

FIRST CORINTHIANS

INTRODUCTION

Hardly any ancient city was as favorably situated for both commerce and defense as was Corinth. Corinth was a builder of ships, as attested by the mythology which names it as the place Jason's ship was constructed and sailed away in search of the Golden Fleece.

The city became prosperous and powerful in the seventh century B. C., being noted for pottery, bronze metal work and decorative handicraft.

Corinthian glory perished in 146 B. C. when the city was utterly destroyed by the Romans who even carted off all of the treasures and demolished it so completely that it remained nothing but a heap of rubbish for a hundred years.

In 46 B.C., exactly a hundred years later, however, Julius Caesar rebuilt the city and populated it with his discharged veterans. It flourished greatly and soon regained and surpassed the size of its earlier history.

The carnality and wickedness returned in a greater degree than ever, making the city a stronghold of paganism. Apollo, Poseidon, Aphrodite and other deities were worshipped there, the temple of Aphrodite Pandemos occupying the top of Acro-Corinthus, and being served by a thousand religious prostitutes.

Corinth was 105 years old when the apostle Paul entered it about the middle of the first century. The triumph of Christianity in such a culture as that of Corinth is one of the great miracles of faith.

Great earthquakes destroyed the city in 1858 and again in 1928. All that remains is "a poor village," mostly Albanian.

The record of Paul's founding the church in Corinth is given by Luke in Acts 18:1-18. In the eighteen months after Paul sailed from Athens, many converts for Christ were won at Corinth. It was here that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla who became his true friends and sailed with him when he left.

Crispus and Sosthenes were among the more able converts; but many of those who obeyed the gospel were from among the lower classes in the pagan culture. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians are usually distinguished as the “four great” epistles of Paul. 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians were written sometime between 51 and 57 A. D.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians with a view of correcting disorders and giving much needed instructions to the young church struggling for its existence in the very eye of ancient paganism.

Any classical outline for 1 Corinthians is nearly impossible because, “the sentences tumble over one another. However a contrived outline could be:

- (1) Paul discussed topics brought up in the letter that the Corinthians had sent to him. There are four main topics in this division:
 - (a) marriage,
 - (b) meat offered to idols,
 - (c) spiritual gifts, and
 - (d) the collection, the later of these being deferred in Paul’s discussion till the last chapter. (16:1)
- (2) Paul discussed topics concerning which he had received information independently of the Corinthians themselves. These are:
 - (a) the factions,
 - (b) the case of incest,
 - (c) the lawsuits,
 - (d) free customs of the women,
 - (e) abuses of the Lord’s Supper, and
 - (f) denial of the resurrection.

Note: The study of this epistle is best achieved by following the sequence of the epistle itself.

Chapter 1

Paul began with a salutation (1-3), and thanksgiving (4-9)—moving immediately to the principal objective of the epistle, which was that of correcting rampant disorders in the Corinthian church. He first took up the problem of disunity (10-17), expounded on the glory and power of the cross of Christ (18-25), and brought forward the character of the Corinthian congregation itself as proof of the wisdom of God in Christ (26-31).

Verse 1

Paul was stating what he was, not what he intended to be. As in most of his writings, Paul stressed his Divine commission as an apostle, thus invoking the authority needed for dealing with the errors prevalent in Corinth.

“Sosthenes” Apparently he was the amanuensis by whose hand the letter was written.

Verse 2

“The church of God” The church did not belong to the Corinthians, but to God, unto whom they were set apart (sanctified) to serve God by reason of the fact that they were “in Christ.”

“In Christ” denotes the status of all Christians, a relationship brought through an obedient faith when they were baptized “into” Him. (Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 6:3)

“Called to be saints” The Corinthian Christians were not merely candidates for sainthood but were in fact already entitled to this designation by virtue of their being in the spiritual body of Christ, “in Him,” and therefore possessing a complete identity with the Savior.

“Who in every place, call upon the name of the Lord” makes this epistle applicable to the saints of all ages in every place and circumstance.

“Lord” This title of Jesus was not a development in the last first-century church but was firmly established by the time of Paul’s writings.

Verse 3

“Grace and peace . . .” This double salutation combined the common greetings of both the Greeks and the Hebrews.

“*Chairein* was the Greek word for “greeting;” but Paul’s word “*charis*” means “grace,” calling attention to God’s unspeakable gift to humanity.

F. W. Grosheide, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 1 Corinthians.*, p. 25, wrote, “In these three verses, it is plain that, “The distinguishing feature is its stress upon the sanctity of the church.”

THE THANKSGIVING

Verse 4

“I thank my God . . .” this is one of the most amazing words in the New Testament. How incredible it appears on the surface that a church troubled by so many errors and outright sins, as in the case of the Corinthians, should have been the occasion of fervent thanksgiving by an apostle! The explanation lies in the key words in Christ Jesus.

In the Lord, the Corinthians were credited with the holy righteousness of Christ Himself, even as the Christians of all ages; and the blood of Christ, operative in His spiritual body; was cleansing them from all sins continually. (1 John 1:7)

Verse 5

F. W. Grosheide, *Ibid.*, p. 25, explained the last phrase of this verse as meaning that, “Their richness in Christ consists especially in the ability to speak well about the revelation of God.”

“In everything . . .” has the meaning of “in everything that really matters.” Although every Christian is required to study and learn continually, there is a certain corpus of truth that he must know before he can become a Christian; and that body of teaching having been acquired, and the believer having acted upon it by being baptized into Christ, he is at that point “enriched in everything.”

Verses 6-7

“The testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you . . .” is Paul’s way of declaring that the Corinthians had believed and obeyed the gospel of Christ as it had been preached to them.

“You are not lacking in any gift . . .” The reference here is to the entire galaxy of gifts in the general sense, which attended establishment of churches of Christ under the apostolic preaching.

“Awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” This is a reference to the Second Advent of Christ, indicating that the final redemption of men will take place then, and that the time of probation is essentially a period of waiting and expecting.

Verse 8

“Who shall also confirm you to the end . . .” Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1053 seems correct in seeing here an exhortation for the Corinthians not to trust in spiritual gifts which they had received, but that they should look to Christ who would be their strength to the end.”

“To the end . . .” is a gentle reminder that the Corinthians had not yet ‘arrived’ at perfection, despite their many gifts.” Full redemption for all men must await, that day, when the Lord shall come in His glory and all His holy angels with Him. (2 Timothy 4:8)

Verse 9

God is faithful . . . “ The thought is that God, having begun a good work in the Corinthians, would not change His purpose of leading them into eternal life.

“You were called . . .” Donald Guthrie, *Ibid.*, said, “Called, that is, called to be a Christian, is in the New Testament always a call obeyed.”

ON THE PROBLEM OF DISUNITY

Verse 10

“Now I exhort you . . .” Paul’s tone in this is one of tender and affectionate appeal, delivered in the all-powerful name of Christ.

“No divisions . . .” All divisions are contrary to the will of Christ; and by reference to the perfect unity which is the ideal of Christian relationships, Paul highlighted the broken fellowship which had marred the body of Christ in Corinth.

“That you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.” This comes from a versatile Greek word, that S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Wycliffe Bible Commentary p. 591, says it means, “To adjust the parts of an instrument, the setting of bones by a physician, or the mending of nets.” The general meaning would appear to be “put the broken unity back together.” Paul states by implication the disunity of the church in Corinth. Paul at once stated the source of his information concerning such a disaster.

