upon all those who spoke languages other than Greek as barbarians. It sounded to them as if the speakers were saying, “bar bar.”

1CO 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

It was perfectly alright for the Corinthians to seek spiritual gifts. Those who possessed spiritual gifts would be expected to make use of them. However, those gifts were to be utilized in the edifying of fellow Christians and not in glorifying the person possessing the gifts.

1CO 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

To avoid wasting time and energy, the one who spoke in a strange tongue needed to pray for an interpretation of that which he spoke. Either the individual himself, or some other person should explain the meaning of that which was spoken.

Again, I find this a bit of a puzzle. If the person must pray that he may interpret what he has said, he must not understand the meaning of the message himself. It would appear that God was merely using the tongue of the person as an instrument in the production of the message. The words were not the product of the understanding of the speaker.

1CO 14:14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

In what sense did the spirit pray when one was speaking in a tongue which he himself did not understand? It seems to me that the individual realized he was doing something that would abound to the glory of God, and therefore willingly entered into the procedure, yet failed to comprehend the meaning of what he was saying.

1CO 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

This speaking in strange tongues, at least in some cases, involved prayer, or speaking to God. It appears, in the context of this passage of scripture, to have

been public prayer. Now if a person is going to lead the assembly in prayer, that person should do so with enthusiasm, but should also do so in a manner which allowed both himself and the persons following to understand the prayer.

This verse is often used in present day sermons to emphasize the importance of entering whole heartedly into the prayer and song service. That application is alright if we understand what the original purpose was in making the statement.

1CO 14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

This verse presumes the person who is praying is giving thanks for blessings from God. The man is very sincere in his thanksgiving. Yet those who do not understand what he has said cannot “Amen” the prayer. They are not unlearned in that they are weak minded. They are unlearned in that they have not learned that particular language. Everyone present ought to be able to follow all that is said.

1CO 14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

One might pray an exceptionally fine prayer. Yet, if none of the assembly understood what was said, they could not participate in that prayer. They would receive no spiritual benefit from it at all.

1CO 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

Paul was capable of speaking in several tongues. But he would certainly not do so without either interpreting the tongues himself, or having another person interpret for him. If they did wish to brag about their ability in tongue speaking, he could brag with the best of them.

1CO 14:19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

The apostle despised the egotistic mind which would use a spiritual gift for self glorification rather than edification of fellow Christians. Even though he was able to speak in numerous strange tongues, he would not do so unless the assembly could follow. Five words in a language understood by the listener would do far more than ten thousand in a language which they could not understand.

1CO 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

Christians are to grow in knowledge and understanding of the truth. A child is one who is incapable of accomplishing much. An adult has progressed to a much higher level of performance. Christians should be incapable of malice, envy,

covetousness and jealousy. But in understanding of the truth, they should be as strong as full grown adults. Understanding and edification were the two key words around which Paul was building his entire case.

1CO 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Here is another verification of the position that these strange tongues were languages spoken by humans, rather than angelic languages. This is a quotation from Isaiah 28:11. Because God's own people had not obeyed him, he would bring in others who spoke in tongues they did not understand, and the strangers would chastise them.

The people of God would not understand those whom God had allowed to overrun them. Therefore they were at a handicap. In similar manner, those who could not understand the one who spoke in a strange tongue were handicapped in serving God. The progress of the entire congregation would be hindered until the entire group began to work together.

1CO 14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

The Corinthian tongue speakers were misusing the tongues. They were not intended as a means of impressing believers. They were a tool in converting

unbelievers who did not understand the native language of the speaker. Many who were unbelievers would have been foreigners. The tongues would allow communication of the gospel message to them. When the unbeliever heard a man speaking in their own language even though he had not been trained in that language, it would cause the hearer to realize the power of God was working in the confirmation of the message.

Prophecy served a different purpose. It was primarily for the purpose of building up those who were already believers. We must remind ourselves here that prophecy had as much to do with teaching as it did with foretelling the future. The prophet was a man who spoke for God, whether in prediction or in instruction.

1CO 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

There can be no doubt that a worship assembly is under consideration here. A worship service should be an occasion of order and decorum. All those present should be edified.

The unbelievers and unlearned who entered the assembly were obviously not brethren. There was a serious danger that they would receive an undesirable message. They were likely to come to the conclusion that the Christians were crazy and speaking out of their heads.

A personal experience is in order. My wife and I were traveling one time. We stopped to worship at a congregation which had a sign on the front of the building labeling it as a Church of Christ. The worship service began in somewhat familiar manner. Soon afterward, however, a man rose to pray. Then another arose before that one concluded and began another prayer. Then another and another. In a short time there were as many as a dozen persons, both men and women, all praying simultaneously. It was almost impossible to understand what any one of them was saying, even though they were speaking in English. It was complete bedlam. Although giving them credit for being sane, we certainly questioned their understanding of the scriptures.

1CO 14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

Prophecy was different. It was presented in the language of the listeners. If one who was not a member of the church entered the assembly, he or she would hear the speaker and understand what was being said. The person could be persuaded by the truth and his life could be judged by the Christians present as well as by himself, as it was compared with the pattern provided by the speaker.

1CO 14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

The speaker would be enabled to look deep into his own heart and see if he was thinking, speaking and acting in a spiritual manner. With his heart pricked, he would repent and become a Christian (See Acts 2:37-38).

After understanding the truth he would be convinced that what the Christians were doing was a result of the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

1CO 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Seemingly, almost everyone in the congregation at Corinth wished to be heard. In addition, they did not wish to wait in line. Many different spiritual gifts were present. Each of these gifts had its own proper place in the worship service. The problem was that the ones who possessed the gifts were self centered and cared little about the welfare of the rest of the congregation. A state of confusion existed. God was highly displeased with the situation.

1CO 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

Not more than three persons were to speak in tongues during a single session. Even then, each was to wait until the previous speaker had finished. They were not to speak at the same time. Someone was also

expected to interpret the tongue so that all who were present could be profited.

1CO 14:28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

This verse is difficult because the one speaking is said to be speaking to himself and to God if no interpreter is present. If he understands what he is saying, why can he not interpret the tongue himself? If he does not understand the message, how can he be speaking to himself? Perhaps he is speaking to himself only in the sense that he knows he is speaking.

At any rate, he is not to speak in strange tongues before the assembly unless the meaning of the message is made clear to everyone present.

1CO 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

The same was true for those who prophesied as for those who spoke in tongues. No more than three were to speak at a single session. They were to speak one by one and someone was to judge as to whether the message was from God or from man. There were, of course, those who had the gift of discerning the spirits (See 12:10).

There may be a connection between the judging mentioned here and that mentioned in verse twenty-four. If that is true, I am not able to exhaust the meaning.

1CO 14:30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

What was to happen if one who was sitting by received a revelation from God while another man was speaking? Again, I do not fully understand. Why would God cause one who was already speaking to relinquish the floor to one who had been sitting by? One commentator humorously suggested that this would be an effective way to shorten the services. If someone spoke too long, someone else could claim he had a revelation and the first would be required to cease speaking.

1CO 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

Paul would not quit on this point. He intended for the Corinthians to come to the realization that the worship services of God were to be orderly and edifying.

1CO 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

The apostle anticipated an objection. What were they to do if others received a message while one had already begun speaking? They were to control themselves! They were not out of control just because they had received a divine message. The heathen might act in that manner. God's people might not!

1CO 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

And why were God's people not to worship in an uproar? Because the God of heaven is not a God of chaos. It was he who brought order out of chaos in the beginning. It is he who constantly strives to maintain order until time has faded into eternity. Every congregation of the brethren is expected to exhibit such order.

1CO 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law.

This command is clear and brief. No person has an excuse for misunderstanding it. Women are to subject themselves to men during the worship services. Women preachers and women taking leadership roles in the worship services fly in the face of this instruction. These women make themselves conspicuous and this reverses the command of God.

Certainly the verse does not mean women are never to be heard. If so, they could not sing, nor could they make a public confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But they are definitely not to take over the services.

1CO 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

I think this explains what Paul was attempting to correct. The women must have been interrupting the speakers who were prophesying or speaking in tongues and were asking them questions. This further increased the chaotic conditions. There was no reason why they could not wait until they went home where they could ask their own husbands the questions.

This is not male chauvinism on the part of Paul. It is a recognition of God's established order. Rather than trying to decrease the impact of Paul's preaching, let us do our best to implement it. God knows best how his creation is to operate.

1CO 14:36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

There are two piercing questions in this verse.

1. "Did the Word of God originate with you?"

If the Word had come from them, they had the right to modify it in any way they chose. If not, they needed to be much more careful about taking liberties with it. This question seems to be saturated with sarcasm.

2. "Was the word provided for your own private use?"

Do you feel that you have some sort of corner on the message revealed to you, such that each of you may ignore others

Corinth was not a mother church to which all others must come for instruction. Nor was each

individual in that church the only prophet to whom God had revealed truth.

1CO 14:37 **If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.**

A truly spiritual man would quickly recognize and admit the teaching of Paul was from God and on target. The Corinthians took great pride in being spiritual. It was time for them to demonstrate this superior spirituality by using some judgment and concern for their fellowman.

1CO 14:38 **But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.**

If any of them were determined to be ignorant of the truth, there was little Paul or any other person could do to extricate them from their difficulty. There are two passages worth including here (Rev. 22:11 and 2 Thess. 2:10-11).

REV 22:11 *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

2TH 2:10-11 *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:*

1CO 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Both tongue speaking and prophesying were desirable spiritual gifts which the Corinthians could use to glorify God. They were urged to seek out and cherish both gifts. It would have been wrong for either Paul, or others, to command them to cease either of them.

What does this have to do with our worship services some twenty centuries later? We must recognize that spiritual gifts were conferred by the Lord directly to the apostles, or to others by the laying on of the apostles hands. When the last man upon whom an apostle had conferred a spiritual gift by the laying on of hands had died, the spiritual gifts were eliminated. This command to prophesy and speak with tongues is not applicable today. Yet the need for order in the services is just as critical. God expects it.

1CO 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

A brief but very important verse closes this chapter. The whole creation of God was brought into being from chaos. The Holy Spirit constantly strives to maintain that order, as do all three persons of the Godhead. There is no more important area in which such order should reign than in the worship of Jehovah.

There is a balance needed in worship. It is possible to run to the extreme of disorder, as was true of the church at Corinth. It is also possible to develop

a worship service so mechanical and stilted that God himself is lost in the stiffness of the ritualistic ceremonies. God is a God of decency and order. He is also a God of warmth and love.

Chapter 15

1CO 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

This chapter deals with the resurrection. There is no more fundamental area of Christian teaching. If there is no resurrection, all the rest of the words Paul had said to the Corinthians could be termed trivia.

Burton Coffman waxes eloquent in his introduction to the chapter. I think a few of his words are decidedly worth our attention.

“When darkness falls upon the day of life, when death has come and men gather around a grave, then it is that they turn to this eternal chapter.”

Gnwrivzw is the Greek word Paul used here. It could have been translated “I remind you” instead of “I declare unto you”. Paul will proceed to speak of some things which he had already preached to them. They had accepted the gospel Paul taught. Their faith was solidly set upon the truth of it. How could they require reinforcement? Yet, clearly they did!

1CO 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

This verse agrees with Romans 1:16.

ROM 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

If they were to forget what he had taught them, there would be no salvation through the precious gospel. There is strong teaching here that one may lose his spiritual life after having been born into the Kingdom of God.

Everything they believed was at stake. The Corinthians must take his words seriously. The Greek *eijkh* employed here speaks of a faith which is random and haphazard. Without the resurrection as a foundation, their faith would be chaotic.

1CO 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

He is ready to remind them of the true nature of the gospel which he had preached.

He made it clear that he first had to receive it. It did not originate with him. It was deposited with him. After having received it, and being charged to preach it to the Gentiles, he had faithfully carried out that charge, both to the Jew and to the Greek.

That gospel was the same as the one preached by Peter, Stephen, Philip and others as recorded in the book of Acts. It hinged upon the death of Christ as the fulfilment of prophecy spoken long before. Christ died for our sins “according to the scriptures.” What scriptures were these? I can only mention a select few.

PSA 16:1 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

HOS 6:2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

JON 2:1 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

MAT 12:4 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

ZEC 12:1 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

1CO 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The swoon theory will not do. The New Testament is absolutely confident that Jesus Christ died and was buried. The so-called theologians who deny this might as well throw away their entire Bible.

A number of Old Testament references are available which speak of his death. If we look for those mentioning his resurrection, we have more trouble. The present verse may simply refer to the raising rather than the third day. Scriptures which might be produced in support of this verse are: Hosea 6:2 as above, Isaiah 53:10-11 and Jonah 1:17.

1CO 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

The appearance to Cephas, or Peter, is recorded in Luke 24:33-34.

LUK 24:33-34 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

He also appeared to the eleven, as is included in the reference above. However, the statement in the verse under consideration says he appeared to the twelve. Who were they? This is not an error in the scriptures. It was a clear way of distinguishing the eleven who were left from many others of his disciples. In fact Matthias did see the risen Lord. That was one of the qualifications for selecting him (Acts 1).

1CO 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Although there is no other record of this massive group of witnesses, this is no objection to its reality. In fact, the verse provides strong verification for the resurrection of the Lord. Over half these witnesses were still alive and could be checked. It is difficult to deceive over five hundred people at once on a matter such as this. Those who cry out “hallucination” forget that this was not a single psychologically disturbed person. It was a large multitude.

1CO 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

This James was very likely the brother of Jesus. We find his fleshly brethren were unbelievers previous to this time. But by the time the events of Acts 1:14 occurred, James was a believer. (See John 7:5 and Acts 1:13-14.)

JOH 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

ACT 1:13-14 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

1CO 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Paul was not the last to see the risen Lord. John saw him at the time of the Revelation (Rev. 1:16). He was the last in Paul's list.

The word translated "out of due time", *ektroma*, is a word referring to abortions, which are violent births, interrupting the normal gestation period. Paul is speaking of the unusual nature of his birth into the apostolic fold.

1CO 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

The apostle never forgot that he had fought against the Saviour in persecuting the church. He felt that, of all men, he was the least deserving of the apostolic office.

This does not mean he felt the other apostles were superior to him in other qualifications. (See 2 Cor. 11:5 and Gal. 2:11).

2CO 11:5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

GAL 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Paul was extremely proud to carry the highest office in the church. Still, he felt he was undeserving.

1CO 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

If the grace of God could turn Paul from being the chiefest of sinners to be the great apostle which he was, no man ought to consider himself beyond reach.

Paul's subsequent labors were vast and influential.

No other apostle wrote as much. No other apostle traveled as much. No other apostle, as far as our record goes, suffered as much.

The word translated “labored” is *kopiaio*. It conveys the idea of “laboring to the point of weariness.”

1CO 15:11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

The “they” of this verse is the other apostles. Paul was no less important than they were. He was continually concerned that the Corinthians would not accept his teachings as being equal in importance with that of the other apostles.

Both Paul and they preached the same gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord. It was the saving power of that gospel which mattered, and not the prestige of the man who preached it. They had believed the gospel when they confessed Christ as the Son of God. Any other gospel which omitted the resurrection of the dead was to be shunned (See Gal. 1:8-9).

GAL 1:8-9 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

1CO 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

At first this seems to be a strange question. Why would it not be possible for them to say there was no resurrection of the dead, even if Christ had been preached?

The point is that they had accepted the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why should it be so difficult to accept a general resurrection? Some obviously were denying a general resurrection would occur in the future.

There are several possible reasons they might have presented:

1. The resurrection occurred when those rose from the graves at the time of the death of Christ.
2. The only resurrection occurs when men are raised from the waters of baptism.
3. The only resurrection of any importance was that of Christ.
4. Resurrection of the dead is a literal impossibility.

To Paul, the denial of a general resurrection was an incredible position. There would be one!

1CO 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

If one denies the possibility of any resurrection from the dead, the denial of Christ's resurrection must follow.

Christ was fully human. If one denies that humans can be resurrected, one must refuse to accept the resurrection of Christ.

1CO 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

The resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian religion, and the proof of our hope of eternal life. It was a major ingredient in the preaching of Paul, Peter, Stephen and Philip.

The same Spirit which raised up Christ from the grave provides the power and energy to raise his followers (Rom. 8:11).

ROM 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

If Christ was not raised from the grave, those such as Paul and the others had been only mouthing empty words. If the gospel which they preached was but empty words, then so was the faith which rested on that preaching. Paul was insulted by their attitude toward the gospel, and at the same time he was extremely concerned over their welfare.

1CO 15:15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

This is plain talk. He is telling them they have called him a liar. It seems this may have been a little farther than some them would wish to go. Paul had been going about preaching that Jesus was raised. If no

person can be raised from the dead, Paul's statement would have been an out and out falsehood.

Also the term "false witnesses of God" does not just mean false witnesses in the sight of God. It means they lied about the character of God. Now that is dangerous! It is blasphemy.

1CO 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

There is now a repetition for emphasis sake. However, he is going to add another very important point.

1CO 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

If Christ was not raised, he is not the Son of God.

If Christ is not the Son of God, the entire system falls under the weight of this denial, and every man's sins weigh heavily upon his soul.

The washing away of sins occurs at the time of baptism, as one duplicates the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord. We may be dead to Christ and alive to sin. Or, we may be dead to sin and alive in Christ. His resurrection and the removal of our own sins are connected in the rite of baptism (See Rom. 6 and also Acts 22:16).

1CO 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

“Fallen asleep” is another expression for death. For non-Christians death would be eternal separation from the God of life. The word perished is more than corruption; it is the word *ajpwvlonto* which is related to the word apostasy.

For the Christian, death is but a sleep which will be interrupted later at the appearance of the Christ.

1CO 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

The “we” here is probably Paul’s reference to himself and the other apostles. They had suffered enormous persecution because of their testimony for Jesus Christ. Paul himself had suffered beyond belief.

All the suffering in this life would take on a completely different color if there is no life beyond the grave. In that case, taking up a cross and following Jesus would be the very height of foolishness. Christians would become martyrs for no more than a dream.

1CO 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Sometimes it helps for men to follow their logic to the end. That is what Paul did in this case. They should now be ready to rejoice in the promise of the resurrection.

Christ proved it can take place. As the first apple which falls from a tree gives promise of many more

to follow, the resurrection of Christ is the first fruit of a vast harvest.

Christ was, of course, not the first to be raised from the dead. It occurred numerous times in the Old Testament. Both Elijah and Elisha raised a child from the dead. It occurred in later times as the power of the Holy Spirit worked through the hands of Jesus and Paul.

1CO 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

Through the man Adam, death found a gate into humanity. Through the man Christ, death will be driven out. Adam was the head of the first creation. Jesus Christ is the head of the second. It is necessary to compare much of the fifth chapter of Romans with this passage. (See Rom. 5:12, 15, 17-21.)

ROM 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

ROM 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

ROM 5:17-21 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as

by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

1CO 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

It is true that all men die physically because they are descendants of Adam. It is not true that all men are guilty of the sin of Adam because they are descendants of Adam.

We do not die spiritually because we share the humanity of Adam, any more than we live spiritually because we share the humanity of Christ. In both cases it is necessary to unite ourselves with the individual. To share in the spiritual death of Adam we must share in the sin of Adam. To share in eternal life, we must be baptized into Christ and thus share his righteousness. There is a choice in both cases.

1CO 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Every man here includes Christ. He was raised first. Those who belong to him will be raised when

he returns. “At his coming” is at his *parousiva*. This word was used by the Greeks to describe a visit by royalty.

There is but one resurrection mentioned here. Christ is its beginning. The raising of the righteous is a continuation of it.

The righteous will be resurrected. (See Daniel 12:1-2, also Mt. 25:32, 41.)

DAN 12:1-2 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

MAT 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

And the wicked shall be resurrected also, and at the same time.

MAT 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

The dead in Christ shall rise first, then those who are alive will join them with the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16).

1TH 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1CO 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

There are some who argue that “Then cometh the end” does not demand zero time period between the resurrection of the followers of Christ and the parousia, or return of the Lord. Such an argument is an attempt to find a place for a literal one thousand year reign of Christ on earth. But, Christ is reigning now. And he will continue to reign from heaven until he comes in final judgment.

There will be absolutely no opposition remaining when his reign closes. Every power structure in heaven, on earth and in the demonic realm will have been subjected unto him.

He will then deliver the kingdom to the Father. This was to be the end product of his visit to earth. Before he came there was serious rebellion. He was sent to quell it. This passage does not imply that Christ is of lesser degree of divinity than the Father. It does say he agreed to subject himself in order to demonstrate the meaning of true obedience, as an example to mankind.

1CO 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

It is not debatable as to whether Christ and his forces will win.. It is simply a matter of when and how the victory will occur.

A. B. Bruce comments as follows. “If elsewhere the principalities and powers, including death itself, are viewed as already disarmed, subjugated and indeed abolished, that is because the death and resurrection of Christ constitute the decisive battle in the war that ends victoriously with the resurrection of his people.” (See Col. 2:15; I Peter 3:22 and 2 Tim. 1:10, also Psa. 110.1)

COL 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

1PE 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

2TI 1:10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

PSA 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

1CO 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

The book of Revelation sheds more light on the nature of these enemies. They include Babylon, the False Prophet, the Beast, those who follow the Beast, and death itself.

After all of the other enemies have been subjugated, death will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 20:14).

1CO 15:27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

The proper order of creation is for Christ to be the governor. God ordained that it be thus. This includes the laws of nature seen in the animal, vegetable and mineral realms, plus the entire angelic world. There is but one thing that stands above Christ. The one thing is the Father. And the reason for that is to teach man the importance of obedience to divinity. There is a quote here from Psalm 8:6.

PSA 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

The author of Hebrews also adds some relevant remarks.

HEB 2:8-10 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But

we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

1CO 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Wayne Jackson made a very interesting statement on this verse. He said Jesus made a greater sacrifice than we usually realize, in his visit to earth. Jackson believes this verse teaches the Son will eternally exist in subjection to the Father.

Such investigations may be beyond our mental reach. Whatever the final and eternal relationship between the Father and the Son may be, all three members of the Godhead will have participated in the triumph over the opposing powers of evil. The cosmos will have been restored to the condition intended. *Thy will be done!*

1CO 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

The present verse is one of the most interesting in the entire Bible. I am convinced that the verse

has been misused by most of the commentators. On the face of it, the verse seems to say that some of the Corinthians have been practicing baptism in the place of friends who have died without having been baptized.

Such an explanation leaves this as a most disjointed section of the entire fifteenth chapter. As Paul said earlier, “I show you a better way.”

The meaning of the verse hinges on the Greek word *nekros*. This word may be translated as “in place of”, “over”, and “in behalf of.” The majority of the commentators have said it is an evasion of the issue to say the Corinthians were not baptizing living persons on behalf of the dead. I deny this. Consider the following very carefully.

Let us first notice that the Greek word *huper* may be found in both the genitive and the accusative cases. The commentators have looked, almost exclusively at the genitive case. Here are examples of both cases:

Genitive case

LUK 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Notice that in this genitive case, the word *huper*, which is translated by the English word “for”, means **on behalf of**. There are dozens of instances where *huper* is used in the genitive case.

Accusative case

2CO 8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

This is a different story. The word *huper* is now translated as **beyond**. There are not as many instances of the accusative case. However, these instances are very convincing when applied to the verse we are discussing. Let's look at some of the other places where *huper* is used in the accusative case.

1. *MAT 10:24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.*
2. *MAT 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*
3. *ACT 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.*
4. *Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing thou wilt also do more than I say.*

It can be seen then that when used in the accusative case, the word *huper* means to **go beyond**. The position is made even stronger when one looks at compound words in which the word *huper* is a prefix. Following are some examples of this usage.

1. *2 Cor. 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure.*
2. *1 Cor. 7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age—*
3. *2 Cor. 3:10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.*

Now what does all of this have to do with the context of 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen? The fact of the matter is that it has **everything** to do with it. There is a consistency in the seven examples given above that is compelling. In each example, the word *huper* has been translated by an English word which carries the idea of “going beyond.”

Now consider the difficulties which are embedded in the use of the genitive case to translate *huper* as **in behalf of**. It is hardly conceivable that the apostle Paul would remain silent about the folly of baptizing a living person on behalf of a dead one. Yet, his approach seems to be of an approving nature rather than condemnation. Translating *huper* here as “on behalf of” causes the verse to stick out like a sore thumb and create all kinds of complexities.

If, on the other hand, the word is translated as “going beyond”, there is perfect integration with the entire fifteenth chapter. Whenever any person is baptized, that person is doing so because he is looking beyond this present life to the time of the resurrection. All then makes perfect sense. Dear reader, this

verse does not speak of some heretical custom the Corinthians practiced of baptizing a living person on behalf of a dead one. It speaks of living persons being baptized in hope of life beyond, or after, the resurrection. If there is to be no resurrection, baptism is nonsense. That is Paul's point.

1CO 15:30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

This use of the word “we” is common with Paul. He may mean “I.” Writers often use this method of avoiding the more personal pronoun.

Paul could also be referring to the apostles in general. He had occasion to place himself in the group of apostles in his previous discussion.

Both Paul and the other apostles had exposed themselves to many dangers in their preaching of the gospel of Christ and his resurrection. If it is impossible for men to be raised from the dead, such exposure would be bald stupidity.

Paul was completely convinced of the coming resurrection. That is why he was willing to endure beatings, shipwrecks, stonings and imprisonment. There was hardly a moment of his life in which he did not have to deal with the sorest of opposition to his activities.

1CO 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

The Greek in this verse is difficult to translate. Some think it is Paul's rejoicing in his converts in

Corinth. Others think it is the Corinthians rejoicing over Paul's labors among them.

I believe it fits best with the context if we consider it to mean that Paul rejoiced in them to the extent that he was willing to suffer the severest persecution for them. He was willing to do so because of his belief in a coming resurrection.

1CO 15:32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

Something of great danger happened to Paul while he was in the city of Ephesus. What were the beasts with which he fought? Were they wild animals, or were they men who acted like wild animals? We cannot know for certain.

He faced them because of his belief in the reality of the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, Paul was off on a very wrong track. He did not believe he was. His great confidence came from the personal experience of having been with the risen Christ. He knew he was not mistaken!

The opposite path should have been taken if the dead do not rise. All men should search for the least misery and the greatest pleasure in this present life. It is very short. Compare Paul's statement with that of Isaiah 22:13.

ISA 22:13 And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die.

Isaiah was also dealing with the difference between pleasing God and seeking one's own pleasure.

1CO 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Bible scholars sometimes become over zealous. Some believe Paul borrowed this statement from Menander, who was a heathen poet. There is no reason why this truth could not have been originated by the Holy Spirit. Let's leave it that way until we have evidence to believe otherwise.

It is apparent that the evil communications mentioned here are those of the teachers who deny the resurrection of the body. Such teaching was bound to corrupt the actions of those who gave up their hope of the resurrection.

The Greek *ommah* is sometimes translated as "company." It is the word from which we derive the English word "homily", which has to do with speaking.

1CO 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

They were to wake up and stop their sinning. They had been boasting of their knowledge of God. The truth was that they did not have adequate knowledge. If they had, they would not have considered denying the resurrection. Paul described them as *agnosia*, or without knowledge. The word is related to our word agnostic.

It was truly a shame for them to be in such a condition. They had had ample time to learn the will of God. They had neglected these opportunities.

1CO 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

Out of their lack of knowledge arose a host of foolish questions. Paul anticipated one of them. “In what condition will the dead be raised?” It is clear that Paul was aware of this objection to his preaching. The body rots away in the grave. How then can it be resurrected years later when it has already returned to dust?

1CO 15:36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

Thou fool! These are strong words. The word for fool is *aphros*, without a mind. God has cautioned Christians about calling others fools. There is a danger of judgment and hell fire. However, it is one thing for an ordinary Christian to do this, and quite another for an inspired apostle of God to do it.

Paul made clear that the body as it comes out of the grave is to be vastly different from the body as it goes into the grave. When the plant is full grown, the seed from which it came is corrupted.

1CO 15:37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

A kernel of wheat or corn has a far different appearance than the full grown plant which develops from that seed. If one had never seen a kernel of wheat or a mature wheat plant, it might be very difficult to persuade them the mature plant arose from the seed.

It is wise to note that there is, however, a carryover from the seed to the plant. Each seed produces its own kind of plant. There is a possible relationship between what is said here and that which is discussed in 2 Peter chapter three with respect to the new heaven and the new earth. Could the essence of the old creation provide the beginning point for the new? I leave the reader to follow this line of thought, or leave it. Some day we shall know.

1CO 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

God is not limited in what he raises from the ground. He can take one thousand seeds and produce a unique plant body from each of them. He can certainly do the same for multitudes of men if he chooses.

It does not matter that the atoms of one body have passed through ten other bodies. Nor does it matter that a person died at sea, or was eaten by wild animals. God can give each soul a new body as he desires.

1CO 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

Paul's first illustration was the diversity of plant bodies. Then he turned to animal bodies. The classification he gives is similar to that of Genesis chapter one. These are the basic kinds of flesh. The flesh of fish is quite different from that of birds. Any nutritionist will heartily agree.

If all these bodies are composed of different structure, why is it incredible that God could provide a different structure for the resurrected body?

1CO 15:40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

After dealing with plant bodies and animal bodies, the apostle turned to the bodies of the heavens. They are vastly different than the earthly bodies. From our knowledge of astronomy today, we know many of the heavenly bodies are made up of gas or plasma and certainly not flesh. But, both the earthly bodies and the heavenly bodies are glorious in their own way.

Some see Paul as using accommodate language here. They see him speaking of heavenly bodies in contrast with earthly bodies because those to whom he spoke believed heavenly beings had bodies. Thus, such names as Jupiter, Mars, Venus, etc. I do not believe he was speaking in that manner. In physics today, we say we can calculate the attractive forces between any two "bodies" in the universe. We are not speaking accommodatingly when we say that.

1CO 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory

of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

The sun shines by emitted light. This light is the result of nuclear reactions occurring there. The glory produced is enough to light the earth and blind the eye.

The moon shines by reflected light. Its glory is much less brilliant. Yet, it is just as mysterious under serious investigation.

The stars are much less brilliant than either the sun or the moon. Nevertheless, some of them are a thousand times larger than our own sun. What a wondrous universe our God has created! As no two snowflakes are alike, no two heavenly bodies are alike.

How can mere man have the unmitigated gall to question God's ability to replace this present fleshly body with one of a far superior nature? The naivety of Adam and Eve is at least matched by those to whom Paul was speaking, and by many of our own day.

1CO 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

Paul then made a series of contrasts between the dead body and the resurrected body. The first is in the corruptibility of the body which enters the grave and the one that arises. The bondage of corruption began with the rebellion in Eden. God said, Unto dust shalt thou return.

A study of this chapter is incomplete without reference to Romas 8:16-23.

ROM 8:16 -23 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

The entire creation shares in the bondage of corruption. Release from that corruption will come with the resurrection and glorification of the saints.

1CO 15:43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

Great pomp and ceremony attend the burial of a dead human body. But it is not the corpse which is paid

honor. It is the memory of the departed soul. There is little more dishonorable than a corpse without an inhabitant.

But one day the body of the faithful Christians will rise in new glory. We do not know what the faithful shall be like. But they will be like Christ (I John 3:2).

The lifeless corpse has no strength at all. In contrast, the resurrected body will be filled with power.

1CO 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

In view of our experiences in this age it almost seems that this verse is contradictory. How can a spiritual body exist? Spirit and body are normally set in contrast. According to this verse the present body is a *soma psuchikos*, or a soul body. The body of the resurrection will be a *soma pneumatikos*, a spirit body, adapted to endless life in the presence of God. Again we must wait and see! God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

1CO 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

Paul is going back to *Genesis 2:7. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.*

I have no doubt but that there is an entire master's thesis wrapped up in verse forty-five. At this time I do not presume to have a complete understanding of it. I will offer a couple of insights.

This verse contrasts a **passive** Adam with an **active** Christ. Adam did not give himself a soul. He became a living soul through the power and life giving ability of God. One who casts his lot with Adam will die, for Adam has no life giving power. Christ is different. Through his death and resurrection, he became the giver of eternal spiritual life. The one who casts his lot with Christ may live.

Is the soul immortal? This verse may say the soul is mortal. I am sixty-two as I write these words. In another twenty-five years I may know the answer.

There are four desirable characteristics of the resurrected body of a faithful Christian. It is Spiritual. It is incorruptible. It is powerful. It is glorious. This is in contrast with the fleshly body which goes into the grave, which is natural, corruptible, powerless and has no glory. That much I know now!

1CO 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

The natural body of Adam came before the risen spiritual body of Jesus Christ. In like manner, the risen spiritual body of the Christian is preceded by a natural body similar to that of Adam.

We cannot have both bodies simultaneously. Pointing out the general nature of the risen body was as close as Paul could come to an answer. Specifics

would have to wait until the seed was replaced by the mature plant.

1CO 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.

The body of Adam was composed of the elements of the ground. The resurrected body of Christ was not composed of these perishable elements. Christ had his eternal existence in heaven before ever the earth was formed. Adam had his origin in the earth. (See John 8:23 and John 8:44).

JOH 8:23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

JOH 8:42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

1CO 15:48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

The natural realm has certain characteristics which are familiar to us. These include mass, time, space and corruption. Those born into that realm will share in those boundaries. The spiritual realm breaks those boundaries. Those who are raised in Christ will share in that freedom.