Verse 11

“The household of Chloe . . .” It is generally assumed by commentators that Chloe was a respected member of the church, but it should be noted that it was not Chloe who gave Paul the information regarding Corinth, but her “household,” a term usually applied in the New Testament to the *familia*, or household slaves.

This is the only mention of Chloe in the New Testament, making it impossible to solve the question of who she might have been. Paul named the source of the evil report he had received, not relying at all upon mere gossip or rumor.

Verse 12

Numerous opinions to the effect that “I of Christ . . .” denotes a sinful division no less than the slogans, this student cannot agree that there was ever anything wrong with a follower of the Lord claiming to be “of Christ.”

The glib assertions of many to the effect that the Christ party was a self-righteous little group insisting that they alone had the truth are as ridiculous as they are unsupported by any solid evidence whatever. Paul himself declared that he was “of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:7)

“I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas—but “I (Paul) belong to Christ.” The final “AND I BELONG TO CHRIST” being the words not of a faction at Corinth but of the blessed apostle himself. Adam Clarke, Commentary, NT, Vol. II. p. 192, wrote, “It is not likely in any sense of the word that Christ could be said to be the head of a sect in His own church.”

What was wrong with the first three of these slogans Those who were using them were glorying in men: but then it follows as a certainty that those who were saying “and I of Christ” were glorying in the Lord.

Note: “Would to God that all men, even as Paul, were “of Christ.”

The three schismatic groups which were glorying in the names of men have had their counterparts in all ages. Such conduct then, as it still is, was sinful. Paul moved at once to show how ridiculous is the device of glorying in human teachers.

Verse 13

The three questions in this verse were designed to expose and correct the sin of the three groups glorying in men.

Verses 14-15

It was Paul’s custom to entrust the physical act of baptizing converts to an assistant such as John Mark, Silas, or Timothy. There were occasions, however, when he found it necessary to do the actual baptizing with his own hands, as in the cases here cited.

Verse 16

“Stephanas . . .” was of “the first fruits of Achaia” (16:15), evidently having been baptized by Paul before the beginning of his great work in Corinth. (Acts 18:5ff)

Verse 17

“Christ did not send me to baptize . . .” What Paul referred to here was the administration of the rite of baptism, there being nothing here to the effect that

Paul preached salvation without baptism. He like all the apostles had been commanded to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them.” (Matthew 28:19)

“Not in cleverness of speech . . .” The Greek word *sophist* (wise men) had fallen from its glory, and in Paul’s day had come to denote a nibble tongue and an empty brain.

William Barclay, quoted from Chrysostom, op. cit., p. 22, describing the Greek wise men thus, “They croak like frogs in a marsh; they are the most wretched of men, because, though ignorant, they think themselves wise; they are like peacocks, showing off their reputation and the number of their pupils as peacocks do their tails.”

Paul used the word “wisdom” in a sarcastic sense in this phrase having the meaning of “gobbledegook” as now used.

“That the cross of Christ should not be made void . . .” Digressions are frequent in Paul’s works; and this word “cross,” mentioned as the antithesis of the philosophers’ so-called wisdom, was made the subject of a characteristic Pauline digression.

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

Verses 18-19

All of the value judgments of men were nailed to the cross of Christ. Men glorify the arrogant, proud, mighty and successful, but Christ was patient, meek, humble, and submissive. A crucified Savior was simply beyond the boundaries of human imagination.

“It is the power of God . . .” There are two reactions to the mystery of the cross on the part of two classes of people who behold it. The two classes are those who are perishing and those who are being saved. To the former, the cross is foolishness, but to the latter it is the power of God.

Verse 20

“The wise . . .” refers to the worldly wise such as the Greek *sophists*. “The scribe . . .” denotes the expert in Jewish religion. “The disputer of this world . . .”

includes both as well as all others who rely upon their own intelligence and do not trust in God.

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? . . .” Paul doubtless had in mind that phase of wisdom relating to eternal things of the spirit, there is also an undeniable application to all phases of human wisdom.

Every mystery ever solved unlocks a hundred others and raises infinitely more questions than are answered, leading to conviction that the ultimate wisdom on the part of man can never be attained by new formulas and gadgets, that the infinite wisdom is a person, Almighty God, and that men may know Him only through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verse 21

“Did not come to know God . . .” The ineffectiveness and frustration of human wisdom are nowhere more dramatically evident than in the long pre-Christian history of the Gentiles.

Paul developed this thought extensively in the first chapters of Romans, and there is a brief mention of the same thing here. Who can believe that modern man, now in the act of turning away from God, will be any more successful in finding the good life apart from his Creator than were his ancient progenitors?

“The foolishness of the message preached . . .” has reference to the foolishness of the thing preached, that is, foolishness from the human viewpoint.

“To save those who believe . . .” “Believe” is here a synecdoche for turning to God through obedience of the gospel, and it includes such things as repentance and baptism.

Verses 22-23

J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible p. 895, paraphrased this, “The Jews will not believe unless a miracle is wrought before their eyes; the Greeks will accept no truth that is not commended by philosophical speculation.”

The Jews had witnessed many miracles, not only by the Lord of life, but also by the holy apostles; but what they demanded was the performance, at their

bidding, of some spectacular wonder of their own choosing, even if it had been wrought, would have had no moral value and would have proved just as ineffective as the true miracles they had already seen. (Matthew 16:1)

“We preach Christ crucified . . . “ The cross is central to the Christian religion; no person may be a true follower of the Lord who is unwilling to take up his cross and follow the Master. (Matthew 16:24)

The cross was the instrument of Jesus’ atonement for the sins of the whole world. It was the place where God, having entered our earthly life as a man, paid the penalty of human transgression, bruised the head of Satan, and purchased the church with His own precious blood. The glory of the cross is seen in what it denied, what it declared, what it accomplished, whom it defeated, and whom it saved.

Verse 14

“Called . . . “ This should not be understood in the narrow and restricted sense, for God has called all men to receive eternal life in Christ, the usage here having reference to men who heed and obey the call.

“Both Jews and Greeks . . .” This has the meaning of “all men” of whatever race or nation, time or circumstance.

Verse 25

Christ on the cross appeared to be weakness in the eyes of “all men;” but that “weakness of God” was stronger than men and everything that man could produce. (Leon Morris, *op.*, *cit.*, p. 47)

THE GLORY OF THE SHAME

We have borrowed this subtitle from Barclay, for it accurately summarizes the argument Paul was about to make. He could use the character of the Corinthian church itself as a demonstration of God’s foolishness being wiser than men.

Verse 26

Many of the earliest Christians were slaves, the majority were poor, most were uneducated; and few of them had any claim to distinction in the wretched

world of their day; but they were the roots from which all that is holy and beautiful has blossomed in succeeding centuries.

Emma Lazarus' poem on the Statue of Liberty reads:

"Your wretched refuse of all lands—your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, homeless and rejected, send them to me. I lift my lamp beside the Golden Door!"

How those rejected ones have blessed the world! But this is only a feeble parable of what Christianity did on a cosmic scale. As William Barclay, *op.*, *cit.*, p. 24, said, "Christianity was and still is literally the most uplifting thing in the whole universe."

Look at the congregation in Corinth, rescued from the dens of vice and debauchery, gleaned from the dregs of a cruel and heartless society, recruited from the hopeless ranks of slaves, delivered from the treadmills of commerce and industry; but Christ redeemed them, named upon them the eternal name, announced from heaven the plenary discharge of their sins, and made them partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. "THANK GOD" for the church at Corinth and everywhere.