1CO 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

In that we have been born as descendants of Adam, we are made of flesh, blood and bone. It appears that the word “image” in this case refers to more than that which we see. The image refers to the structure as well as the appearance.

The true Christian may look forward to bearing the image of God. We are informed that in the beginning man was created in that image. After a very long trip, the faithful will return.

We face a question. When man was created in the image of God, was the body a spiritual body, and not composed of flesh and blood, or did it become changed in composition and become flesh and blood. It was flesh and blood from the beginning. Adam said of Eve, “She is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

If we are to be like Christ, what shall we be?

1. Christ was the same person after he was resurrected.
2. Christ was able to pass through locked doors.
3. Christ was able to change his appearance.
4. Christ could vanish from sight.

Was the resurrected body of Christ composed of flesh and bone? See Luke 24:39 and John 20:27.

LUK 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

JOH 2:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

1CO 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

This is a pretty hefty knot. Jesus resurrected body was composed of flesh and blood. When we are resurrected, we shall be like him. Yet flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God!

The best solution I can see is that in Jesus appearances after his resurrection he adapted himself such that the observers could recognize that it was the same person they had know previous to his death. If he then shed the flesh and blood at his ascension, we have at least a partially satisfactory answer.

The problem still remains as to the creation of man with flesh and blood, but also in the image of God. Perhaps God foresaw the entire scenario and created flesh and blood bodies in anticipation of a sin filled world and corruptible world. I have many more questions than answers!

One thing is sure. The present corruption will have no part in heaven. All will be incorruptible there.

1CO 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

Again sleep is used to refer to the death of the Christian. This is not soul sleep. It is the sleep of the

body. Paul said it was preferable to die and be with Christ. He expected to be in the presence of the Lord immediately after death.

The point of this verse is that when Christ returns, the living Christians will be changed also. Both the bodies of those arising from the grave, and those of the ones still living will be changed instantly and take on the new form.

1CO 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

In a “moment” is translated from the Greek *atomos* which is the origin of our English word atom. Literally it means “uncut”. It is so small there can be no further division. **That is not much time.** The transition will be instantaneous

Both the living and the dead in Christ will instantly become incorruptible.

We must again be reminded that Daniel claimed the wicked would also be resurrected, but will be plunged into eternal torment rather than reward. Nothing is said about the resurrected bodies of the wicked. Perhaps there is one clue. They must be capable of eternal existence in a place where fire is not quenched. That would not be true of flesh, blood and bone. They must also undergo some type of transition.

1CO 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

To put on incorruption is to clothe ones self in incorruption. The body is not the person. It is but the dwelling or the instrument used by the indwelling person. Compare 2 Cor. 5:1-4.

2CO 5:1-4 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

1CO 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

The last enemy is death. For death, the resurrection of Christ was the beginning of the end. The victory over death will not be complete until the resurrection with its change from mortality to immortality and from corruption to incorruption. Then death itself shall be cast into the lake of fire. See Isaiah 25:8.

ISA 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

1CO 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Paul rang out a defiant challenge to death to do its very worst. With the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, we have the initial stage of the conquest over death, hell and the grave. The culmination of our victory is certain to appear.

Satan only appears to be able to pay his wages of death to the Christian. Jesus has the key to the bonds of sin and death. He provides the means of escape.

1CO 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Death is hideous because of sin. Sin separates people from God. To be eternally separated from God and all that is holy is unthinkable.

The law simply defines sin and allows us to know the meaning of transgression. If we had only the law, we would all be condemned to spiritual death. Under those circumstances, death would have a terrible sting.

1CO 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks to a loving and merciful God, we do not have to endure the eternal “sting” of death.

The “but” in this verse is one of the most precious words in the whole of scripture. Through Christ we will grasp the sweetest victory of all; the victory over death, the last ally of Satan.

The book of Revelation tells us of both the gore of the battle and the sweetness of the wonderful victory which comes only through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1CO 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The logical conclusion of this entire chapter is that Christians must not miss the victory over Satan. This victory will not come to those who are driven backward and forward with every wind of doctrine, or with every temptation of life. It requires steady productive labor in the service of the Master. If that labor is forthcoming, the Christian may rest in the greatest confidence that his baptism into Christ, and the work of his life will bear the glorious fruit of a new incorruptible, powerful and glorious body which will be perfectly fitted for eternal existence in the company of the Godhead and the faithful of all the ages.

Dear reader, do you see the major thrust of this chapter. The Corinthians were living for the present. They were immature in their thinking and failed to fasten their affections upon the hope which comes through passing from time into eternity. This chapter on the resurrection was intended to rivet their thoughts on that hope.

At the same time, I must agree with Burton Coffman when he said he was disappointed that the wonderful motivation for Christian living which is found in this chapter is neglected because it is so frequently used at funerals. If we were to heed the

admonitions provided by this chapter, there would be smaller lumps in the throats and fewer tears in the eyes at the passing of our loved ones.

Let us close the comments on this chapter with a quote from the prophet Hosea.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues. O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Chapter 16

1CO 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

We now have another main topic of discussion; the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. When Paul was in Jerusalem the leaders there had agreed that he was to take the responsibility for getting the gospel to the Gentiles. At the same time, they urged him that while doing so he not forget the poor saints among the Jews back home.

Paul took both charges very seriously. He braved much opposition to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentile world. He also never forgot the poor Jews. As he traveled from city to city, he urged the Gentiles to send a contribution to the Christian Jews in Jerusalem.

There are several suggestions as to why the need existed. Some say that the early sharing among the Christians had disrupted the normal routine. Others say these early Christians were placed under immediate persecution from the Jews who rejected Christ. Still others point to famines such as that predicted by Agabus.

Other related references to these matters are found in Acts 17:14; 2 Cor. 8:1ff. and 2 Cor. 9:1ff.

1CO 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

The word “day” is not in the Greek. Thus, it would read, “upon the first of the week.” This has caused some to wonder if we have imposed on the passage in limiting it to the first DAY. There does seem to be sufficient evidence from records outside the Bible to prove that Christians met each first day of the week.

Does this verse give just as much room for laying by in a cookie jar at home? Probably not. That would still lead to a gathering to bring everything together when Paul arrived. That is what he sought to avoid.

The Corinthians were to give as they had been prospered. Later, in the second letter, Paul explained that he did not expect a contribution so great that the donor was left destitute while the recipients were made comfortable.

1CO 16:3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

They were asked to choose men from among themselves who could carry the contribution to Jerusalem. Paul did not wish to expose himself to suspicion by receiving the money personally. A letter would accompany the gifts, and would verify such things as who sent the money, how much was sent and for what purpose.

1CO 16:4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Some read more into this verse than is present.

They wish to make Paul say he would go only if the gift was sufficient that it not be embarrassing. There is not the slightest reason for such a conclusion. He was saying that if everyone is agreed, including the Lord, he would be happy to accompany the donation.

I think Paul placed great hope in this donation, and believed it would act as a bonding agent between the Jews and the Gentiles as they formed one new man in Christ. His hopes were damaged when he delivered the gift in Jerusalem and was arrested by the Jews.

1CO 16:5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

There were some in Corinth who doubted Paul had the courage to back up the sharp rebuke he had given them. This verse makes a promise. He will come to them. The time is left indefinite. In 2 Corinthians 1:15 and following, the Corinthians seem to have accused him of fearing to come. This may indicate the statement here was a change, and that he had previously told them he would come without the delay of passing through Macedonia.

2CO 1:15-18 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh,

*that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?
But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea
and nay.*

1CO 16:6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

It was difficult to travel in the winter with the ships and other facilities which they had available. This is not the only place where Paul spoke of staying in a place through the winter before moving on.

He felt confident that they would financially support him in his further travels, perhaps to Spain. We are told that he did stay in Corinth for a period of time.

ACT 20:2-3 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

1CO 16:7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

If Paul had come to them at that time, he would have had to move on too quickly. He wished to abide with them for an extended period.

The apostle was always aware of the providential guidance of Jehovah. He always placed his activities in the hands of God. We would be well advised to follow

his example on this. God may not speak as directly to us as he did to Paul. He will, however, intervene in our affairs to make things work together for the welfare of the entire kingdom.

1CO 16:8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

There was still work to do in Ephesus before he could leave. It was from Ephesus that he had written this letter.

1CO 16:9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

There is a fine lesson in this verse. A door of opportunity had been opened to him. At the same time, he had to be ready to face fierce adversaries. It is often so in the work of the Lord. God opens the way. Evil forces do their best to keep one from passing through those doors. Satan will always attack in the place where much work is possible. It is clear that Paul did meet much opposition in Ephesus, as we can see from Acts 20:19.

ACT 20:19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

1CO 16:10 Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

There is reason to think Timothy may have already been on the way when Paul wrote these words. The “if” may be more of a “when.”

Timothy was a young man. With the troubles and pride which prevailed in Corinth, Paul seems to be concerned about the welfare of the young man. The Corinthians were advised not to intimidate Timothy. He would be doing the work of the Lord.

1CO 16:11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

It is altogether too easy to ignore, or even insult, others who serve Christ, if they do not carry a big stick. We do not just misuse them. We misuse God and his Beloved Son. We should remember that God carries a much bigger stick than we.

1CO 16:12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

There is another *peri de* in this verse. Previously it was translated “Now concerning.” This time it is “As touching.”

The Corinthians may have requested that Apollos be sent to them. Some of them had great admiration for him. Paul had asked Apollos to go, but Apollos was not ready at the time. This tells us two things.

First, Paul and Apollos were certainly not at odds with each other as might be guessed from what was said in chapter one. Second, Paul did not command Apollos to go, even though he had apostolic authority. There are times when it is much better to request than to command. Apollos indicated he would go later when he judged the time to be right. We do not know whether or not he did so.

1CO 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

The command to persevere was repeated. To quit like men is to behave as adults. There is a flashback to the concern Paul has had for their immaturity throughout the entire letter. They are to cease acting like children and follow the better way he introduced in chapter thirteen.

1CO 16:14 Let all your things be done with charity.

That better way was to love one another. Love is the bond of perfectness which holds the temple of God together. The two greatest commandments are to love God and to love one's neighbor.

1CO 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

These are not mentioned in the report of Paul's preaching at Athens where we have the first account

of his preaching in Achaia. They may have been converted even before he reached Athens. They may also have been among the few who are mentioned in Acts 17:34, but left nameless.

ACT 17:34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

We find many people addicted to numerous things today. Cocaine, marijuana, alcohol, nicotine, food, hobbies, etc. Not enough are addicted to the ministry of the saints.

1CO 16:16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

The admonition to subject themselves to these hard working fellow-laborers of Paul should not surprise us. Jesus taught that we should serve one another, just as he himself had entered the world as a servant.

Women are taught to subject themselves to their husbands. This does not mean the husband is never under any responsibility to serve his wife.

It could be that these persons had proven themselves to be worthy administrators. However, the use of the general language indicates harmony with the general teaching that Christians are to submit themselves to each other, always thinking of others as higher than themselves.

1CO 16:17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

These three had lifted Paul's spirits. He could not meet with all the Corinthians at that particular time. The three mentioned had represented the entire congregation.

The word "supplied" is from *anapleroo*. It has to do with being "filled up."

1CO 16:18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

It is simple to see how these had refreshed Paul's spirit. But how had they refreshed the spirits of the Corinthians? It may be that Paul believed the letter he was writing would cause a refreshing of the spirits of those working in the church at Corinth. If so, this would have been a direct result of the work of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus.

1CO 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

How diligently Paul attempted to bind the entire church together! Sometimes it was Galatia and Achaia. Sometimes it was Achaia and Jerusalem. Sometimes it was Galatia and Jerusalem. But, always, it was Christians and Christians.

Six times altogether Aquila is mentioned along with Priscilla. Three times Aquila is mentioned first. Three times Priscilla is mentioned first. How is that for gender equity! The Christians at Corinth had good reason to hold the two in admiration and affection. They had entertained the church in their home at Corinth. Now they were doing the same in Ephesus. They had risked their necks for Paul, and had brought Apollos to a better understanding of the truth. God will bless such Christians. (See Rom. 16:4 and Acts 18:26.)

ROM 16:4 *Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

ACT 18:26 *And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.*

1CO 16:20 **All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.**

The kiss of friendship was common then, as it still is in the nations of the Middle East. Men often kissed on the cheek rather than shaking hands.

This is a custom which can be readily abused. It is probably better for men and women to shake hands rather than to kiss those of the opposite sex who are not dear friends or else closely related. This was to be a **holy** kiss. Other passages in which the holy kiss is mentioned are: Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26 and 1 Pet. 5:14.

1CO 16:21 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.

Usually Paul dictated his letters to a male secretary, or amanuensis. He would then sign the letter with his own personal signature. Most business men today would understand this custom.

1CO 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

It is a dangerous thing to have heard of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and then not return that love with our own. To do that is to bring the wrath of his Father down upon our head. Compare 12:3

1CO 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

The word from which “anathema” comes is simply transliterated into English. Refusing to respond to the love of God through his Son Jesus Christ makes one an enemy of God. He is accursed!

The word Maranatha is divided in the Greek. It makes a difference. If the word is combined, it means “Our Lord come.” If the word is separated, it means “Our Lord has come.” Either statement is true. One looks forward, the other backward. I believe the word should be divided and that it looks forward to the Lord’s return and the resurrection.

1CO 16:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Not only did Paul need the grace of God to overcome his past opposition to the church of God. He knew that every Christian needs that same grace. He prayed that it might be well with the Corinthian Christians. This could only be true if they loved Jesus Christ.

1CO 16:24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

As one might expect after studying through this book in detail, it closes with an emphasis on love. This was the prime fault of the church at Corinth. They needed badly to realize the value of loving fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Brethren. As Paul wrote to them, they were still very immature. **But so am I!!**



**The Book Of
SECOND
CORINTHIANS**

Chapter 1

2CO 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

It was customary for Paul to establish his apostolic authority at the beginning of his letters. In this case it was especially important. Some among the Corinthians were disputing his right to correct and command them as he had done. Paul pointed out, as he had done in the first letter, that he did not seek the role of an apostle. It had come about through the will of God.

Timothy did not have authority equal to that of Paul. The Corinthians did know Timothy and it was reasonable that Paul include his name in the introduction. The letter was addressed particularly to the saints at Corinth. However, it would have significance for Christians throughout the lower part of the Grecian peninsula.

2CO 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is undeserved or unmerited favor. There is no greater blessing which can be offered to others than to pray for the grace of God to rest upon them. God's grace reached a peak in the offering of his Beloved Son for the sins of men. Christ participated in that grace by emptying

himself of heaven's glory and descending to the level of flesh and blood. That supreme grace is supplemented daily by the providential care with which He guides and strengthens us each day.

2CO 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort

Both the Father and the Son deserve the praise of all men for their willingness to forgive our transgressions and to comfort us in our difficulties.

2CO 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

There is much in this verse to sustain the Christian. The comfort which God and Christ extend to us during our own tribulation is due to be passed on by us to others who need our own support. It has been said that abused children often become abusive parents, as the patterns of behavior are passed on from generation to generation. When one is the recipient of comfort which God and Christ provide for each of us, that person has the responsibility to offer comfort to others.

I believe Paul was leading into a request for the Corinthians to show sympathy for him in the

many trials which he faced during his service as a missionary.

2CO 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Since he had endured so much persecution and suffering as a result of his service to the Lord, Paul felt that his brethren in Christ ought to do all within their power to alleviate those problems. He seems to be saying such consolation is not only right, but that it had been offered to him by his brethren.

2CO 1:6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

The apostle knew he was not the only Christian who had suffered. He did not expect them to sympathize with him because of his trials, and then have him refuse to offer the same comfort to them. The Christian church is one body. When one member suffers, all suffer. When one member rejoices, all rejoice. At least such is true when all is as it should be.

2CO 1:7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the

sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

We must ask the question as to just how the Corinthians were participating in the sufferings. Were they doing so by sympathizing with Paul. Or, were they actually suffering much hardship of their own? Since he went on in the next few verses to talk about his own trials, I believe the participation may have been sympathy for Paul's discomfort. But insomuch as they had sympathized with him in his trials, they could also be consoled when Paul was consoled.

2CO 1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

In order that the Corinthians might truly sympathize with him, Paul expanded a bit on the nature of the suffering he had undergone. To be pressed out of measure would mean that the weight of the persecution was almost like being squeezed out of shape in a giant press, or being overrun by a large vehicle.

The matter became so serious that he had decided his life had reached an end.

2CO 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

If it had not been for the mercy and grace of God, the apostle felt that he would have died. We do not know just what this sentence of death was. It could have been a disease which would have ordinarily been fatal. It could have been a sentence passed by an official of the Roman government. Either way, Paul placed his confidence in the Heavenly Father to see him through.

2CO 1:10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

Paul's faith had not been misplaced. God did protect him from the cessation of life. There was still much for him to do. Since God had delivered him in the past, he was certain God would do so in the future.

2CO 1:11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Paul was a man of prayer. He also emphasized the importance of prayer on the part of all Christians. In this instance, he praised the Corinthians for helping him by way of their petitions to the Father. As a result of their prayers, he had been enabled to go on with his work. Now both he and those who had prayed for him ought to bow the knee and thank God for answering the prayers.

2CO 1:12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

They had been correct in their support of Paul. He had preached to them in sincerity and simplicity in the past. Having been released from the sentence of death, he now was able to continue his preaching. As he had done before, he was determined not to depend upon the wisdom of men, but to proclaim the inspired message from the mind of God.

2CO 1:13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

There was no effort on Paul's part to be double minded. They need not try to read between the lines. He meant precisely what he said. They had found this to be true in their past relationships with him. They would find it to be true in any future relationships. He would speak the truth. They must hear and obey that truth.

2CO 1:14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The blessings which flow from Christian to Christian in this life are a means of mutual edification. But beyond that, we will be made to rejoice when Christ arrives in judgment to see that our fellow members of the body are present with us to hear the words, “Enter into the joy of the Lord.”

2CO 1:15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

The Corinthians had benefitted by Paul's previous association with them. Many of them had been turned from death to life. If he could come to them again, he had confidence they would be further strengthened.

2CO 1:16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

This is a strange verse. Most Bible students feel this letter was written from Philippi. Philippi was in Macedonia. If Paul was in Philippi at the time this was written, it is odd that he would talk of passing by them into Macedonia. It almost seems as if he were writing from the Ephesus area to them and had the intention of passing from the region of Ephesus to Corinth, which was in Achaia, and then northward to Macedonia. Then he would move southward again from Macedonia to Corinth.

Whatever the case may be, he was offering them an invitation to help him in a planned return to

Jerusalem in the province of Judaea. We remember that he kept the poor saints in Jerusalem constantly in mind and expected to take the gifts collected in Macedonia and Corinth to them.

2CO 1:17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

At no time did Paul lie to them as some had suggested. Any change of plans was not the result of deceit on his part. He had not acted like some people and said one thing when he intended something quite different. The false teachers might do so, but he would not.

2CO 1:18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

Double mindedness is not pleasing to God. Lying is an abomination to him. He expects his children to speak the truth. Therefore, Paul had been straightforward in his promises. Any changes in plans were for the benefit of the Kingdom of God.

2CO 1:19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

It would have been a sad thing for three preachers of the gospel, such as Paul, Silas and Timothy to

have moved from place to place speaking lies. Jesus did not do that, neither did they.

2CO 1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

God is not slack concerning His promises. His Son, Christ was not slack concerning His. If Christians are to give glory to God, they must behave in a similar manner.

2CO 1:21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

Through Christ, God has given an example of stability. The Christian knows where he has been, where he is going, and why! He does not waver like a reed blowing in the wind. He is dependable and trustworthy in both word and deed.

The anointing of which Paul wrote is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

See 1 John 2:20, 27 and also Eph. 1:13-14.

1JO 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

1JO 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

EPH 1:13-14 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

2CO 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Christians belong to God. The Holy Spirit is God's way of marking his own. When the person hears, believes, repents and is baptized, his heart is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, removing his sins, and God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell within him. With the earnest, or down payment, in hand, the Christian would be very unwise to reject all of this by speaking lies.

2CO 1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

It was not because he feared to come to them that he had delayed his coming. It was partly because other duties had interfered, and partly because he wished to give them time to correct some of the matters about which he wrote in his previous letter. If he had come before those corrections had been made, it might have been necessary to deal very harshly with them in person.

2CO 1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

The tone was getting somewhat harsh, even in this letter. The apostle added that he did not write such things to show he could order them around. He was not a boss. He was a brother. It was through their faith in Jesus Christ that they had hope, not because of his own wisdom or ability.

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Chapter 2

2CO 2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

It had not been pleasant for Paul to chastise his brethren in Corinth. I am not certain whether this verse is speaking of what we call the first Corinthian letter, or whether in a previous personal contact with them he had experienced an unpleasant confrontation. Either way, he desired that the next meeting be much more pleasant. At this point there was reason to believe that might be true. Conditions had improved.

2CO 2:2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

It certainly did not make Paul happy to scold them. It grieved his heart. It was his fond hope that the words he had written to them previously would cause the next meeting to be happier. The heavy heart which he had, due to the correction he had to administer, could work in either of two ways. It could embitter them and cause them to be angry with him, or it could lead to a more spiritual life for them and they would meet him with joy. The latter would replace his heaviness with happiness.

2CO 2:3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having

confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

Both the former letter and the one he was presently writing were intended to bring about a happier relationship between himself and the Corinthians. He is expressing confidence that they will have responded in such manner that he will be able to rejoice with them in a future meeting.

2CO 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

Here we get a view into the compassionate heart of a great man of God. It is always difficult for a preacher of the gospel to rebuke and admonish. Although there may be no visible tears, there is always a heaviness on the inside. Paul wanted them to know he had written out of a heart filled with love. It had been very difficult.

2CO 2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

The next few verses deal with the man who had committed fornication with his father's wife. There are some who believe this is not the case, but that some person in the congregation had insulted Paul before the group. However, the following verses seem

to rule that out. He was writing about someone who had been subjected to sharp punishment such as that which he had commanded to be applied to the fornicating man. The actions of the man had not just brought grief to Paul. They had caused discomfort and embarrassment for everyone in the congregation at Corinth. Paul was truly grieved, but his grief was not the whole of the the disaster.

2CO 2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

According to the word which had been brought to Paul by Titus, the withdrawal of fellowship from the man had brought positive results. He had ceased his wicked ways. This is a bit surprising. With as many egotistic and rebellious persons as seemed to be present in Corinth, one might expect there would be enough sympathy for the man to support him in his sin. It is good that this did not happen. The congregation had united sufficiently that he had repented.

2CO 2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

Since the man had repented, there was a need to be cautious about continuing to withhold fellowship. If he was not forgiven and comforted, he might decide his case was hopeless and give up completely on life in Christ.

This is one of the most difficult things to deal

with in church affairs. When a member of the congregation has sinned sufficiently that there is reason to withdraw fellowship from him, his repentance will be difficult to accept. This was the case with Paul himself. After he had begun preaching, the saints in Jerusalem remembered persecution of Christians in past days. They found it hard to believe he had really changed. Barnabas had to plead for him.

One of the consequences of departing from the faith is the difficulty of ever flying quite as high in the future. Fellow Christians never seem to be able to stamp out the memory of the sins one has committed. Therefore, we ought to be extremely careful not to allow ourselves to turn back after we have become members of the family of God.

2CO 2:8 Therefore I beseech you that you would confirm your love toward him.

As Christians we are to love all men, even our enemies. We abhor their sin, even at the same time that we cherish their soul. It may seem to the sinner that during a period of punishment such as this man had endured all love had disappeared. Actually the punishment itself was a demonstration of the love and concern of the brethren. Now that the man had repented, Paul urged all members of the church to let him know their love had never failed him.

2CO 2:9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

Would they have character enough to forgive and comfort the man? Paul would be interested in finding out whether they would do so. If they were obedient in the forgiveness of this man, they would very likely be obedient in many other things.

To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgive anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ.

If they were strong enough to forgive this formerly wicked man, Paul would also forgive the hateful persons in the church who had resisted him and attempted to destroy his influence. With Christ as his example, Paul would forgive them that he and they might move forward in harmony and love.

2CO 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Satan loves nothing more than to see Christians with malice and an unforgiving nature toward one another. We do not realize just how much of Satan's foot he can get in the door when we are filled with envy, hate and jealousy. It will take every bit of the dedication we can muster to harmonize our efforts toward his defeat.

2CO 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

Paul had left Ephesus after the uproar in the stadium and had gone to Troas. Again, he had found opportunity to expand the Kingdom of God. The members at Corinth would not understand why he had not come directly to them. Yet, when God opens doors of opportunity, men must walk through them.

2CO 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

He had not forgotten Corinth when he arrived at Troas. He had expected that he would meet Titus there with news from them. He was quite disappointed that Titus did not come. After a time, he decided to move on into Macedonia in the north of Greece. He gave no further explanation of his choice to go from Ephesus to Troas, and then into Macedonia, rather than to visit the church at Corinth. It should be sufficient that doors of opportunity had opened and must be respected.

2CO 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

God is in control of the life of any Christian who will allow him to be. When any Christian allows himself to become an instrument of righteousness in the hands of Jehovah, there will be mighty

triumphs over Satan. The glory of the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ will be a sweet odor in the lives of those who hear and obey the gospel. Throughout the entire earth, Christians are light, salt and sweet perfume in the midst of darkness, bitterness and rottenness.

2CO 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

Whenever Christ is preached a sweet savour arises to the nostrils of Jehovah. The hearer is converted. What if he is not converted? Though the results are not always what is desired, the preaching of the gospel is always sweet in the nostrils of the Lord.

2CO 2:16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

For those who reject the gospel, the resulting odor is the stench of death. For those who hear and obey, the resultant odor is more like that of the cleansed baby who has just been bathed and powdered. How great a responsibility Christians have in offering the Word of God to the world!

2CO 2:17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Paul insisted that he and those who labored with him did not offer a corrupted message. A corrupt message would result in death. The unadulterated truth which he and his companions such as Barnabas and Titus preached promised eternal life.

Chapter 3

2CO 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

It was a common practice among the early churches, even as it is among some at present, to send a letter along with a person who was moving from one congregation to another. This letter expressed the approval and trust of the congregation from which the person came. It is a wise practice. However, Paul is saying that he does not need such a letter of approval.

2CO 3:2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

One would expect Paul to say the epistle was written in their hearts. After all he had preached the gospel to them and it had been etched upon their hearts resulting in their conversion and Christian behavior. But he did not say that. They were an epistle themselves, written in the hearts of all who observed them and read their character. This character could be read by any man who wished to do so.

2CO 3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

In one sense, Paul could say he had written these human letters. He had not written with normal writing instruments such as pen and ink. Nor had he written upon physical writing materials such as the stone upon which the law of Moses was written. His writing instrument was the Holy Spirit of God, and the material upon which he had written was human hearts. Thus, each of the Corinthians Christians was a living letter about Jesus Christ. Each of them declared by their life that Paul preached a message from God. He needed no other recommendation.

2CO 3:4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

The apostle was absolutely confident of his own empowerment through God and Jesus Christ the Son. He fully believed others should have that same confidence in both his message and his life.

2CO 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

He did not wish for them to think for a moment that what he had accomplished was through his own power. By himself he could do nothing. But through Christ he could accomplish all things that were in harmony with the will of God.

2CO 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the

letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

It was God who had enabled Paul as his minister of the gospel. Jeremiah had foretold the arrival of a new covenant which would be written in the hearts of men rather than on stone.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:31-33).

But why is it said that the letter kills while the Spirit gives life? It is because the law cannot save. The letter of the law defines sin and specifies the punishment. It does not provide a way to escape the punishment. And the punishment for sin is death.

Contrariwise, the Spirit of God which led Christ to sacrifice his life and shed his blood for the possible redemption of sinners did provide a way of escape from the wages of sin. Thus, the Spirit gives life.

2CO 3:7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

The law of Moses was a glorious revelation from God. It was written on the tables of stone by the very Finger of God. When Moses delivered it to the people of Israel, his face shone so brightly they could not look at him. It was a glorious law because it came from the divine mind and because it revealed the will of God for man. It was a glorious law because it pointed in the direction of the coming Saviour.

Nevertheless, the glory of that law was to come to an end. It had a purpose to fulfil. When that purpose was completed it was to be done away. That is why Christ said in the sermon on the Mount that he did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. Both the law and the prophets were but preparation for his coming.

2CO 3:8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

In comparison with the glory manifested by the law of Moses, the glory of the New Covenant is far brighter.

2CO 3:9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth

the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

The reason is that the first leaves men condemned. The second has the potential to lead men to justification and righteousness in the sight of God. Upon the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elijah faded away. The figure of Christ remained in splendor before the apostles.

2CO 3:10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

Even though the law of Moses did have glory associated with it, that glory was of a lower kind. The glory that excels is the glory of the gospel of eternal life. The law of Moses did not offer eternal glory to the resurrected saints.

2CO 3:11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Those who live in the days of the Christian dispensation sometimes insist the law of Moses continues because several of the commandments of that law are presently in effect. We are not to kill, steal or commit adultery. However, this verse clearly indicates the law of Moses was *done away*. The reason some of the commandments are in effect today is because they have been restated by the Lord Jesus Christ. The sabbath was not restated

by Christ and therefore it has been removed, as stated in Colossians 2:14-17.

2CO 3:12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

What hope? The hope of eternal life. This is the hope which makes the New Covenant more glorious than the Old. Because Paul was perfectly confident of the ultimate glorification of the saints, he knew it was both a privilege and a responsibility to speak out as clearly and forcefully as he could. The same is true of every Christian today and forever.

2CO 3:13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

Because the people of Israel were not yet ready for the appearance of the glory of the Son of God, Moses had to protect them from that glory by putting a vail over his face. They were ready for the moonlight of the Mosaic law, but not for the sunlight of the Christian age. The time would come when the law of Moses, which was delivered to them, would be abolished. When that time came, the true light would shine (John 1).

2CO 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

It was not unreasonable that the minds of the Israelites were blinded at the time the law was given. They still had need of a schoolmaster to deliver them to the one who would be the Way, the Truth and the Life. The vail which separated them from the glory of Christ remained through the centuries until the Christ came. If one refused to read farther than the Old Testament, the vail would always remain.

2CO 3:15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

That was what had happened to the Jewish false teachers who attempted to seduce men from Christ back to the keeping of the law. These men should have been prepared for the glory of the New Covenant. They were not prepared and by restricting themselves to study of the law of Moses, they constantly prevented themselves from seeing the blessings of grace and liberty in Christ.

2CO 3:16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

All that was necessary for those false teachers, or for the Corinthians who were heeding their heresy, was to open their eyes and hearts to Christ. The Israelites of Moses day did not have that option. These people did. Everything depended upon them. God had made possible the removal of the vail. All they had to do was look beyond it.

It is possible that this verse has a connection with Romans 11:11-16. There may be a time ahead when many of the Jewish people will recognize Christ for what he truly is. If that were to happen, the world could well see a time far happier than it has seen thus far. The verse may only refer to individual Jews, but I cannot but wonder if there is not more than that in it.

2CO 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Why are we told the Lord is that Spirit? This is certainly the Holy Spirit. Yet the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three persons. How can Christ and the Spirit be separate persons and yet have it said of him that he *is that Spirit*? I believe it is because the relationship between the three persons of the Godhead is so close they can be considered as one. John said, *There are three and the three are one*. Jesus said, *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*. Christ had the Spirit without measure.

The New Covenant is his will and testament. It was through Christ's teaching that the apostles were first indoctrinated with the glorious New Way. It was because they were led by the Spirit which Christ sent to them after his ascension that they were able to present the complete body of truth which was delivered to them.

As the reader can easily see, I am struggling with a concept which is a bit too big for me. I do

not think I, or anyone else, is able to completely understand the relationship between the three persons of the trinity.

2CO 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What a verse this is!! There are three stages in the beholding of the glory of God. The first is that of looking through a veil. That was true of those of Moses day who could not see beyond it because they were not yet prepared by the Lord. It was also true of those of Paul's day who deliberately refused to look beyond the veil, even though God had made it possible.

The second stage in beholding the glory of Christ is that of seeing him in the looking glass of the perfect law of liberty. Every man who studies the written Word of God has before him the express image of God. He can examine that image and compare himself with it. He can see where he falls short of the glory. He is then expected to repent of his sins and move from his present condition to one closer to the perfect image observed in the glass. Day by day and year by year, every Christian should be progressing toward the fulness of the stature of Jesus Christ the Lord of Glory.

Then, when the saint shall be manifested in glory at the time of the resurrection of the dead, he shall see him face to face, and *we shall be like him.*

Here then are the three stages in beholding the glory of Christ.

1. Seeing him through the veil of the law of Moses.
2. Seeing him in the mirror of the perfect law of liberty and moving from glory to glory toward his image.
3. Seeing him face to face when we share his glory and shall be like him.

Chapter 4

2CO 4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

The ministry of which Paul spoke was the ministry of the gospel to both the Jew and the Gentile. He did not take the responsibility lightly. When he was a fierce enemy of the Lord, he was granted unbelievable mercy and grace. Once forgiven of his sins, he labored in the face of the most severe difficulties and opposition. Truly he did not faint. He fought the good fight and finished the course.