Verse 27

Those "foolish" Christians of Corinth triumphed over all the vaunted learning of the philosophers; those "weak" followers of Christ spread the truth over the world while Corinth and Athens crumbled.

Verse 28

This verse taken in conjunction with verse 27 gives five designations to Christians (as they were esteemed by the world of that period). The foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, the things that "are not" but the great apostle's words on behalf of those who were despised by the world are to the effect that the triumph, the success, the honor, and the glory belong to them.

Verse 29

How incredible it is that a man, a creature of flesh and blood, a creature of the dust and of the dust certain to return, whose glory at its zenith is only for a moment, whose days are spent in frustration, whose tears flow incessantly, whose very righteousness is filthy rages—how unbelievable is it that such a creature as man should glory before God! Such is the wretched state of Adam's race that only God can give salvation and even God could do so at the extravagant cost of the bloodshed on Calvary. God desires that man should recognize and confess his sin and unworthiness, and, like those poor mortals of Corinth, turn to the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ the Lord. If the first converts to Christianity had been the wealthy rulers of earth, there would inevitably have prevailed an impression that such persons had earned eternal life.

Verses 30-31

"In Christ Jesus . . ." In Christ alone is there salvation; and in Christ the saved possess all things. Behold here is the only true ground of justification in the eyes of God.

Jesus is perfect, holy, undefiled, and righteous in the superlative degree. In Christ and as Christ and fully identified with Him, it is true also that Christians are holy and righteous.

It is not their righteousness, of course, in the sense that they achieved it; but it is theirs in the sense that Christ achieved it and they "are Christ," being members of His spiritual body.

Satan, death and hell have no claim on the one who is "in Christ." Why? Because what is true of the head is true of the entire body; and our head which is Christ, having paid the penalty of death for sin, the whole spiritual body (the church) has likewise paid it in the person of Christ. That is what is meant by being dead to sin by the body of Christ. (Romans 6:11)

There are four things mentioned by Paul in this passage which belong to the Christian by virtue of his being "in Christ."

- (1) The wisdom of God.

In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
(Colossians 2:3) The person “in Christ,” by reason of having believed and having been baptized “into Christ is thus identified with Christ, being a part of His spiritual body; and thus, as Christ he has become the possessor of the wisdom of God.

(2) Righteousness.

All that has been said of wisdom in the above paragraph pertains with equal force to righteousness, which may be acquired by the believer in no other way except through being baptized into Christ. The notion that “this righteousness is forensic, that is, an imputed righteousness, bestowed on the grounds of faith alone, is incorrect. It is not an imputed, forensic, bestowed righteousness in any sense whatever. It is a pure, perfect, genuine, and actual righteousness performed and achieved by Jesus Christ our Lord; and when the believer becomes a part of the Lord’s spiritual body, that true righteousness belongs to him as being “in Christ,” “of Christ,” and in fact part of the spiritual body which “is Christ.” And when does one become a part of that spiritual body which is Christ? “In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

(3) Sanctification.

The person who is “in Christ” is sanctified, set apart for spiritual service, and through spiritual growth, endowed with whatever may be needed for development in the Christian life.

(4) Redemption.

Significantly, the salvation of the soul is a reality only for those “in Christ.” Although Paul gave only an abbreviated list of four blessings in this verse, as resulting from the believer’s being in Christ, it must be construed as merely a token list, despite the all-importance of the four. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul stated that “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” is “in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

It is not fair to leave this brief discussion of the salvation (inclusive of all spiritual blessings which are “in Christ,” without pointing out for those who truly

desire to know the truth that in all the Holy Scriptures there is no other way revealed by which a believer might acquire the status of being “in Christ,” except through being baptized “into Him.” (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13) Could there be any wonder, therefore, that Jesus Himself said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16)

“Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord . . .” In this concluding sentence in this paragraph, Paul quoted Jeremiah 9:23, where the meaning is that men should glory in God; and, by His application of this text to Jesus Christ, he testified to the deity and godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 51 said, “No higher view could be taken of the Person of Christ.”

CHAPTER 2

One of the problems in Corinth was related to the pretensions, empty philosophy of the Greeks who so highly regarded the eloquent speeches of the popular leaders of such *sophistry*; and Paul gave his reasons for not following the popular methods of oratory in his preaching of the word of Christ. (Verses 1-5)

However, fully mature Christians could look forward to an understanding of the true wisdom of God (as contrasted with the current *sophistry*); and the mystery of God, far more wonderful than the so-called mysteries of the Greeks, could be participated in by those of genuine spirituality. (Verses 6-16)

Verse 1

Paul had been educated at Tarsus. Henry H. Halley, *Bible Handbook*, p. 545 said, “Paul was a university man, the outstanding scholar of his generation.” Paul despised the pedantry, superficiality and narrow conceit of those who were received as intellectuals.

Paul had a wide acquaintance with all the learning of his generation, but he counted all such polite learning as mere dross, as compared with the gospel of Christ. (Philippians 3:8)

The meaning of this verse is that when Paul when to Corinth, he renounced all of the tricks and devices of the Greek Philosophers, and did not try to adorn

the truth with pagan wisdom. That Paul had the ability to do such things may not be doubted for a moment; but he wanted their faith to be in the power of God, not in the ability of men. (Verse 5)

“Excellency of speech . . .” When the preaching itself is stressed to the degree that it obscures its own content, there is a case of “excellence of speech.”

“Testimony of God . . .” This means that the gospel is founded upon the word and the authority of God Himself; and, by this word, as James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles and Commentary*, p. 32, said, “The apostle insinuated that the credibility of the gospel depended neither on its conformity to philosophy of the Greeks, nor on the eloquence of its preachers, but on the attestation of God, who confirmed it by miracles.”

Verse 2

There is no hint whatever, either in this passage or in Acts 17, that Paul preached “Christ crucified” at Corinth because of a sense of failure of the philosophical approach in Athens. He preached the resurrection of the dead, and when did that get to be philosophical?

His preaching in Athens was in no sense whatever a failure. Dionysius the Areopagite, Damaris, certain men and others with them were converted. (Acts 17:34) An very large number of people in Athens became Christians. Don De Welt, *Acts Made Actual*, p.243, wrote, “The church in Athens was one of the strongest congregations in the empire in the second and third centuries.”

“The others with them” of Acts 17:34 may not be construed as “a mere handful,” except arbitrarily and with no logic to support it.

“I determined to know nothing . . .” has the meaning that Paul would rely upon no earthly wisdom for power in his preaching.

“Except Jesus Christ and Him crucified . . .” This cannot mean that Paul would henceforth leave off preaching the resurrection, the final judgment, the brotherhood of humanity, the unity of God, the sin of idolatry, etc.

Verse 3

Such was Paul's dauntless courage that it may not be supposed that this has reference to any fear of physical danger; but it suggests Paul's recognition of human weakness and his realization that the salvation of so many persons was dependent upon so false an instrument as himself.

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 895, paraphrased this verse, "It was with much anxiety and self-distrust that I preached the gospel to you."

Verse 4

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 32, paraphrased this verse writing, "Paul's discourses were neither composed nor pronounced according to the rules of Greek rhetoric, yet they were accompanied with the powerful demonstration of the Spirit, who enabled him to prove the things he preached by miracles." There was a reason for Paul's renunciation of the methods of the rabble-rousers; and that reason he at once emphatically stated.