2CO 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Paul had been accused of insincerity. These accusations had originated with men who were insincere themselves. He wanted to draw a contrast between those who preach for personal gain and those who truly love the souls of men. He was not among those who abused the Word of God. His preaching was simple and straightforward. Any who would take the trouble to examine his record would find he could be trusted.

2CO 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost

He had not spoken in such manner that his true meaning could not be seen. If any man failed to understand the gospel he preached, it was because they were determined to wander around in the darkness.

2CO 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The god of this world is Satan. He is a liar and the father of liars. His major objective is to destroy the children of God by seducing them through his deceit. If he is able to persuade Christians they should turn from the precious offer of grace through Jesus Christ, he is ecstatic. Thus, he attempts to place blinders upon the minds of those who show interest in the plan of salvation. He does not want them to look into the perfect law of liberty and see Christ as the glorious image of God. He would much rather they stumble and fall in the darkness.

2CO 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Some might preach for personal profit. It was not so with Paul. His goal was that men be made to see the wisdom and power of Jesus. The fact that Paul is as well known as he is today is not a result of his self-exaltation. It is the consequence

of his having glorified Jesus and then having been glorified by God. God will exalt the humble.

2CO 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The light which shines out of the darkness is the illumination of the truth which comes through Christ. He is the true spiritual light of the world. Christ's truth penetrated deep into the heart of the apostle, as well as the hearts of those to whom he preached. This resulted in men coming to know the will and character of God through seeing his Son.

2CO 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Man was created from the dust of the earth. He is limited in both mental and physical power. In spite of the frailty of man, God has seen fit to spread the gospel by human means. Paul was one of those frail dust-bound creatures. He had little power or wisdom of his own. The power he displayed came from God. He had said in Romans 1:16,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

In the earlier letter to the Corinthians he had written much about preaching that which many considered to be foolishness, but which was truly divine wisdom.

Paul was only a container for the precious water of life. But that which he dispensed was invaluable.

2CO 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

There is not a Christian alive who has faced heavy trial that will not feel a oneness with the apostle in the next few verses. Though faced with every weapon the Devil can cast at us, we will not capitulate to his will. I take great comfort in reading these words of Paul. I have not faced the resistance he did. If he could maintain his faith in the face of these obstacles, so can you and I.

Sometimes it seems that one trial is not finished until another begins. That must not defeat us. We may be perplexed as to why such circumstances are allowed to exist. Yet our faith in the providential care of God must burn strong. We cannot give up.

2CO 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

The greater the service rendered by the Christian, the greater will be the tests of his faith. It was at the cross itself that Jesus cried out, *My God, My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?* But his Father

was still in the background. He had only turned his face away for the moment because of the sin which the Son bore to remove its guilt from the souls of the faithful. We will also wonder at times if we have been forsaken. We will not be. The promise of Christ is that he will be with us always. *I will not forsake thee.*

2CO 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

When placed upon the cross, the body of Jesus was mutilated and bleeding. He had been scourged across his back. He had received a crown of thorns about his head. Nails had been driven into his hands and feet. A spear had been thrust into his side. He bore all of this that we might live.

Paul also bore scars in his body as he dutifully followed the Master carrying his own cross. The marks of his beatings had no doubt left many scars. The same life which Jesus lived, Paul lived. Jesus had his cross. Paul had his. And we must bear ours. It may be physical, or it may be mental. But it must be carried!

2CO 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

A supervisor of mine was once sympathizing with me over a problem I faced in the classroom. It

was a matter which really could not be remedied. He said, "I suppose everyone in this profession dies a little every day." They were wise words. There are some things which must be faced in life. This is particularly true in the life of a Christian. The Devil will harass us. His servants will attempt to destroy us. Though we struggle under the burden and carry the scars of our own cross, we shall overcome.

2CO 4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

At the same time that the true Christians are suffering and being scarred by Satan, the Christian may take pleasure in the fact that there are those who are snatched from spiritual death through hearing the Word of God and seeing it in action. We may even die physically for the Lord. If we give spiritual life to others while we are dying, we have won the victory.

2CO 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

The quote is from David in Psalm 116:10.

I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

The man of God must speak that which has

been given to him. Jeremiah once tried to quit preaching. It was impossible. He said it was like fire in his bones. He had to speak out. The apostles were told in the early days of the church that they must cease to teach and preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. They answered that they must speak that which they had seen and heard. Affliction and persecution will not daunt the spirit of the man of faith.

JER 20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

2CO 4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

The reason it will not stop God's servant is that hope outweighs suffering. Jesus became obedient even to the death of the cross. Then, through the power of the Spirit of God, he was raised. First he was raised from the grave, then to heaven itself. That same Spirit which raised Jesus will raise our mortal bodies and we, along with Paul the apostle, will be presented to the Father in heaven.

2CO 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

Paul attempted to do all things for the glory of God and the expansion of God's kingdom. As he preached the Word, he expected men to hear and obey it. This would lead to their salvation. When the Corinthians realized Paul was preaching for these goals and not for his own gain, they would give thanksgiving for God's grace and God would be glorified.

2CO 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For that reason Paul must not grow weary and faint under the load. The flesh might well become so tired it could hardly go on. Yet, the inward man of the spirit would receive nourishment from God and refresh the energy of the flesh.

2CO 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

In days gone by, many persons weighed materials on balances. A standard weight would be placed on one side of the balance and the object to be weighed would be placed on the other side. Paul is saying that when our present affliction is placed on one side of the spiritual balance, and the glory of eternal life is placed upon the other side, the balance will show the weight of glory to be far greater than the present trials.

2CO 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

If one were to limit his view to the things which can be seen, the Christian might very soon give up. But, our view is not limited to the temporal and visible. We look beyond the cemetery. Jesus conquered death, hell and the grave. There are numerous things which are eternal in nature. They include, the Godhead, the truth, the church, love and everlasting life. Alignment with these things motivates the Christian. He cannot be vanquished.

Let us close this chapter with the words of Romans 8:35-39.

ROM 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Chapter 5

2CO 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Chapter four closed with a discussion of the difference between the temporal and the eternal, the visible and the invisible. The earthly house of this tabernacle is the human body. It is a tabernacle because it is only a temporary dwelling. The tabernacle in the wilderness was a tent which could be dismantled and moved from place to place as the Hebrew people wandered for forty years. The human body serves a similar purpose as we make our way through this world.

The time will come when the faithful will no longer dwell in the fleshly body. It will be replaced by an eternal dwelling place built by the Lord. Every true Christian looks forward to that promise.

2CO 5:2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

Yes, there is considerable groaning while we live in this fleshly tabernacle. For about twenty-five years the body grows and becomes more efficient. Then it reverses the procedure and one can observe its steady deterioration. Various diseases attack it at every age. Gradually it succumbs to the wear and tear. The eyes grow dim. The ears are less acute. The muscles lose their tone. Even the brain loses

both size and power.

Along with these deficiencies of age come mental pressures of many kinds. Our friends and relatives have problems which we are unable to alleviate. We see society stumbling along and suffering because of its stubborn resistance to the truths revealed in the Bible. We know full well that it would be better to leave this body and this world. Yet we are willing to allow the Lord to govern the time of our departure.

2CO 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

It is not that we desire to be found with no body at all. The soul needs a means of expressing its self. A human body without a spirit is dead. A human spirit without a body is powerless. We do not wish to exist as a soul without a habitation.

2CO 5:4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

We do not remove a suit of clothes and move about naked. We put on another suit. The new suit with which we desire to be clothed in heaven is one of everlasting nature. Unlike the body of flesh which now clothes our spirit, the new body will not be subject to death. It will live forever.

2CO 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

We were not created to die. Death came about through the transgression of the law of God. God has made possible a remedy for death. It comes through the blood of Jesus Christ.

We have a way of knowing that there are much finer things ahead. Even while we live in this present body, God provides the Christian with a taste of the heavenly reward. That foretaste of heaven is found in the Holy Spirit which is given to every Christian at the time of baptism. An earnest payment is money paid at the time of purchase of a property or service. It is only a partial payment which is to be followed by full payment later. The gift of the Holy Spirit while we are in this present body is but a prelude to the unimaginable joy which awaits us in the new body.

2CO 5:6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

The flesh is like a veil which separates us from the Lord. The reader will recall that when Jesus died, the veil of the temple was split from top to bottom. He left his fleshly body to move into the Most Holy Place where he intercedes for us today.

Death is the separation of the spirit from the body. When the faithful man of God dies, his body goes back to the dust of the earth and his spirit

returns to God who gave it. We cannot move into the direct presence of God while in the flesh. However, when the body is left behind, the spirit may enter paradise and be with Christ. This is one of those passages which indicate there is no period of time in which the soul is unconscious.

This, of course, leaves us with the question of the purpose of the judgment. If the faithful move directly into the presence of God at the time of death, why should there be a day of judgment at which time the sheep are to be separated from the goats, with one group being told to enter into the joys of heaven, while the other is told to depart from God's presence? It is my personal conviction that once one leaves this world behind, time is replaced by eternity. Hours and days lose their meaning. Hebrews 9:27 tells us,

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

We are not told how long "after this" it will be before the judgment. Still, I believe in view of passages such as the one at hand, we can say it is "immediately after this."

This still does not mean the new body is provided at the time of death. The new body must be provided when Christ reappears to call the old bodies from the grave in a new incorruptible and immortal form. Then every person who has been true to God will be wearing their new suit, and living in their new house not made with hands.

2CO 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

We do not see these things now. We can only trust the promises of our Father. He has not disappointed us in the past. He is not slack concerning his promises as men count slackness. He has given his word that those who are faithful unto death will be given a crown of life, a new body, a new suit, a new house...I believe him!

2CO 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Paul used the words “we” and “us” about thirty times in this one chapter. Is he using these words to mean I? Is he using them to designate the apostles in general? Or is he talking about all of the faithful? I think it is the latter. Not only Paul, but every Christian who labors to do the will of God, would rather be with God in heaven than to be in the fleshly body. None of us look forward to death. All of us look forward to everlasting life.

2CO 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Until the times comes when we are called from this life to the next, we will be found working diligently to please the one who made us and the one who died for us. Above all things, we must be acceptable to them.

2CO 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Notice the word “must.” It will not be an invitation by choice. You and I **will** be there. Not only will each of us be there. We will be judged according to the things which we have done.

There are several pictures of the judgment found in the scriptures. Daniel saw it in a vision (Dan. 12:1-3). Solomon predicted it (Eccl. 12:13-14). John pictured it in the Revelation (Rev. 20:11-15). It is extremely important that our sins be blotted out, and that our names be written in the book of life.

2CO 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

What is Paul saying?? Is it possible that the God who loved the world so much that he was willing to give his Only Begotten Son to save it would strike terror into the hearts of men?

In spite of what some think. Jehovah is not only a God of love. He is also a God of wrath. Paul warned us in the book of Romans,

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee,

goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Rom. 11:22).

For that reason, Paul and all other dedicated Christians feel the responsibility to persuade other people of the importance of living in harmony with the will of God. God knew Paul was sincere. He prayed that those to whom he preached would also realize his sincerity.

2CO 5:12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

Paul had carefully presented his credentials as an apostle of Jesus. He had explained that his preaching was solely for the purpose of sharing hope of eternal life with his listeners and readers. He did not anticipate having to present any further evidence of his sincerity nor of his authorization to preach. They had enough information that they could rejoice in answering his critics.

His opponents were far more interested in the circumcision of the flesh than they were of the heart. But God looks on the heart.

2CO 5:13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

His detractors had accused him of being out of his head. His answer to them was that his actions

were those of a man who loved God and the lost souls of men.

2CO 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

He had good reason to preach the good news. Christ loved men enough that he was willing to die for any who would receive him. All men are lost without the loving sacrifice of the Son of God. If Christ loved men's souls to that degree, Paul felt he was to do the same. Men must hear of Jesus sacrifice.

2CO 5:15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Christ did not die in order that any one individual or group of individuals might be saved. Every man who has escaped from the entanglements of Satan is expected to reach out for others in an attempt to deliver as many as possible.

2CO 5:16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

As Christians, we are not to judge men by human standards. Paul had done that once. It resulted in him holding the garments of those who stoned

Stephen to death. It resulted in him persecuting the cause of Christ to the limit of his ability.

He had changed. No longer did he see Christ through the eyes of a Jewish Pharisee. He knew Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of lost men.

He is not talking about having walked and talked with Christ on earth. Knowing Christ after the flesh was misunderstanding the true spiritual nature of the Lamb of God.

2CO 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

What does it mean to be “in Christ?” It means that one has been freed from the guilt of sin, justified in the sight of God, and endued with the power of the Holy Spirit to meet every challenge and discharge every responsibility placed upon one by the will of God. There are new purposes, new attitudes, and new thoughts, words and actions. The way of the flesh will have been replaced by the way of the Spirit.

How does one get “in Christ.” Let Paul explain!

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death (Rom. 6:3)?

2CO 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

Everything the Christian is and does is aimed at the eternal home in heaven with the Father. It is he who sent his Son to remove the enmity and replace it with the Spirit of grace and peace.

That was Paul's life. He had been reconciled to God through Christ. Because of that he set about to offer that same reconciliation to anyone who would meet the conditions set before them by the Saviour.

2CO 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

John tells us Christ, as the Word, was God. The name Emmanuel means "God with us." Jesus said, *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:9).*

While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. Our sins may be washed away through his sacrifice and we may be counted as friends of God. We must then take the good news of our friendship to others that whosoever will may be adopted into the divine family.

2CO 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you

by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

As a ambassador for Christ, Paul had appealed to the Galatian Christians to leave behind the things of the flesh and fasten their eyes on Jesus. Sin separates from God. Christ can remove sin. As though Christ himself was pleading with them, Paul called them to leave the ranks of Satan and join the army of the Lord.

2CO 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Christ, who had no sin, bore our sin upon his back. Hear Isaiah!

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

We do not come to God through our own righteousness. The only path to the throne of the Almighty is through unity with his Son. Dear reader, if you have not been baptized into Christ, you ought to be this very day.

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Chapter 6

2CO 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

The “we” here is clearly Paul and his fellow workers such as Timothy, Barnabas, Silas and other traveling companions. They did not work independently, and on their own. They worked side by side for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is proved by his having addressed the remarks to “you.” The we and the you are two different groups.

That does not mean, however, that the recipients of the letter were not also fellow workers with Paul, nor with the Lord. Every Christian, as a part of the body of Christ, is vitally involved with the unfinished work of Jesus.

As a fellow worker with Christ, Paul did not want to see his labor wasted. If the Corinthians were to have turned back from Christ to keeping the law of Moses, Christ would have been rejected. The grace he offered to men would have been ignored. Paul’s preaching would have been to no avail.

2CO 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

The apostle used a quote from Isaiah to make the urgency of taking immediate advantage of the grace of God clear. Isaiah said in Isaiah 49:8,

Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

These words apply specifically to the Christian age. The grace of God is now offered through Christ. Tomorrow is never sure. Death is sure. With the tremendous blessing of grace within our grasp, why procrastinate? Today is the day of salvation for every man, not yesterday, for it is gone. Not tomorrow, for it may never arrive. *Now* is the accepted time. Both the Corinthians and ourselves become fools if we do not accept God's offer, or if we accept it and then turn from it later.

2CO 6:3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

It was the purpose of Paul and his companions to behave themselves in an exemplary manner in order that no shadow ever be cast upon the light of the gospel of the Son of God. It is not always possible to prevent men from criticizing unjustly. It is possible to live in such manner that any criticism will be unjust. No doubt many have chosen to avoid becoming Christians because of flaws they have detected in the lives of careless servants of God.

2CO 6:4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

It had not been easy! The obstacles had been gigantic. The patience had to be great enough to match the tribulation. There were beatings. There were times of hunger and thirst. There were diseases and weakness.

2CO 6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

At another place Paul spoke of bearing the marks of the Master on his body. He had been bound and placed in prison. He had survived riots resulting from his preaching. He had found it necessary to escape over the wall of Damascus in a basket.

2CO 6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

How had he managed to prevail? He lists the ways. He had done this by maintaining a pure life. He had made use of the knowledge made available to him through Christ. He had been willing to suffer much abuse from both those within and those outside the church. He had depended upon the power of the Spirit of God to overcome every foe. Sincere love for God and love for the souls of men had kept him going.

2CO 6:7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

Is it not interesting that Paul should wax so eloquent here? He humbly suggested several times that he was not a powerful orator. Yet the words before us indicate much greater ability than he admitted.

He felt he was more than adequately prepared for survival. He had the revealed Word of God with all of it's power to meet the enemy. He had put on the whole armor of God. His life was one of righteousness. God would protect him and see that his efforts bore fruit.

2CO 6:8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

A list of paradoxes is presented. How could one at the same time meet these opposing conditions? Yet Paul did. And many Christians have done the same over the centuries following.