Verse 5

Paul desired that the faith of the Corinthians should be grounded in the facts and certainties of the Christian gospel, not in the showy eloquence of polished oratory. There can hardly be any doubt that this paragraph condemns much of the preaching of our own times.

Up to this point Paul was stressing the truth that the gospel of Christ owes nothing to human wisdom and that his enunciation of the popular methods of advocating it had resulted in its being despised by those who considered themselves sophisticated; but, beginning in the next verse, Paul effectively refuted the notion that "Christianity is contemptible, and proceeded to show something of its profundity and dignity." Leon Morris, *Tyndale Commentary*, p. 53.

Paul showed that it is not wisdom which he rejected but false wisdom; he preached God's wisdom, which is higher than man's wisdom, and the only true wisdom.

Verse 6

“Among those who are mature . . . “ All Christians begin as “babes in Christ” (3:1); but through prayerful study and growth they may attain unto the “stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13)

The rational and intellectual dimensions of the Christian religion infinitely surpass all of the achievements of mortal intelligence; and Paul’s blunt reference to this truth states that it forcefully applies even to “the rulers of this world.”

“Among those who are mature . . .” The subject of this clause is “the rulers of this world;” but the meaning is not restricted to such persons as governors and emperors. F. W. Grosheide, op. cit., p. 63 wrote, "Paul had in mind, all of those who set the pattern of this world including the rulers in the sphere of science and art."

The proof of what Paul said here came within a few years when the Jewish state, Jerusalem and the temple were utterly destroyed in 70 A.D. Nor was it any less true of Rome, when the period of the phantom emperors soon came; and the mighty empire itself eventually sank under the ravages of the invading hordes of vandals and barbarians.

If human wisdom had any genuine merit, the depredations of war, famine and pestilence might be controlled. But every generation has fulfilled its destiny of proving that, “It is not in a man who walks to direct his steps.” (Jeremiah 10:23)

“We do speak wisdom . . .” The plural “we” implies that Paul did not stand alone among the apostles in his method of teaching.

Verse 7

“Mystery . . . “ The mystery of the Christian religion far surpasses anything affected in the mysteries of the Greeks, and notably in the fact of its having been foreordained in God’s purpose even before the creation of the world. The usual definition of mystery, to the effect of its being something once unknown now revealed, while true enough, is inadequate. Some elements of the mystery of God will not even be finished until “the days of the voice of the seventh angel.” (Revelation 10:7)

John William Russell, Compact Commentary on the New Testament, p. 406, wrote, “The mystery in the scriptures denotes:

- (a) something above the ordinary human understanding (Mark 4:11);
- (b) something formerly hidden in the counsel of God, but afterward revealed as a plan understood by its own fulfillment; and
- (c) as something always accompanied by vastness, depth and power.”

Note: 1 Timothy 3:16 reveals a six-line summary of this “great mystery.”

Verse 8

One great essential element in the mystery is that of the incarnation of God in Christ, this being the precise element of the mystery unknown to the rulers of this world.

Christ made it clear that the Jewish religious hierarchy did indeed know who Christ was, in the sense of knowing that He was the lawful heir of the temple, the promised Messiah, a holy and righteous prophet of God, and also the undisputed heir to the throne of David. What they did not know was that the “fullness of the godhead” dwelt in Him bodily. (Colossians 2:9) In Matthew 21:38, the Jewish leaders, under the figure of the wicked husbandmen, said, “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and take His inheritance.”

“The Lord of Glory . . .” John Wesley, op. cit., in loco, declared, “The giving to Christ of this august title, pertaining to the great Jehovah, plainly shows Him to be the supreme God.” Thus “the Lord of Glory,” “the Father of Glory” (Ephesians 1:17), and “the Spirit of Glory” (1 Peter 4:14) indicates that the three members of the Godhead alike receive this title.

“Would not have crucified the Lord of Glory . . .” F. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 19, p. 60, wrote, “These words brought into juxtaposition the lowest ignominy, and the most splendid exaltation.”

Verse 9

These words are usually thought of as suggesting heaven and the glories of the future world but Paul did not hesitate to apply them here to what God had

already done for His children. Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Whole Bible Vol. VI, p.199, wrote, "They certainly belong to the present state, and express the wondrous light, life and liberty which the gospel communicates." George W. DeHoff, Sermons on First Corinthians, p. 30 said, "While it is true that heaven will be so wonderful that we cannot comprehend it, Paul was talking about here, the present dispensation."

Verse 10

"For to us . . ." The things which eye had not seen, etc., were revealed through God's Spirit to the Apostles.

"The Spirit searches all things . . ." This is true! Donald Guthrie, The New Bible Commentary, p. 1055, says, "Not in the sense of needing information," but in the sense of penetrating all things."

"Even the depths of God . . ." have reference not to some abstract inscrutability of God but to the complete work of salvation. The mystery already mentioned is of the deep things of God.

Verse 11

The only way to know God is through the revelation of God through the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

"The thoughts of God no one knows . . ." is not to be understood as saying that men know nothing of God, for this would deny revelation. F. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 60, wrote, "All that is meant is that our knowledge of God must always be relative, not absolute. It is not possible to measure the arm of God with the finger of man."

Verse 12

"Not the spirit of the world . . ." Paul did not mean that such a spirit of the world, comparable in a sense to the Holy Spirit and opposed to him, actually exists. Nor can we agree with Paul Marsh, A New Commentary, p. 379, who said, "It may mean Satan." What Paul had in view here was the secular, materialistic thinking of unregenerate men.

“The Spirit who is from God . . .” F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 70, wrote, “What is meant here is not the perpetual indwelling of the Spirit in the congregation, but the historical fact of His coming.” The reference here is to Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth.

Verse 13

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 41, wrote, “The declaration here refers to the Holy Spirit’s giving “words of wisdom” to the apostles, not leaving them free to clothe ideas and impressions in their own words merely, but in words which “the Spirit teaches.”

“Combing spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. . . .” Paul had in view here what he called “the form of sound words.” (2 Timothy 1:13) The theory that God gave men the ideas without imposing any vocabulary upon them breaks down when it is asked, “How could any idea, be conveyed without the use of words?” Clearly, the combining in this verse pertains to what the Spirit of God did, not to what Paul did; and the fact of the Spirit’s combining spiritual things (ideas) with spiritual words would leave the choice of words to the Spirit, not to men.

Verse 14

“Natural man . . .” has the meaning indicated by Macknight, being that of “an animal man.” It is an abuse of his passage to make it mean that unregenerate men cannot understand spiritual things until God, in some independent action, opens their hearts, or regenerates them.

George W. DeHoff, *op. cit.*, p. 32, said, “Paul means that ordinary men cannot receive or give a revelation from God, because God has not selected him and filled him with the Holy Spirit. Only the apostles and certain other writers of the New Testament were so selected and guided.” The application of this in its primary context is that none of the brilliant orators of Greece had the slightest knowledge of the wisdom of God.

Verse 15

This applies to the company of inspired apostles and evangelists who delivered the great corpus of Christian doctrine. Such men, “endowed with the Holy Spirit could discern and discriminate what is of God, and teach all things God revealed.” (David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 43)

“He who is spiritual appraises . . . himself is appraised by no man. . . .” This applied to Paul himself, especially, as an affirmation of the authority he was about to exercise in correcting the disorders in Corinth.

Christians are instructed, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 62, wrote, “The Christian has a spiritual capacity to sift, to investigate, to examine, and to discern all things within the framework of the Divine revelation of redemption. On the other hand, the natural man does not have the ability to subject the Christian way of life to examination and judgment, for he is completely unacquainted with the meaning of spiritual life.”

Verse 16

David Lipscomb and Adam Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 62, concurred in rendering this verse, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord that he should teach it (that is, teach the truth)?” This would appear to be preferable, because the thought of any mortal “instructing God” is evidently not in the passage at all.

The thought is that “none of you inspired men have any notion whatever of what the truth of God may be.”

“But we have the mind of Christ” “We” indicates that Paul did not claim this status for himself only, but for all of the inspired apostles and evangelists of the New Testament dispensation.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Precisely what is it to have the mind of Christ? There are a number of expressions in the New Testament which clearly have reverence to the same condition: Being “in God,” God’s being “in us,” our being “in Christ,” Christ’s

being "in us," the Holy Spirit's being "in us," our being "in the Holy Spirit," our having the word of Christ dwell "in us." and our having the mind of Christ "in us." As here and in Philippians 2:5, are all references to the saved condition, not to eight different conditions.

David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 45, wrote, "The whole trend and meaning of the chapter is that none could know or teach the word of God by human wisdom." Today, all men are dependent for the knowledge, of the will of God, upon the revelation made by God's Spirit through the apostles and inspired teachers of that era. John Wesley, *op. cit.*, *in loco*, said, "No man ever had any greater right than Paul to say, "We have the mind of Christ."

CHAPTER 3

This chapter falls logically into two divisions having reference to fellow-laborers in God's field (Verses 1-9a), and to fellow-workers in God's building (Verses 9b-17), with a short summary and recapitulation of the apostle's argument in the epistle to this point. (Verses 18-23).

THE FIELD

The unspiritual, worldly conduct of the Corinthians, glorying in various parties, was the occasion for Paul's introduction of the metaphor of farm workers, such a comparison no doubt coming to the recipients of this letter as somewhat of a shock.

Verse 1

"Brethren . . ." Tempering the stern things he was about to say, Paul began with this word of loving affection.

"Spiritual . . . carnal . . ." The spiritual were those who, after conversation had continued to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, no longer continuing as "babes in Christ." The carnal were those who were continuing to live like the unconverted, full of envy, jealousy and strife.

The background of Paul's words here was probably the allegation of false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:12-15), or teachers, who had made the simplicity of

Paul's teachings (when the Corinthians were converted) an excuse to "criticize him as a shallow teacher."

This verse is thus a refutation of the false teachers. Paul flatly told the Corinthians that their immature spiritual conditions rendered them incapable of receiving any more advanced instruction than he had provided.

It appears that some of the Corinthians has been impressed by the pretentious claims of false teachers; but Paul in this chapter affirmed that, "Their philosophical pretense was a sign of their spiritual infancy, produced faction, tended to destroy the church (17), and resulted in no permanent value (12-15)." (Henry H. Haley, Bible Handbook, p. 545)

Speaking of such a false teacher, James Macknight, Apostolical Epistles and Commentary, p. 44, wrote, "He (false teacher) had represented Paul as either ignorant or unfaithful, and boasted concerning himself that he had given them complete instruction."

"Babes in Christ . . ." It is evident from the next verse that Paul did not blame them for being immature at the time of their conversion.

Verse 2

Milk . . . solid food . . ." The milk is the first principles (Hebrews 6:1-2); and solid food is more advanced learning.

"For you were not able . . ." is written as censure. Paul W. Marsh, A New Commentary, p. 380, wrote, "This describes a condition wholly inexcusable; by now they should have grown up."

It is expected of young Christians that they should be weak "as babes," this having been true of the Twelve themselves, of whom Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (John 16:12)

Verse 3

"You are still fleshly . . ." Paul by these words did not deny that the Corinthians were Christians; they were still "brethren;" but their lives were marred by serious failures.

John William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 407, declared that Paul used this word, “Not in the modern meaning of “sensual,” but as meaning earthly secular, worldly, having the worldly spirit of partisan strife, like (some) politicians rather than Christian disciples.”

“Jealousy and strife . . .” These call to mind Paul’s list of the works of flesh (Galatians 5:19-21); and, “Where these exist, the flesh rules.” Had they been spiritual they would have looked to Christ and would not have been partisans of men. (David Lipscomb, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 47)

“Walking like mere men . . .” means, “like ordinary unconverted men.”

Verses 4-5

“I am of Paul . . .” It is incorrect to suppose that either Paul or Apollos encouraged or approved any such divisions, nor is there the slightest hint that any rivalry existed between them.

“What then is Apollos . . . Paul” Certainly, such persons even as Paul and Apollos are nothing worthy of receiving any adoration and glory from men who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. It appears here that Paul and Apollos were instruments only, and not, in any sense, the source of Divine grace.

The second word is not that the Corinthians believed “in” Paul and Apollos, but “through” them.

“Servants . . .” Paul was the grandest apostle of the New Covenant, he nevertheless refers to himself here with a title which, as variously translated in the New Testament, means “servant,” “minister,” or “deacon.” Paul would countenance no party, not even one the proposed to honor him as a man.

“Even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one . . .” Any benefit that had come to the Christians at Corinth originated not with the instruments through whom it was conveyed, but with the Lord of glory.

Verses 6-8

The location depicted here is fully identified later as “God’s field.” (Verse 9) The thought is that Paul planted the crop; Apollos cultivated and watered it. There is no reference to baptism in “watered.”

“Are one . . .” They were one in mutual love and respect for each other, one in purpose, one in status as God’s servants, and one in their reliance upon the Lord who would reward both.

“According to his own labor . . .” reveals that the gospel preacher’s reward will be measured according to his work, and according to his success. The injunction of God is not that men shall go and “convert” all nations, but that they shall “preach the gospel to the whole creation.”

Verse 9

“God’s fellow workers . . .” is ambiguous. F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 82, said this, “May refer either to men who cooperate with God, or to men who cooperate with each other in God’s service.”

Despite the fact of there being a sense in which Christians are God’s partners at the present time, and that this partnership shall be expanded at the judgment (Matthew 25:23), it is hard to believe that Paul was stressing such a thought here.

The meaning here is “fellow-servants” under God. The Greek text has: “God’s fellow-workers; God’s husbandry; God’s building.”

“God’s fellow-workers . . .” The Corinthian congregation was the vineyard, or field, where Apollos and Paul had been fellow-workers.

“God’s building . . . (house or temple).” Practically all of the next eight verses have reference to the church as the temple of God.

Verse 10

“Laid a foundation . . .” The foundation which Paul laid at Corinth is Jesus Christ. (Verse 11) This was done through the faithful proclamation of the whole gospel of our Lord.

“Another is building upon it . . .” It may be that Paul, in this new metaphor, considered that both Apollos and himself had laid the foundation in the preaching of Christ, a work which had also been shared by all of the apostles and inspired teachers.

The entire Apostolical community could do little more than lay the foundation (of Christ); and Christians themselves were expected to continue the building of God's true temple, the church. F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 74, said, "They leave the work of building to the congregation itself. The Corinthians were actually engaged in building, but in a way the apostle felt obliged to condemn. Paul was not content with what the Corinthians had done themselves."

The words another and each man, are too indefinite to apply to Apollos, having rather an application to all who labor in God's building.