There were times when Paul was seen as a god and given honor beyond that which was due. There were other times in which he was accused of lying and seeking profit at the expense of those to whom he preached. He received honor and good reports from those who understood his message. He received evil reports and accusations from those who were spiritually deaf and blind.

2CO 6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

Yes, one can be known and unknown at the same time. One can be known by some and unknown by others. The apostle was well known by those hungering and thirsting for righteousness. He was almost completely unknown to those who insisted on following their carnal minds and fleshly desires.

One can also die and yet live. Paul died a little every day in his service to Christ. Yet, at the same time, he knew the only true fulfilment was found in service to his Lord. He was dying daily, yet living life to the fullest. The same will be true of every Christian. The outer man takes a continual buffeting from many sources. One can observe the deterioration of both the mind and the body. However; even as these changes take place, there is a constant growth of the spiritual man.

2CO 6:10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

There is great sorrow in Christ. That sorrow comes from knowing the vast majority of men are traveling down the road to destruction. It comes from observing the disease and poverty of the multitudes. It comes from wishing to do so much more than it is possible to get done.

But at the same time there is great joy. The joy comes in seeing some leave the broad road and enter into the way of life everlasting. It comes from seeing hope born in the hearts of the hopeless. It comes from bringing peace and love in the place of violence and hatred.

The Christian may be so poor as not to know where the next meal will be found. At the same time, he may be an heir of the Father in heaven who possesses all things on earth and in heaven.

2CO 6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

To the Corinthians, it seemed as if Paul did not care about them. He had remained in other places for extended periods of time when they had expected him to visit them. He wanted them to realize how much he cared. In every way he knew, he was desirous of communicating with them. He was writing to them even at the time. There was room for them in his heart. He loved them very much.

2CO 6:12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

To be straightened was to be restricted or kept from expanding. In the estimation of the Corinthians, Paul might not think much of them. But that estimation was incorrect. If anyone was to restrict the fellowship between Paul and the Corinthians, it would have to be the Corinthians, and not Paul.

2CO 6:13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

He had just said that he was open to them. He loved them dearly. Now he called for them to do the same toward him. Just as a child loves its parents, he desired that they love him.

2CO 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Those who were turning away from Christ were as lost as those who had never turned to him. God's righteousness is only found in him. The Christian must cut himself off from everything which opposes God and hinders his cause. Any time a Christian links himself to those outside of the Lord, he is inviting disaster. A man cannot serve two masters. He will love one and hate the other.

There has been considerable discussion over the relevance of this verse to the marriage relationship. Without doubt marriage is one of the closest yokes one can enter into. The words here warn us against such. In spite of this, the passions of youth lead many young men and women into marriages with non-Christians. Once bound by the marriage vows, one does not dissolve the marriage to get out of the yoke. The yoke can become quite uncomfortable, but it must be carried. When properly done, this may lead to the conversion of the unbelieving mate and the raising up of believing children. If you are in this condition, do not despair. Trust and obey. God will help.

2CO 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

It seems cruel to classify anyone who is not a Christian as Belial, or a servant of Belial. The term “Belial” is nearly the same as Satan. Yet Jesus said whoever was not for him was against him. We are not fifty percent with Christ and fifty percent with Satan. To enter into business, recreation or marriage with one outside Christ is to ignore this truth.

2CO 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This is not the first instance where Paul declared Christians to be the habitation of God. When a person is baptized into Christ and God keeps his promise of sending the Holy Spirit to dwell within him, that person has become a temple of God. God lives within his children individually and also congregationally. He cherishes them as his own. There is nothing more dear to the heart of God than to love and care for his people, and have his people love and obey him. That was the purpose of our creation.

2CO 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,

and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Corinth was full of temples dedicated to the worship of idols. If God's people were to receive His blessings, they must sever their relations with idol worship. One cannot roll around in the mud without getting a little on himself. One cannot come into steady contact with idolatry and unrighteousness without rotting the soul. A rotten soul is not a suitable place for the Spirit of the Holy God to dwell.

2CO 6:18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Jehovah is not presented as a Father in the Old Testament, as He is in the New Testament. In the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages, He was God, and the Hebrews were His people. The Christian age marks the introduction of this concept in full force. God the Father sent His Only Begotten Son into the world that we all might have the power to become His children. A father has a special concern and affection for his sons and daughters. He loves them. He provides for them. He chastises and corrects them. He rejoices in their success and happiness.

Paul's words concerning the Father apply to us just as they did to those in Corinth. Separate yourselves from all unrighteousness. Allow the Father to lead you. He will care for you and bless you.

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Chapter 7

2CO 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The promises of which Paul wrote are those of life in the Spirit here and life everlasting in heaven. With such blessings to motivate us, why should any man revel in the fleshly attractions of this world? Each of us should move onward toward the image of God as seen through Jesus.

The fear in this verse is respect for the awesome power of Jehovah. Paralyzing fear is dissolved by love. Reverent respect is magnified by love.

2CO 7:2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

It is most difficult for Paul to realize there were some in Corinth who condemned him as a gainsayer. Nothing was farther from his mind than taking advantage of his brethren. He could honestly say he had not injured any one of them. There was no reason to reject him, and every reason to accept his message. There was nothing to lose, but everything to gain.

2CO 7:3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

It was not his purpose to criticize them. Contrariwise, he wished with all his heart that they could be well in every way. Every thought and action the apostle took was aimed at their physical and spiritual welfare.

2CO 7:4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

There had been difficulties beyond description as a result of Paul's determination to preach the gospel to the Gentile world. He had fought valiantly to overcome every obstacle in order that he might speak plainly and forcefully about the Saviour. He was proud of the manner of speech he had used toward them. He was also proud of, and comforted by, those who had responded to the preaching of the cross.

2CO 7:5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

Is it not a strange thing that the offering of God's blessings is often met by fierce opposition upon the part of the very ones to whom the blessings are presented? I have heard of men spitting in a preacher's face because their son or daughter had been baptized into Christ at a gospel meeting conducted by that preacher. How sad it was that Paul had to endure such humiliation

and fear as he carried out the charge given him by the Lord.

2CO 7:6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

In the midst of despondency over the trials, Titus had come to him with news that the situation in Corinth had improved greatly. That had been a source of great consolation.

It was God who had sent Titus. The Almighty never leaves his people to despair. He is always working in the background to bring about the best possible results for both the individual and for God's Kingdom.

2CO 7:7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

The news from Titus had been delightful. It was not just seeing Titus once more that had made Paul lighter of heart. It was the fact that Titus himself had been lifted up by the improvements in Corinth. Joy filled Paul's heart. This made all of his hard work worth while.

2CO 7:8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

It had been necessary for Paul to dampen their spirits by his sharp correction. He was now happy that he rebuked them. The rebuke had paid high dividends in the salvation of souls. Their sadness at being corrected had made it possible for them to be much happier in the long run.

2CO 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

Paul had no joy in knowing they had been grieved. He had found joy in the news that they had repented. Their sorrow was not the type of sorrow which leads to even greater grief. It was the type that leads to later happiness as lives are changed for the good. Even the temporary damage Paul had done to their pride had been turned to joy.

2CO 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

There is a very critical truth in this verse. Sorrow and repentance are not identical. When God commands men to repent, he is not satisfied with sorrow. Godly sorrow leads to repentance. Repentance is a change of action. It is a turning from evil and toward righteousness. Many criminals are extremely sorry about their condition. The sorrow, however, comes from being caught and not from concern over having done wrong. The man who has repented will

have first been sorry for his sin. Then he will have turned from it toward the way of the Lord.

2CO 7:11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Look at the list of consequences of their godly sorrow. They had become careful about further sinning. They had cleared their lives from sin. They had even become indignant over any attempt to bring sin back into their lives. They had developed a fear of falling back into it. They had a healthy desire to do right. They had revenged both Paul and themselves toward Satan and his allies. The apostle was happy!

2CO 7:12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Paul had not written to them in an effort to line himself up with or against certain persons in the church at Corinth. He was concerned, of course, about them injuring one another. But, his purpose in writing was not to decide who was right and

who was wrong, as much as it was to show them how much he cared for their souls.

2CO 7:13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

The Corinthians were now happier. Titus had been made happier, and Paul had also found joy in the changes which had taken place.

2CO 7:14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.

It seems that Paul had spoken very favorably to Titus about the Corinthians. He had felt he was telling the truth about them. Just as he had spoken the truth boldly to the Corinthians, he had also been truthful when telling Titus about them. Now, since they had changed their ways, the things which he had told Titus about them had proven to be correct.

2CO 7:15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

Through his association with them, Titus had learned to love them. He had related to Paul how

they had obeyed the will of God, and had also accepted Titus in their midst. Rather than opposing Titus, they had heard his message.

2CO 7:16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

All of these circumstances had inspired Paul with great confidence in the future of the church in the city of Corinth. He could look forward to future growth.

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Chapter 8

2CO 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

We do you to wit means “I want you to know.” Grace from God had been poured out upon the churches of Macedonia. What was this grace? Paul is about to explain it.

2CO 8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

The grace God had bestowed upon the Macedonian Christians was the ability and the opportunity to make a contribution to others who were in greater need than they were. You see, a contribution by a Christian involves two aspects of grace. There is the grace God has manifested toward the giver in blessing him with whatever he has to give. Then, there is the grace which the giver bestows upon the recipient of the gift which he offers.

The Macedonians were not rich by any measure. They had been under much tribulation. Paul even described it as deep poverty. In spite of this poverty, they found joy in sharing some of that which they had available with others in even greater need. By giving, they became spiritually rich.

2CO 8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

They had given all they were able to give. In fact, they gave more than they could have been expected to offer. This came about because they were of a willing heart. We are reminded of the poor widow who cast in two mites under the observant eye of Jesus. He said others had given of their abundance. She had in a sacrificial manner, offered from her need.

2CO 8:4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

The Macedonians had not only offered willingly. They had pleaded with Paul to receive the contribution which they offered and assume the responsibility for seeing that it arrived in Jerusalem to aid the poor saints there. The saints in Jerusalem are not mentioned in this verse; however, Paul made this a major feature of his missionary work. When he had met with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to discuss what the Gentiles were expected to do when they became Christians, the leaders there had approved of his activities in going to the Gentiles. But, they had requested that while he was preaching to the Gentiles, he not forget the poor saints there in Jerusalem. Paul did not forget.

I am convinced Paul felt the gifts which the Gentiles offered to the Jewish saints in Jerusalem would aid in bringing the Jews and the Gentiles together as one in Jesus Christ. It is a sad thing that it was while he was delivering the Gentile's gift to the saints at Jerusalem that he was arrested and imprisoned.

2CO 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

Far beyond what they could have been expected to do, the Macedonian Christians had given. The reason for their generosity was that they first gave themselves. That, my friends, is the secret of all successful giving. If one first gives himself, he will open his heart. As soon as the heart is opened, all else follows. The time, the skills and talents, and the financial means all flow plentifully from the open heart of the one who has first given himself.

It is God's will that men give. He is the Father of giving. All good and perfect gifts come from him, including his Son. When God's children give, he is assured that they are his own.

2CO 8:6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

Paul needed help in collecting and administering the gifts. Therefore, he authorized Titus to help in the task. Titus had apparently helped Paul in

receiving the gift of the Macedonians. Now he was to continue in that work by collecting that of the Corinthians also.

2CO 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

There were many of the virtues of Christian life that one could observe in the Corinthians. They trusted in the existence of God and respected his Word. They had attained knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel and were able to preach that knowledge to others. They were energetic and filled with love toward Paul. However, they could possess all of these fine qualities and still fall short of being completely approved of God. Paul wished to make certain they did not lack in the grace of giving.

2CO 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

This is not the first time Paul mentioned that something he was writing did not come from a direct command of Christ. Still, we are reminded that he spoke as an inspired apostle. The reason for writing on the matter at hand was that he wished to let them know others had already given. A positive response would prove their love of God and man was sincere.

2CO 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for

your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

The prime example for giving was Jesus the Lord. No one could have been in possession of greater riches than he had when he was in the glory of heaven. On a grander scale than that of Moses who gave up the pleasures of the Egyptian palace to lead the people of Israel through forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Jesus allowed himself to be born into this sin stained world where he had no place to even lay his head. Ah, yes dear reader, he did become poor that we might become rich.

No man ever matched the love of the Son of God. All men are expected to try. The Macedonians had already tried. Paul expected the Corinthians to follow suit.

2CO 8:10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

In verse eight he had said he did not write by direct commandment. Now he offered them his advice. The advice was to follow up on the plans which they had initiated a year before the time of writing this letter. It would be a commendable thing for them to bring those plans to fruition. A year is sufficient time for preparation. It was time to act.

2CO 8:11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so

there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

James said,

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (James 2:14-17).

Lip service on the part of the Corinthians was not going to be sufficient to care for the Jerusalem saints. It would take solid action as faith came alive.

2CO 8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

After a Christian has made up his mind to perform some godly deed, there are certain considerations which should be followed. No man is expected to drive himself into abject poverty, while those to whom he gives live in the lap of luxury. That would be unreasonable.

2CO 8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

Neither Paul nor God urged men to place their own lives in jeopardy while their gifts enriched the ones who received them.

At this point I must express my personal disgust toward those radio and television evangelists who fleece poor widows of their living, while they build mansions worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. They show pictures of starving children in order to motivate the giving; then divert the contributions to their own uses. Such devilish practices will bring condemnation in the day of the Lord.

2CO 8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

The purpose of requesting gifts from the Corinthians was to see that all had enough to support themselves, while no one lacked. No deserving brother or sister in the family of God ought ever to be hungry or cold while another brother or sister has an excess of food, shelter and clothing.

2CO 8:15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

The quote here is from Exodus 16:16-18.

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread

which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

God had provided enough for all. If one man hoarded, another would not have enough. Therefore, if one picked up more manna than his neighbor, all was to be placed in a common place and was to be measured out equally. This is not communism as we have seen it operate in the Soviet Union. Christian sharing is not mandatory. It is voluntary.

2CO 8:16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

If it were not for God, no man could accomplish anything. If Titus was concerned about the Corinthians and the saints at Jerusalem, it was only because God had made it possible. This does not take anything away from the fine decision Titus had made. It only declares God's part in the process.

Paul was very thankful that Titus shared his love and concern for all men, both Jew and Gentile.

2CO 8:17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

The exhortation of which Paul spoke no doubt came from Paul. Since Paul had found it necessary to remain in Ephesus for such an extended period, he needed someone to go to the Corinthians and move them to action. Titus was on the way at the time.

2CO 8:18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

Who was the brother whom Paul sent with Titus? We do not know. There have been suggestions that it was Luke. We know Luke was a traveling companion with Paul. We also know Luke was well known throughout the churches. Also, Luke wrote one of the accounts of the gospel. All of these matters fit the picture of the brother who accompanied Titus. But, very honestly, we can only guess.

2CO 8:19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

There was a small band of men ready to oversee the receipt of the gifts as well as the delivery of them.

Paul had invited both the churches in Macedonia and the Corinthians to pick out men from among them who would go along with the gifts to see that all was honest and above board. Paul wished there to be no shadow cast on either the glory of God, or the character of those who administered the collection and delivery of the gifts.

2CO 8:20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is ad-ministered by us:

In those days, as in our own, there were men who profited at the expense of God's cause. They were far more interested in feathering their own nest than in serving Christ and his followers. The apostle was determined that no one would be able to justly accuse him of acting in selfishness.

Much harm has been done by careless handling of contributions for the work of the Lord. I am painfully aware of a case existing even as I write. A man who has spent much of his life in promoting the Kingdom of God in missionary areas has been accused by a well known and respected preacher in the states of having been careless in record keeping and reporting. I do not know enough of the details of the situation to make an accurate judgment. I do know the resulting friction has been a hindrance to God's work.

2CO 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Christians are to avoid the very appearance of evil. Both God and men must find the servant of God to be scrupulously honest. There must not be the slightest hint of shadows and hypocrisy.

2CO 8:22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

Is the brother in this verse the same as the one who was mentioned previously? Or is it Titus himself? The next verse may be an indication that it was Titus. I cannot be sure. I believe, however, that it was the brother Paul said he was sending with Titus.

Whichever was the case, the individual was well tested. Paul had tremendous confidence in him. He also had confidence that the Corinthians would make all of these preparations worth while and would contribute generously of their means.

2CO 8:23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

If any man had the slightest doubt about Titus, Paul was ready to vouch for him. He had been with the apostle and was now Paul's designated representative to meet with the Corinthians. He

could be trusted, and should be!

There was also good reason to trust the rest of the group who had been sent along by the various churches. These were of good character and would promote the glory of God.

Some sectarians have used this group of men to justify sending overseers from a denominational headquarters to legislate for various congregations. These men Paul sent were not supervising the churches. They were accompanying the gifts for the saints in Jerusalem to see that all was orderly and responsible.