Verse 11

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus declared that His church would be built upon the rock, and here is revealed what the rock is—it is Christ. David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p.51, wrote, "Paul said that Christ is the only foundation that can be laid." No man may begin anywhere else.

Leon Morris, *Tyndale Commentary*, p. 67, wrote, "This is still worthy of emphasis in a day when so many build their 'Christianity' without Christ, on a foundation of good works, humanism, or science."

Of course, this is not the only metaphor of Christ's preeminence in His kingdom. He is also called the door of the sheepfold (John 10:7), the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), the head of the body (Ephesians 1:22, 23), etc.

Verse 12

Two widely held misconceptions are grounded on this verse, which is understood:

- (1) as "applicable primarily, if not exclusively to teachers," and
- (2) as applying to doctrines of two classes,
 - (a) gold, etc., and
 - (b) wood, etc.

It is evident of course, that the six kinds of building materials are of two classes:

- (1) the valuable and permanent, and

(2) the cheap and destructible;

but the conviction of his writer is that the two kinds of people built into God's temple, the church, constitute the reality indicated here.

Ministers as a class of persons different from the rank and file of Christians were not a feature of the churches of that era, every Christian being a builder in God's temple; and such is indicated by these words.

Regarding the view that the six classes of materials are various doctrines used in building God's temple, a view advocated by an unbelievably large number of scholars, was nevertheless refuted by James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles and Commentary*, p. 52, saying: "As the apostle is speaking of the Christian church, consisting of the believers of all nations, of which church Christ is the foundation, it is evident that materials built on this foundation (gold, silver, etc.) cannot represent doctrines, but the disciples of Christ. In no passage of Scripture is the temple or church of God said to consist of doctrines, but of the disciples of Christ, who are called living stones built up of a spiritual house or temple." (1 Peter 2:5-6)

Macknight also cited, "There is also the consideration that all of the true doctrine of Christianity is comprehensively included in Christ Himself, that the totality of His doctrine is the foundation, and that there remain no more doctrines of gold, silver, hay or stubble that are to be built into God temple; (the church) by the advocates of Christianity, whether by ministers and teachers, or by the so-called laity.

As for seeing only two classes in these six kinds of materials, J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 64, observed that, "The first three kinds were found in their fireproof temples, materials worthy of sacred Scriptures; and the latter three were used in their frail, combustible huts, but which were in no way dedicated to divinity."

J. W. McGarvey, *Ibid.*, made the application of this verse as follows, "The church should be built of true Christians the proper material; and not of worldly-minded hypocrites, or of those who estimate the oracles of God as on par with the

philosophies of men. The day of judgment will reveal the true character of all who are in the church.”

Verse 13

“The day . . .” is a reference to the judgment day when Jesus shall be revealed from heaven “in flaming fire.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7) Some have understood it as a day of terrible persecutions such as the “fiery trial.” (1 Peter 4:12) Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 68, declared, “The day is clearly the day when Christ returns, the Day of Judgment.”

Only the judgment day will reveal what is and what is not a part of the true temple of God; and, according to Christ Himself, it will be a time of many surprises. (Matthew 7:15-23; 25:34-46)

Verses 14-15

The fact that men do not fully understand this passage is implicit in the truth that some have built up the theory of purgatory, based partly on what is stated here. The whole concept of purgatory is foreign to the word of God, but the advocates of it are still receiving immense revenues through the preaching of it.

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 53, wrote, “The Roman clergy, seeing that this doctrine properly managed, might be made an inexhaustible source of wealth to their order, have represented this fire of purgatory as lighted up from the very beginning of the world, and have kept it burning ever since, and have assumed to themselves the power of detaining souls in that fire, and of releasing them from it; whereby they have drawn great sums of money from the ignorant and superstitious.”

What this verse actually means is that the persons led to Christ through the efforts of any Christian may defect from the faith, proving themselves wood, hay, or stubble, and that the loss of such souls will not affect the salvation of a Christian teacher, whose reward would in some manner unknown to us, have been far greater if they had not defected, and whose salvation is to be only by the narrowest margin, “by the skin of his teeth.” (Job 19:20)

“To be revealed with fire . . .” has the meaning of “something resembling” an escape as in snatching then out of fire. (Jude 23) It is certain that this phrase has absolutely nothing in it of actual fire. It is a figure of speech, prompted possibly by Paul’s reference to the judgment and the fire of that day, but not to be identified as the same thing.

The doctrine of purgatory is not merely unscriptural and anti-scriptural, there being not one word in the entire Scriptures to support such a monstrous thesis; but it is effectively refuted in a single question: “If any church believes in such a thing, and in their own power, through prayer to deliver men from it; why do they not pray all men out of it immediately for sweet charity’s sake?”

Verse 16

The reference here is to the church. There is no article before temple in the Greek; and it would be more accurately translated, “You are the Temple of God.” (Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 69)

THE CHURCH THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Of all the beautiful metaphors of God’s church, the vineyard of the Lord, the household of God, the pillar and ground of truth, the Spiritual body of Christ, the flock of Christ, none is more beautiful or intriguing than “The Temple of God.”

The first suggestion ever made regarding a temple for the one true God was made by David whose conscience was stricken with the thought of his own house of cedar compared with the humble tent-shrine which housed the ark of the covenant. Nathan the prophet, however, explained to David that God had never once expressed any desire to have such a house (temple), stating emphatically that after David’s death, David’s son would build God a house, that His kingdom would be established forever in the person of that “seed” which was Christ. (2 Samuel 7:1-13)

Concerning the Greater Son of David, who is Christ, it was prophesied that He would build a house (temple) for God’s name and that His throne would be established forever. From the remarkable teachings in this passage from Samuel

it is absolutely clear that God never intended that a physical temple would be constructed in Jerusalem. The departure of Israel from God's word in 2 Samuel 7 is exactly parallel to their departure from God's word in 1 Samuel 8.

How did David react to the prophet's forbidding him in God's name to build a temple, and promising that "the Son of David" would build God's temple (a prophecy of the church?). He said in effect, "Solomon will build the temple!"

God accommodated to the hardness of the people's heart but that extravagant earthly temple of the Jews was only a second outcropping of the fleshly desire of Israel to be like the nations around them, which had their richly ornamented temples erected to pagan deities.

It is known that God would not permit David to build the temple because of his wickedness. He was a man of blood. But was Solomon any less wicked and bloody? His notorious debaucheries were the scandal of forty generations.

Moreover, the temple proved to be as big a stumbling block to the Jews as the secular kingdom was. Christ's first announcement to His generations included the fact that, "One greater than the temple is here! (Matthew 12:6) While Christ was on earth, the true temple was "His body" John 2:21; and after Pentecost, the true temple has been nothing other than the spiritual body of Christ.

Paul's designation of the body of Christ in this passage as the temple of God is of the utmost significance. Paul himself had, with difficulty, come to understand this. As soon as he was converted, he went straight to the old secular temple; and God told Him to get out of the place, even out of the city (Acts 22:17-21); and Paul, after that, returned to the temple where he was mobbed. Paul finally read the will of God as it had been declared by Jesus that the temple was nothing but a "den of thieves and robbers" (Mark 11:17), that it was not God's house at all, but the house of the Jews, and that it was left unto them "desolate." (Matthew 23:38)

The true temple of God, therefore, has never been anything else except the church of Jesus Christ our Lord. In it alone, not in some man-made shrine, men are called to worship and serve the Lord of glory. Meeting houses are not, in any sense, "true" sanctuaries.

Verse 17

The conduct of the Corinthians was such that the Spirit of God would be grieved and denied of any place in their hearts, thus destroying God's true temple; and just as any defilement of the ancient tabernacle had been punishable by death, there would be fearful retribution against all who defile the church. In context, this was a terrible warning to the Corinthians, but it applies to all who ever became a part of God's church. As F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 89 declared, "It is clear that the judgment of God is meant; it may refer to suffering loss (verse 15), but also to eternal life."

SUMMARY OF PRECEDING ADMONITIONS

Verse 18

Here begins the summary of what Paul had written up to here. J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary of the Holy Bible*, p. 898, wrote, "Do not deceive yourselves; but if there be any of you priding himself on his worldly wisdom, let him quickly unlearn it, that he may learn the true wisdom."

This verse is a short summary of much Paul had written in Corinthians thus far; and it has the effect of condemning intellectual pride, one of the most hurtful of human vanities. Paul urged the man who would be wise to become a fool. "This is a simple way of urging a man to be humble enough to learn." (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*. p. 39)

Verse 19

Paul's quotation is from Job 5:13, where Eliphaz the Temanite was speaking against Job, declaring that "God frustrates the devices of the crafty, and takes the wise in their own craftiness." Eliphaz was wrong in his application of these words to Job, but the words themselves are true.

Adam Clark, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI, p. 206, wrote, "The pagans raised up persecution against the Church of Christ in order to destroy it; but this became the very means of quickly spreading it over the earth, and of destroying the whole pagan system. Thus the wise were taken in their own craftiness."

Verse 20

This quotation is from Psalm 94:11. The teaching is not merely that “Human thought is fruitless in the sense of not producing anything of spiritual value that redeems man from sin.” (Donald S. Metz, Beacon Bible Commentary, p. 337)

It is likewise ineffectual in devising any worthwhile solutions of the secular, political, economic and social problems which plague the entire world.

Verse 21

The brief summary concludes with the first clause here, except for the beautiful doxology. F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 93, said, “Paul is here recapitulating all he has said before. The Corinthians named themselves after men; and those who do that love the wisdom of the world.”

Therefore, this verse makes it crystal clear what Paul condemned in 1:12. It was the sin of their calling themselves after the names of men; and, as the name Christ is not that of a man in the sense of the word’s use here, there cannot be the slightest condemnation upon those who said they were “of Christ.”

Verse 22

This precious doxology reminds one of the famous passage in Romans 8:31-37, but this has a positive implication not in evidence there. “Things present, things to come,” are there viewed as opposing the Christian but failing to stop him; here the Christian is viewed as the possessor of everything in Christ.

This means that Christians are not to choose certain things, such as certain teachers; for all things are theirs. A Christian is in fact a member of no sect or party, because he has entered “into the possession of a fellowship and love which are as wide as the universe.”

Verse 23

The Christian’s possession of all things in Jesus Christ derives absolutely from the fact of who Jesus Christ is; He is God incarnate in human flesh, the eternal Word, one with the Father, who is and was and will be before all time and now and forever.

That Christ is God's, as here stated," in no way detracts from His deity. (Paul W. Marsh, op, cit., p. 382). His essential oneness and equality with God are not under discussion in this verse, "but His subordination for the sake of human redemption." (Ibid)

CHAPTER 4

Paul had stressed the inspiration of the apostles in the previous chapter; but in the first paragraph here he pointed out that even apostolic authority was not absolute and even he himself and Apollos were but servants of Christ, their first concern being to please the Lord, and not to accommodate their teaching to win favor with false teachers. He stated that the lower courts of conscience and public opinion were inferior to the judgment of the Lord. (Verses 1-5)

In verse 6, Paul pointed out that his use of his own name and that of Apollos was not to be construed as an admission he and Apollos had actually headed any divisive parties in Corinth, but that he had used these names figuratively for the purpose of teaching against all divisions.

Most of the remainder of the chapter deals with the false teacher without naming him, ending with a dramatic promise that he would return to Corinth the Lord willing, and that the Lord would enable him to vanquish the false teacher and set the Corinthians once more in the right way of humility and service. He severely condemned their vain-glorious boasting, egotism, and conceit. (Verses 7-21)

Verse 1

"Us" refers to both Paul and Apollos, and the word "minister" here is not the same as in 3:5. "It is *hyperetes*, and originally meant an under-rower in a trireme" (a warship). (Adam Clarke, A New Commentary, Vol. VI, p. 207)

This is very similar to a word Luke used of ministers. "The word Luke used (1:2, 4:20 is *huperetai*, used in medical terminology to refer to doctors who served under a principal physician." (Herschel H. Hobbs, An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, p.19)

“Stewards of the mysteries of God . . .” These are two extremes to be avoided in the Christian attitude toward teachers. Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, p. 29, wrote, “We should love and respect them; but we ought not, however, to worship them or seek to form a party about them.” Stewards in ancient times were very important people.

George W. DeHoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 41, wrote, “The steward was the major *domo*, in charge of the whole administration of the house or estate. He controlled the staff, issued supplies and rations and ran the whole household; but he himself was still a slave where the master was concerned.” It was not so much the importance of a steward that Paul stressed; it was his faithfulness.

Verse 2

Trustworthiness was the outstanding characteristic of a good steward, and it was that which Paul brought into view here. The next three verses will deal with that thought.

In the New Testament, the term “steward” was applied to all Christians, “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1Peter 4:10, to elders of the church; “A bishop then must be blameless as God’s steward” (Titus 1:7), and to apostles and preachers of the gospel in this verse. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 41, wrote, “It is important that those entrusted with the truth of God as stewards be faithful and honest.” A failure to teach men God’s truth leaves the blood of the lost on the hands of unfaithful stewards who neglected or refused to teach it.

Verses 3-4

In this and the following verse, Paul considers the three tribunals of judgment, these being: conscience, the court of public opinion, and the Lord, the righteous judge of all men.

The implication of Paul’s words here as directed toward the false teacher, is as follows. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, 1 Corinthians, p. 69, “If I do not regard my own opinion of myself as of high value, I cannot be suspected of

undervaluing you when I say that I do not much regard your opinion. If I do not estimate highly my own opinion of myself, then it is not to be expected that I should set a high value on the opinions of others.”

F. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 19, p. 132, wrote, “The verdict of my own conscience acquits me of all unfaithfulness; but this is insufficient, because God sees with clearer eyes than ours. Who can understand his errors? (Psalm 19:12).”

Regarding the lower and Higher courts which came into view in this passage, the following is submitted.

LOWER AND HIGHER COURTS

I. The court of public opinion.

Later on in this epistle, Paul indicated that, despite its inferiority, the court of public opinion is of some importance and not to be ignored by Christians. These Corinthians were bringing the whole Christian movement into disgrace by their ecstatic tongue-speaking; and Paul wrote, “If therefore the whole church should assemble together, and all speak in tongues . . . will they not say you are mad?” (14:23) Timothy was instructed to have regard to this court through the requirement that any man appointed as a bishop should have a good reputation with “those outside the church.” (1 Timothy 3:7)

Nevertheless, desirable as a favorable public opinion undoubtedly is, it should always be courted within the strictest limits of absolute fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ. Public opinion is a lower court, not a higher one.

Paul said, “But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by any human court.” All men should have his attitude where any question of faithfulness to the Lord is involved.