2CO 8:24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

The Corinthians were to trust Titus and every other person in the group. Paul had made the boast that the Corinthians were ready to give a generous offering. He did not wish to be embarrassed for them, or for God, because of any stinginess on their part.

The decision as to how much one should give to fellow Christians is not an easy one. If one gives too little, someone who needs help may be neglected. If one gives too much, someone who is lazy will take advantage of the situation and become even more lazy. It is probably better to err on the side of generosity than on the side of caution. Prayer is an absolute necessity. With God working in the background, all things will work together for good.

Chapter 9

2CO 9:1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

An honest compliment never hurt anyone's efforts to get others to help a cause. I do not think Paul is flattering here. He truly believed the Corinthians would back up their promises with action. He says it is not necessary to write to them about giving to the Jerusalem saints. Nevertheless, he goes ahead and writes about it. What we have is apparently just a courteous reminder.

2CO 9:2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

He had not hesitated to boast to those in Macedonia that the Corinthians had already committed themselves to help. In fact, they had been an inspiration to the Macedonians, as they made up their own mind to give assistance.

2CO 9:3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

Just in case the Corinthians needed a reminder of their promise, Paul had sent the others ahead to make contact ahead of time. This is the mark

of a capable administrator. Surprises are not good. By preparing the way before he arrived, everything should have been ready to move smoothly upon his arrival.

2CO 9:4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

Paul would have been just as ashamed as the Corinthians if those representatives from Macedonia had come with him and found that his confidence in the willingness of the Corinthians to make a contribution had been misplaced.

2CO 9:5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

There was a need for a bounteous contribution. Not only that. It needed to be brought forth from a willing heart and not given grudgingly. Christ did not give grudgingly. Neither should his followers. The apostle felt that all of these preparations would result in a full harvest for the Jewish saints back in Jerusalem.

2CO 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he

which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every farmer knows one does not save by skimping on the quality or the quantity of the seed which is sown. It does not pay to sow half the amount of seed which should be sown in a given field. That only reduces the harvest to one half. Spiritual laws often follow the same pattern as physical or natural laws. The Corinthians were sowing seed which would later ripen for the glory of God. They must sow abundantly.

2CO 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Is it right to pledge a certain amount beforehand and then be expected to meet the pledge? This verse speaks of purposing. Each of the Corinthians needed to decide just how much he was willing to give. Then, when the time arrived, the gift would be gathered and taken to Jerusalem.

Many congregations do request that the members pledge a certain amount which they plan to give during the upcoming year. This aids the elders in setting a budget and meeting it. Usually this results in increased giving. When members think about the amount they are going to give, they tend to be a bit more generous. I think there is nothing in the Bible that would oppose this.

However, I also think it is quite unwise to put

excessive pressure on anyone who does not feel comfortable in making known how much he or she expects to give. Some feel this is making the giving too public. After all, the Bible says not to let the left hand know what the right hand does. Although this particular verse is aimed at ostentation, or showing off, it does cause some to feel uncomfortable making the amount they give public information.

2CO 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Paul did not hesitate to remind them God is responsible for all they have. His grace had been poured out upon them to the extent that they had something to give. It was time to follow the example of the Father and the Son. God's children should act like their Father.

There are many good works which await Christians today. A large number of them remain unfinished because those who are able to help do not accept the challenge.

2CO 9:9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Paul loved to quote the Word of God. He had studied the Old Testament with great care. Time after time he called forth a quotation from the law, the prophets or the wisdom literature to prove a point. This time the quote is from Psalms 112:9.

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

2CO 9:10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

The same God who makes seed available to the farmer for the production of a full harvest is the one who has provided each of us with the possessions we have. These may be used as spiritual seed for the harvest of souls. The fruit which is produced from this spiritual seed is the righteousness of men; both the righteousness of the sower and of the souls which are harvested.

2CO 9:11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Every man who labors in the service of Jesus Christ to supply the needs of those in want, shares in an outpouring of gratitude to God. The production of glory to God is the true purpose for existence for each of us.

2CO 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

The Corinthian gifts would fill the needs of those to whom they gave. But, even more important, they would also cause much thanksgiving to be offered to the Father in heaven for his part in making such activities possible.

2CO 9:13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

The saints who were to receive the gifts would see the givers as being subject to the will of God. The gospel is one of giving and sharing. The glory would spread out from their work to all parts of the world. Yes indeed, it has done so. It has shone throughout the world wherever the book of Second Corinthians has been studied, from that day unto this one in which I write these words.

2CO 9:14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Those who were to receive the gifts would offer prayers for those who had given. Their hearts would always desire only that which was best for the Corinthians and for any others who share in this gracious act of giving.

2CO 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

No member of the church in Corinth would ever begin to match the gift given by God himself. We can only do our best. No man possesses a gift as valuable as the Only Begotten Son.

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Chapter 10

2CO 10:1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

Paul was ready to aim some strong remarks at those in the church at Corinth who had been seeking to discredit him. He did not intend to do it in a cruel and dominant manner, but he fully intended to get their attention. He wrote with a meek and gentle spirit such as Jesus himself had. But, as Jesus commanded attention, Paul would do the same.

It is apparent that some were accusing him of being extremely bold in his words when he was at a distance, but much more subdued when he was with them in person. It is quite possible that the manual labor he performed as a tentmaker left some of the members with a wrong impression. Paul made every attempt to avoid profiting at the expense of those to whom he preached. He wanted no taint at all upon the gospel or the Kingdom of God. He worked to support himself in order that he would not have to call upon them for any more than necessary. Some may have misinterpreted his actions and looked down upon him.

2CO 10:2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

He would prefer not to have to deal harshly with those detractors when he was finally able to come to them. He would do whatever was necessary to defend his actions. They might have mistakenly felt that his manual labor was an indication that he was material minded. That was not the case.

2CO 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

It is necessary to live in this fleshly body. It is necessary to feed it, clothe it and provide protection from the elements of the weather. However, no one should gain the impression that such activities mean the person doing so is neglecting the far more important spiritual matters. Paul's war was spiritual in nature. Any time and energy spent in maintaining the flesh was incidental.

2CO 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Jesus spent much time while present on earth with his disciples in trying to lift their vision from the material things of life to the spiritual realm. He was the bread of life. He offered men living water. He was the Great Physician. He was the Way. His battle was against the wiles of the Devil.

It was the same with Paul. The weapons with which he fought were not bombs, tanks and steel swords. Nevertheless, they were fantastically powerful, and able to bring the fortifications of

Satan crashing down. I wonder, dear reader, do you and I have the same confidence as that shown by the apostle?

2CO 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

The word “imagination” is normally used in the scriptures as a very negative term. As an example, remember that God said every imagination of the heart of those in the days of Noah was on evil continually. Today, if a child places a row of blocks on the floor and imagines them to be a train, we say the child has a creative imagination. This is thought of as a positive quality. Paul used the word in the negative framework in which it is usually found in the Bible. These imaginations are the ideas that we are strong enough to fight against the will of God.

There are many high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. Humanism, materialism, atheism, and agnosticism are a few of them. You will note that this is the world of ideas. Our war with Satan is fought primarily in the minds of men. Out of the heart are the issues of life. The godless ones are well aware of the importance of capturing the mind. That is why Satan makes every effort to invade the educational and political systems of the world. The Christian must not capitulate. He that worketh in us is greater than he that worketh in them. There will be victory through Jesus our Lord.

2CO 10:6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

There was still a fight to be won against Satan in the church at Corinth. Some were fighting on the wrong side. Paul was prepared to wage that battle either in person, or at a distance. The rebellion against the cause of Christ would be attended to. When that happened, he expected their obedience to be closer to what God expected of them.

2CO 10:7 Do ye look on things after the out-ward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

They were to cease judging Paul's efforts on a shallow and material basis. If they insisted on evaluating his message by his personal appearance, or by his tentmaking activities, they were making a grave mistake. Any man among them who was truly a Christian would recognize him as an apostle of the Lord.

2CO 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

He was sorry that it had become necessary to write strong words to them. But he certainly was

not ashamed of having done so. He had received authorization to come to them from the Lord himself. He was not using that authority to do them damage. He was using it to build them up. He had done nothing for which he should be ashamed.

2CO 10:9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

It was certainly not his intention to intimidate them, or scare them through the things he had written. There were far more important reasons.

2CO 10:10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

At this point, we begin to see very clearly why he accused them of judging by outward appearances. Three factors had influenced them. Paul was not an impressive man like King Saul, who stood head and shoulders above others, or like Absalom who impressed the people with his physical appearance. Paul was, on the other hand, weak in physical makeup. Neither was he a powerful orator such as Apollos. It is possible that his thorn in the flesh was a speech defect. We cannot be sure.

But, while he seemed despicable to some of the Corinthians when he was with them in person, his letters sounded just the opposite. He wrote as if he was a giant, and had the ability to back up his words with action.

2CO 10:11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

The time would come when they would have opportunity to see whether or not he could back up what he was saying. They would be wise to pay heed to his message.

Do you recall that when Paul first began his missionary efforts, a man on the island of Cyprus was struck blind because of his opposition to the work of Paul and Barnabas. Paul did have the wherewithal to gain respect!! Also recall what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they underestimated the power of God. They were both struck dead.

2CO 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Humans are not sufficient standards of measurement. Christ is the standard. The Word of God is the basis of proper evaluation. When men begin measuring themselves or others by human standards, gross disaster follows. It is unwise in the extreme to be satisfied with our nature or our efforts when we look at a fellow human and say to ourselves, “I am alright in the sight of God because I am superior to my neighbor.”

Nor should religious sects be built upon the philosophies and reputations of men. Any such organizations will ultimately crumble. The foundations are just not strong enough to hold up the building.

2CO 10:13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

Paul was not ready to throw away all measuring sticks. He simply wanted the one that measured accurately. It was the yardstick by which he measured himself, and also the one by which they were to measure, and be measured. He did not intend to be measured by their standards. He would be quite willing to be measured by the Lord.

2CO 10:14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

The apostle was actually attempting to lay himself beside the measuring stick of the Lord when he came to them with the gospel. If he had not preached to them, he would have come up short under the careful eye of Jehovah.

2CO 10:15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours;

but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

How could Paul measure up in their sight? He could become larger if they would hear the Word of God and obey it. As their faith increased, Paul himself would be enlarged through the success of the gospel. He did not intend to gain a reputation either by feasting on the labors of other men, or by being compared with other men.

2CO 10:16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

How should a man gain glory? Should it be in profiting from the labors of others? The false teachers in Corinth were quite happy to settle down among the people and suck their spiritual blood. The fact that Paul had labored so hard to build up the church in Corinth meant nothing to them. It was more important to them that they enlarge their own dominion.

That could never be Paul's approach. Even when he did find himself able to come and visit them, he would not remain there for an indefinite period. He was obligated to move on and plant the seed of the Word in soil which was as yet barren.

2CO 10:17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Any glory Paul sought was to come from God. As the Kingdom moved out over the Gentile world, Paul received all of the glory for which he was seeking. When Christ was glorified, Paul was glorified; for Paul had been baptized into Christ.

2CO 10:18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

A man can be completely deceived as to his own accomplishments and worth. There was no need for Paul to brag on himself. It would not change his true value in the slightest. The commendation of the Lord was all important. If God was pleased with him, Paul was pleased with himself. If God was not pleased, Paul must do better.

When a man or woman humbles their own spirit and comes into subjection to God, they will be rewarded with honor. No man, other than Christ, ever gave up self to the degree Paul did. No man, other than Christ, was ever exalted higher. Paul did not have to exalt himself. The Lord handled that part of it.

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Chapter 11

2CO 11:1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

The apostle is about to present reasons why the Corinthians should pay very close attention to his admonitions. He makes a plea before God that they may do so. He is about to enter into such matters as would be unnecessary except for their misunderstanding of his reason for coming to them.

There are two senses in which what he was about to write may be considered folly. First, some of them had considered his preaching foolishness. He would continue to write and teach the same message, regardless of their low opinion of it.

Second, it had become critical that he spend some time talking about himself. He did not relish the task. There were other important things which needed to be accomplished. It was folly to boast of his own experiences and qualifications. Yet it had to happen. Otherwise, they would not listen.

2CO 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

He was jealous on behalf of Jesus Christ. They had promised themselves to the Lord. Now, they were acting as if they were ready to follow the seducing false teachers back to the law of Moses. To do that would be to commit spiritual adultery.

The marriage of the Lamb is ahead. Every

Christian is a part of the bride of Christ. We are only espoused, or engaged at this time. The marriage will take place after the resurrection and the judgment. Until that time, we must keep ourselves spiritually pure and faithful for our future husband in order that we will not be rejected.

2CO 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Men are all too apt to follow any smooth speaker. Nearly anyone can gain a following, regardless of his cause, if he acts confident of what he is saying and speaks fluently. The false teachers were persuading some of the Christians to depart from Christ and follow them.

The Christian system is a simple one. It takes someone like these seducers to complicate it. Millions of men and women have been stolen from Christ, in generation after generation. It takes human interference to misunderstand the simplicity of the gospel. But, there have always been those who were ready to offer such “help.”

2CO 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Paul expressed his concern in plain words. He

knew the danger. As soon as someone came along preaching a perverted gospel, or a false Christ, some would follow him. That must be prevented if at all possible. The reason he wrote about another spirit is that the spirit is the point of origination for the preaching which one does. If the preaching is from a seducing spirit of men, some are in danger of being lost. If the Spirit which originates the message is the Holy Spirit, men will be saved. We are to try the spirits to see if they are of God.

2CO 11:5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

Here comes the “folly” he spoke of earlier. He was forced to defend his qualifications.

Who were the “chiefest apostles” of whom he was writing. The Roman church would have us believe Peter was the “chiefest apostle.” They point out that Peter was given the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16). But, the others were given those same keys just a bit later in the same record. It is true that Peter, James and John were somewhat closer to Christ at times. For example, they were present on the Mount of Transfiguration and also in the garden of Gethsemane.

I do not believe God ranked the apostles in order of their importance. This verse is only Paul's means of saying he was an apostle in the truest sense. He had the right to be heard.

2CO 11:6 But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

Again, we find Paul referring to his lack of oratorical power. I cannot help but think this had something to do with the respect some of the Corinthians had for Apollos who was a fine orator. In the first letter, there were those who were saying they were of Apollos. Paul says, "Please look beyond the majesty of the presentation and pay heed to the meat of the message." He had not failed to be clear. They should have understood what he had preached to them.

2CO 11:7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

He had done his best not to be a burden on them. He had worked with Priscilla and Aquila as a tentmaker in order not to have to beg them for support. When he said he preached the gospel freely, he was not talking about boldness of preaching. He was talking about what it had cost them to hear it.

2CO 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

He had not hesitated to receive support from other congregations who were already established so that he might build the congregation at Corinth. Here is a fine example of one congregation paying a preacher in order that he might do missionary work in another area.

2CO 11:9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

The brethren from the church in Macedonia in the north of Greece had provided Paul with enough support to keep him preaching in Corinth. No man in Corinth could say Paul owed him anything. It had been that way in the past, and Paul intended to pursue the same course in the future.

2CO 11:10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

What boasting? The boasting that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that it is worth any sacrifice to offer it to those who have not heard it. Achaia was the province in which Corinth was located.

2CO 11:11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

Why did the apostle make such sacrifices? Certainly not because he wished to gain either profit or fame from them. God himself would take care of that part. He did these things because he loved their souls. If they did not have the discernment to know his heart, God did.

2CO 11:12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

He would keep on just as he had been. This would keep all men from having any just criticism of his motives. The false teachers were receiving gain from their teaching. They apparently wished that Paul would promote such a policy. Instead, Paul placed the pressure on them to get their glory by preaching the truth and saving men's souls.

2CO 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

They were claiming to be apostles when they were not. They were filled with lies and greed.

2CO 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Their actions were not unexpected. They were servants of Satan and thus could be expected to obey their master and follow his example. Satan was a liar from the beginning when he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. He made it appear that he had something to offer when death was the only wages he was prepared to pay.

2CO 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the

ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Those who minister for Satan will follow his example. They will appear to be holy when they are full of corruption. God is perfectly aware of their deceit and will see that their destiny is appropriate to their destructive methods.

2CO 11:16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

If they insisted on thinking of him as a fool for preaching without cost, he pleaded with them to hear what he had to say anyway. He still had some “foolish boasting” to do.

2CO 11:17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

Before he could actually present the truth of God, it was necessary for him to gain a hearing. After having proven his dedication, he would go on to preach the meat of the gospel.

2CO 11:18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

It seemed to Paul that fleshly accomplishments received far more respect than they deserved. Yet, he was forced to list some of his own accomplishments to gain their attention.

2CO 11:19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

Paul was being highly sarcastic. They thought they were so very clever. Yet, they were completely duped by the false teachers. They were being taken for everything they had. All the while, they envisioned themselves as wise and discerning.

2CO 11:20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

What foolish people! They were being enslaved. They were being eaten alive. They were being robbed and smitten about. And they seemed to like it!

2CO 11:21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

These deceitful workers had spoken very boldly and accused Paul of being weak and despicable. If they wished to speak so boldly, he would speak boldly also. He had been challenged to make comparisons between them and himself. He would provide a few comparisons.

2CO 11:22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

They claimed to be *Hebrews*, reading the Hebrew language in their worship services and speaking it. Paul also spoke Hebrew as his native language.

They claimed to be *Israelites*, descendants of Jacob rather than of Esau. Paul also was a descendant of Jacob.

They claimed to be *descendants of Abraham* and therefore a part of the covenant and the promise. Paul could trace his lineage through Benjamin, to Jacob, Isaac and Abraham.

2CO 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

This verse helps to clarify the exact position of these seducers. They claimed to be Christians. But as proud Jews, they expected the Gentiles to undergo circumcision and observe the feasts, sacrifices and holy days of the law of Moses.

Now we come to a barrage of obstacles which Paul had overcome through the Spirit of God. He had been imprisoned. He had been beaten beyond description. He had worked ceaselessly. His very life had been in danger repeatedly.

2CO 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

It was not lawful for the Jews to beat a man with more than forty stripes because it would bring

charges of extremely cruelty and disrespect for the law (See Deut. 25:3).

Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee (Dt. 25:3).

Therefore, the beating was halted at thirty-nine stripes to avoid going over the limit by miscount. Five different times Paul had received such a beating.

2CO 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

The beating with rods must have differed from the stripings above. Recently, a young American was arrested in Singapore for destruction of property. A great uproar arose in the United States because he was imprisoned and sentenced to “caning.” A bamboo rod was used to beat him across the back a few times. The young American may well have deserved the punishment. Paul did not.

2CO 11:26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

Peril is danger. I will not discuss each of these in detail. They are self evident. I will say that it took a man of tremendous faith to endure them. If ever a man had earned the right to be heard, Paul was that man.

2CO 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

He had often ached with pain and weariness. He had been hungry and thirsty. He had been cold and wet. It had been necessary to watch carefully on every side that any new threat might be met.

2CO 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

On top of all the burdens just listed, he had a constant concern over the welfare of the saints whom he had converted in various locations. Every day added to that weight.

Any preacher of today who is conscientious will partially understand the load laid on the apostle's back. When the church is prospering and all is well, such concerns can be borne with a degree of joy. But when the church is under attack by those such as the Judaizing teachers Paul dealt with at Corinth, there is much agony.

2CO 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

Any time a Christian stumbled and fell, Paul felt the weakness. Any time a Christian was abused, Paul felt the abuse. Is this the kind of man the false teachers were accusing of being weak and despised?

2CO 11:30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

2CO 11:31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

Yes, Paul would glory, but his glory would not be in the spoils he could collect from his listeners and readers. It would be in the fact that he had served well.

2CO 11:32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

In the very beginning of his ministry, he had been sought by the governor of the city of Damascus. It had quickly spread that Saul the persecutor had begun serving the Christ he had formerly fought. The Jews attempted to stop him immediately. He allowed himself to be transformed from persecutor to persecuted!

2CO 11:33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

In a humiliating fashion, Paul had to be secretly let down over the wall of the city of Damascus to avoid being arrested and perhaps even killed for his change of allegiance.

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Chapter 12

2CO 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

It had been unpleasant to spend so much time talking about his tribulations. There was a need to turn to the message which he had been charged to preach. That information had been delivered to him in a very special way.

2CO 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above four-teen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

Strangely, the man of whom he speaks in this verse is himself. It is as though Paul felt a little less conspicuous as he talked about himself in the third person rather than the in first person. He had been caught up from earth into the heavens, at least in mind. He still, fourteen years afterward, was not able to tell whether it had been his spirit alone, or both spirit and body, which had been taken up.

The Bible speaks of three different heavens. There is the heaven where the birds fly. There is the heaven where the sun, moon, stars and other heavenly bodies are found. Then there is the third heaven, which is the abode of God and the angels. Some fiction writers speak of seven heavens. The Bible speaks of only three.

Let's explore this fourteen year period of time for a moment. After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul went into Arabia and returned to Damascus. Three years from the time of his conversion, he went to Jerusalem and met with Peter for a short period of fifteen days. He tells that, fourteen years later, he went to Jerusalem again, after preaching among the Gentiles (See Gal. 1:15-2:2). It may be that the beginning of the fourteen years Paul preached among the Gentiles was the same event of which he speaks here as fourteen years ago. We do know that he desired to stay in Jerusalem while he was there, but Jesus appeared to him and told him his preaching would not be accepted there and that he was to enter into his work with the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21).

I leave it to the reader to put all of this material together. Pieces of information are found in Acts 11, Acts 22, Galatians 1 and 2, as well as here in 2 Corinthians, and perhaps other places also.

2CO 12:3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

Only God himself knows whether Paul's body accompanied his spirit into the presence of God. Ezekiel and John the apostle also had somewhat similar experiences. Ezekiel speaks of being caught up and moved from place to place by the Spirit of God. John was caught up into heaven and saw visions (Rev. 4:1-3). Details of these events are not given. We must be satisfied with that which God has seen fit to reveal.

2CO 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Now Paul says he was caught up into paradise. We are immediately reminded of Christ's statement to the thief on the cross that he would be with Christ that day in paradise. Abraham seems to have been in paradise as Lazarus rested on his bosom, as recorded in Luke 16:23. The tree of life is said to be found in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7). From these passages, it seems one can be in the paradise of God and in the presence of God in spirit, without the body being present. The resurrection is not necessary for the human spirit to be caught up in this manner.

Paul heard words which he was charged not to speak to us when he returned from his visions. This time, our minds turn to the passage in Revelation which tells us John was about to write about the seven thunders when God told him not to write. There are some things that must remain hidden to the eyes and ears of humans until the proper time comes. The things which are revealed belong to man, but the secret things belong to God.

2CO 12:5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

Paul did not wish to spend time talking about his human accomplishments. These were not the primary things that qualified him for a hearing

by the Corinthians or any other men. It was the divine message which had been revealed to him that must be heard. Any glorying he did had to be in the fact that God had taken such a foolish and weak man as he was and made him an apostle of the Lord.

2CO 12:6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

No doubt the apostle had as much temptation as any other man to cherish the praise and honor of his fellow humans. But, he knew that would be detrimental to both himself and the cause he promoted. It would cause men to think of him more highly than they ought to think. If Paul took credit for the wisdom which had been revealed to him by the Lord, men would be giving him credit far beyond that which he deserved.

2CO 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

It would have become easy to be puffed up with pride over the wisdom which had been entrusted to him. God saw to it that such did not happen. Paul

was allowed to carry some type of burden which humbled him, probably some affliction which could be seen by others. Some believe he had poor eyesight, since he said at one point that there were those who would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him. Some think he suffered from a fever such as malaria, caught while traveling in areas where the water was unfit to drink. Others believe he had a speech defect since he talked several times about not being an effective speaker.

I said it was probable that the thorn in the flesh was something others could see. But it is even possible that he had to fight off sexual temptation. He did not have a wife. Such a temptation would certainly qualify as a thorn in the flesh. Whatever this thorn was, it was a result of Satan's activities. God only permitted it to keep Paul humble.

2CO 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

The thorn certainly must have been difficult to bear. One would think Paul would have given up in his request for its removal after he was rejected the first time. He did not give up. three times he begged that it be taken away.

2CO 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

God explained that Paul needed to be satisfied with the lot which came to him. God had been very gracious to him in a number of ways. God also knew best just what Paul needed in order to serve most effectively.

What did God mean when he said his strength is made perfect in weakness? I believe God delights in taking situations which look impossible to men and turning them into glorious successes for his kingdom. He caused his Son to be born of a poor woman and raised in a village known for its wickedness. He chose manual laborers as apostles to begin the spread of the gospel. He took a mere boy with his slingshot to kill a giant of the Philistines. Elijah defeated some four hundred prophets of Baal.

2CO 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in in-firmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in per-secutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Paul had found the real secret of life. One meets every obstacle with supreme confidence for every seemingly impossible hindrance creates another possibility to demonstrate the power and wisdom of God.

2CO 12:11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

It seemed to Paul a great waste that he had been forced to spend so much time in defending his right to preach the truth. He really was nothing when one looked at him as a man. But, he could accomplish any task placed before him when aided by the power of Christ.

2CO 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

This verse is a key in considering the possibility of miracles in the church today. Paul called the miracles which he performed “signs of an apostle.” Just as the other apostles were able to perform miracles, he was also. From this verse we can conclude that in New Testament times miracles were only done by an apostle, or one upon whom an apostle has laid hands. When the last man died upon whom an apostle had laid his hands, the miracles ceased.

2CO 12:13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

There are not a great number of times when one can be certain sarcasm was used by New Testament writers. This does seem to be one of those times. The indication is that the Corinthians were accusing Paul of treating them as inferior to the other churches.

His reply was that the only way he had treated them differently was to refuse support from them. If that caused them to think less of him, he sought their forgiveness. Perhaps he should have received support from them as he had the other churches. Then they might have respected him.

2CO 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

They really thought he did not intend to visit them again, and that he was only saying he would come. He denied that. He had come to them twice before and would come a third time. In spite of all they had said, he would not even seek personal support from them this third time. He did intend to collect the gift for the saints in Jerusalem, but he would see that they did not have to care for him.

He spoke to them as a parent who had brought children into the world. The parent should care for the children until they were mature enough to be independent. He did not expect them to support him while they were still immature. There could still be a hint of sarcasm here. Throughout the entire letter which we know as First Corinthians, he had scolded them for acting like immature children.

2CO 12:15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

It was not Paul's intention to stop loving and caring for the church in Corinth, in spite of their lack of gratitude. It seemed to him that the more he did for them, the less they thought of him. Nevertheless, he would keep on doing everything he could to see them spiritually healthy.

2CO 12:16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

If that was the way it was, that was the way it would have to be. The statement that, being crafty he had caught them with guile, was probably what the opponents in Corinth were saying about him. I expect they were saying that Paul was not taking money from them directly, but was allowing those who collected the gift for the poor saints in Jerusalem to divert this to his own pocket.

2CO 12:17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

He denied that any of his representatives had received anything from them for personal gain. He had not done so. Neither had his associates.

2CO 12:18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

They could not prove Titus had taken anything from them. Titus had no doubt worked with his own hands just as Paul had, to avoid the slightest taint of profiteering. The gift would be delivered to Jerusalem. It would not be diverted.

2CO 12:19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

Did they really think he and his traveling companions were just making excuses for themselves and betraying the trust of the Corinthians? They were not destroying the Christians at Corinth. They were helping them to build up treasures in heaven through growing in the grace of giving to the needy.

During the time I taught in the Chemistry department at Middle Tennessee State University, one of my colleagues went to one of the countries of South America to help solve some of the hunger problems there. They took a protein supplement with them which they offered to the children of the poverty stricken country. The children liked the drink and came back over and over. Suddenly, they stopped coming. When the Americans investigated to see why the children were no longer coming, they found that the parents of the children had decided they were fattening up their children so they could eat them. Paul, Titus and the others had similar problems.

Paul had a noble endeavor in mind. He wished to draw the Jews and the Gentiles together by having

the Gentiles send support to the needy Jews. The effort backfired on him at both ends. The Gentiles accused him of gainsaying and profiting at their expense. The Jews arrested him for mixing with Gentiles. The important thing was that God knew his motives. That was enough.

2CO 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

Titus had come to him with refreshing news about the improvements which they had made as a result of his earlier letter. However, he was still somewhat uncomfortable. Above all things, he did not want to have to walk into the middle of childish behavior again. If he found the works of the flesh among them, he would not be pleased. If that was the case, they would not be pleased either, because he would have to deal sharply with it.

2CO 12:21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

It would have been most difficult for Paul to come back to them again and find the same kind

of sin which had been there previously. That would truly dampen his spirit and decrease his joy. It is said that God would humble him because God was the one who expected him to bear up under such disappointments. It would be grievous to the apostle to see sinners among them who still had not turned away from their erring ways.

Chapter 13

2CO 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

The first time Paul had come to them was when the congregation was established. About the second visit, we know only what is written in this epistle. Some have speculated that it occurred between the time of the writing of First and Second Corinthians.

When Paul arrived this time, he would initiate a meeting in which the accusations against him would be tested. He would expect two or three witnesses to back up any charge which had been made.

2CO 13:2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

He was prepared to swing away. There would be no punches pulled. They had been warned more than once about their destructive words. They might think he would not come. They are wrong!

2CO 13:3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

They desired a strong proof that Christ had authorized him as an apostle. That strong proof was within their midst. Men had been rescued from

Satan and empowered with renewed lives through the Holy Spirit. Some of them had been enabled to perform miracles through the laying on of the apostle's hands.

2CO 13:4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

The Jews felt the crucifixion was weakness on the part of Christ. The Messiah should have thrown off the yoke of Roman power and established a kingdom based on physical force. It was true that he allowed himself to be overwhelmed by the Roman militia. It was not true that he was weak. The power of God had raised him from the dead and he continues to live.

Not only does he live, but those who hear and obey him will live also. They may appear to be weak, as Paul appeared to be weak to his opposers. But they are filled with the power of the Spirit of God. Paul might be weak in the same sense that Christ was weak when he was crucified. Nevertheless, the strength and power of God was shown in rejuvenated lives, brought to life by the gospel, which is the power of God.

2CO 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Paul threw out a challenge to them. They were invited to give themselves a real test. Were they true Christians? Did they truly know their spiritual condition? If they were true to Jesus Christ, his example would live in them. If it did not, they were not faithful Christians. They were reprobates who would be denied by the Lord in judgment.

2CO 13:6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

There were reprobates among them. But Paul was not one of them. He thoroughly resented any such charges. A proper examination of his preaching and his actions would show he passed the same test he proposed that they give themselves.

2CO 13:7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

Paul was making a strange request if he was truly a reprobate. Reprobates do not normally encourage men to abstain from wickedness. He was not making that request to make himself look good. He was asking them to live in a holy manner in order that they might please God. Even if some should call Paul a reprobate, he would continue to encourage the Corinthian Christians to be of pure character.

2CO 13:8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

Rather than sinking into the mire along with his accusers, he would do everything within his power to promote truth. It was necessary that he stand by truth regardless of the consequences.

2CO 13:9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

It would have suited Paul very well if they had been strong enough that he did not have to use his apostolic power to chastise them. He would have had the greatest of satisfaction if they made steady improvement in harmony among themselves and service to God. One can see the immaturity of these Corinthians in every chapter of both First and Second Corinthians. Perfection here, as in numerous other places in the New Testament has to do with *movement toward* the image of God, rather than attainment of that image.

2CO 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

The things he had written in this letter were intended to prevent a sharp confrontation later when he saw them in person. He had great power from the Lord. He much preferred to use that power to encourage righteous conduct than to use it in punishing rebellion against God.

2CO 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Harmonious living with other Christians requires effort. It does not just happen. Everyone involved must be involved in that effort. The one mind he mentions is the mind of Christ. The peace is that which Christ demonstrated when he prayed for those who were crucifying him. God is not a God of wrath and violence. The wrath of God only comes when men fail to love both their Father in heaven and their brethren on earth.

2CO 13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

The holy kiss was the customary greeting of friends in the Middle East, and is unto this day. In much of the world today, the handshake is parallel to the holy kiss. It would not be wise for a male to walk up to a strange woman in a congregation of the Lord and kiss her, even on the cheek. I suspect that, even in Paul's day, a holy kiss would have been passed only between men, or between a man and a woman with whom he was acquainted.

2CO 13:13 All the saints salute you.

The apostle made every effort to tie the entire body of Christ together. When he moved from place to place, he was constantly reminding the Christians

in one area of the concern of others who were at a distance. His work in gathering Gentile gifts for the needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem was perhaps the most notable example of this.

2CO 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

All three of the members of the Godhead are mentioned. I do not know whether there is significance in the pairing of the qualities or not. Is grace anymore the province of Christ than it is of God or of the Holy Spirit? Does the Father have a closer connection with love than either of the others? Or does the Holy Spirit have a deeper interest or role in fellowship and communication than either of the other two?

Whatever the answer to the three questions I have just posed, the verse implies that love, grace and communion between God and men may be had through drawing near to all members of the trinity. It is appropriate that the apostle closed this letter with a prayer for love, grace and communion in the congregation at Corinth.

The words written by Paul in these two epistles to the Corinthians have no doubt helped millions of Christians in every age since the first century to live together in peace. Let each of us take them to heart and apply them in the glorification of God and the health and expansion of his Kingdom.

An Abbreviated Bibliography

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