(The voice of the people is the voice of God) is a suitable motto in politics, but not in holy religion. The voice of the people is frequently the voice of Satan, as when the people cried, “Make for us gods who will go before us, (Acts 7:40). as when the people prepared to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 14:11)

II. The voice of conscience.

This is a higher court than that of public opinion, but not the highest court. It is exceedingly important that men respect it. “In whatever our heart condemns us for God is greater than our hearts.” (1 John 3:20)

Paul always respects and honored the court of conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16), being far more attentive to it than to the court of public opinion. We are indebted to Paul for information that, regardless of its value, this court is still not the final tribunal.

The great difficulty with conscience is that it is much like a watch, the value of which (as a timepiece) is determined by the accuracy of its synchronization with the correct time, determined not by the watch, but by the movement of the sun over a certain meridian.

Like a watch, conscience can have many things wrong with it. It can be evil (Hebrews 10:22), seared (1 Timothy 4:20), defiled (Titus 1:15), ignorant (1 Timothy 1:13), choked with dead works (Hebrews 9:14), etc. Is there any wonder then, that it was a proverb millenniums ago “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool?” (Proverbs 28:26)

III. The highest court of all.

At the last advent of Jesus Christ, when the dead, small and great, as well as all who are then alive, shall be summoned before the Great White Throne for the final judgment. None shall escape the judgment and sentence of this court (2 Corinthians 5:10); it shall be presided over by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Acts 10:42) Then shall be exposed the secrets of men’s hearts. (Romans 2:16)

The court crier, an angel of light, shall stand with one foot on the land and one on the myriads of earth to the final judgment before the King of kings and Lord of lords. How infinitely blessed shall be those who are to stand before that tribunal of righteousness and truth!

“I judge not my own self . . .” In 11:31, Paul said, “but if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged;” but “two different words” are used. There the apostle is emphasizing the necessity of self-examination;” but in this statement,

he is saying, "I myself am not competent to assess the quality of apostolic service and pronounce a verdict on it; only One can do that; and I shall submit myself to His decision, "It is the Lord who judges me."

Verse 5

Since the time of the Second Coming was unknown by all of the apostolic preachers, and not even known by the Lord Himself as a man (Matthew 24:36), it was altogether proper that the certainty of that event (whenever it was to come) was a legitimate basis of appeal and motivation for Christians of every generation. It is a positive certainty that both Christ and His apostles taught that the Second Coming was an event to be expected at a very remote time in the future.

Paul's great prophecy of the apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2) makes it certain that he did not expect the coming of Christ in his own lifetime.

The import of this verse, according to Leon Morris, Tyndale commentary, p.76 is, "Stop judging." This injunction is necessary because:

- (1) the only judgment that matters will be announced by the Lord at the final judgment, and
- (2) besides that, men do not have sufficient information or competence to judge one another, not even themselves.

"Then each man's praise shall come to him from God . . ." T. Teignmouth Shore, Elliott's Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 298, commented, "God, unlike man who selects only someone for praise, will give to every worker his own share of approval." Moreover, it must not be supposed that no blame will be assigned in the judgment for, "The word rendered "praise" denotes in this place "reward," and (Albert Barnes, op. cit., p. 71), indicated that God will reward every man according to his works "whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

"The things hidden . . ." and "disclose the motives of men's hearts," shows "how much that is needful for a correct estimate of men's conduct lies now under an impenetrable veil." (John Wesley, One Volume New Testament Commentary, in loco.)

The background of Paul's teaching in these profound lines was a sordid condition among the community of Corinthian believers. Henry H. Halley, *Bible Handbook*, p. 545, wrote, "There must have been a very considerable group of church leaders, Paul's own converts, who in Paul's absence, had become influential and self-important, and were trying to run away with the church. They had become haughty, overbearing, and boastful in their attitude toward Paul."

Verse 6

"You might learn not to exceed what is written . . ." The traditional use of this clause as a commandment that Christians should order their lives and their service of God by the Holy Scriptures, and that it is prohibited that they should go beyond the word of God, is without doubt whatever, the true interpretation.

Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 78. wrote, "This was a catch-cry familiar to Paul and his readers directing attention to the need for conformity to Scripture."

It was precisely in this matter of going beyond the word of God that the factions in Corinth had developed. They were evaluating the word and authority of men upon parity with the Holy Scriptures, thinking of men more highly than they should. William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 43, wrote, "It is not his own words that Paul insists that the Corinthians must not go beyond; it is the word of God."

"Arrogant in behalf of one against the other. . ." An interesting phase of this rebuke is that instead of puffing up their favorite teachers, it was themselves which had become puffed up!

Verse 7

It is God who gives to every man, life, talent, ability, opportunity, health, personality, strength—everything thing that he is or has; and what kind of conceit blinds the eyes of men who behave as if this were not so?

Verse 8

The first three clauses are directed against the false teachers, who had promoted themselves in the eyes of their admirers, were receiving honors and

emoluments from them, and affecting all the airs of “big men,” not merely in the church, but in the whole city.

“That we also might reign with you . . .” has the equivalent meaning, “Oh, if it were only true, what you think of yourselves because if it were true, together we could go on building up the temple of God.”

Verse 9

Beginning with verse 7, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the rebuke of the false teachers and exposure of their sins of worldliness, vanity, conceit, vainglory, and division.

The imagery here is that of the Roman Coliseum. T. Teignmouth Shore, *op. cit.*, p. 299, wrote, “Paul pictures himself and fellow apostles as ‘the last and most worthless band’ brought forth to die in the great arena, where the whole world, including men and angels, view the spectacle.”

Verse 10

Paul was himself the founder of the church in Corinth. He had rescued them from the temples of vice and debauchery, preached to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, nurtured them in their weakness and immaturity as Christians, and suffered and toiled among them, even working in order to eat bread; and now, at the first visible signs of material prosperity among them, they openly despised their teacher, heaped unto themselves popular, shallow leaders after their own lusts, and were indulging the most amazing boastfulness and conceit. It was truly a disgusting development; and Paul’s words here exposed the moral ugliness of their behavior.

“Fools . . .” means “fools in the eyes of the world.” “We . . . yet,” contrasts Paul with the Corinthians, in terms of their own egotistical reversal of the true values. Forsaking the true values and methods as taught by the apostles, those at Corinth had discovered a way of preaching “so as to procure a name of wisdom, reputation and profundity.” To discover such a way and then to walk in it has been a temptation to every preacher of the word of God who ever lived.

Verse 11

All of these terms refer to genuine, bitter hardships, involving insufficient food and clothing, beatings and chastisements by enemies of the truth, and that lonely itinerancy which was the invariable mark of apostolic preachers. The false teachers in Corinth suffered none of these injuries or discomforts.

Verse 12

“And we toil . . .” “The Greeks despised all manual labor, regarding it as the duty of slaves or people mentally unfit for anything else.” (Donald S. Metz, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, p. 343) Paul was a tent-maker by trade and frequently worked in order to support himself.

“Reviled . . . persecuted . . .” Instead of retaliating in kind, Paul returned good for evil, blessing for reviling, and patient endurance for persecution.

Verse 13

The imagery here is still that of the Coliseum, where after the bloody games were over, the ground-keepers cleaned the theater by the removal of the bloody corpses, the offal and the debris. Paul, in this remarkably blunt, shocking irresponsible Corinthians to their senses.

Verse 14

What a wealth of abused and suffering love lies in such a tender appeal as this! Not a word of blame, in the sense of recrimination not a trace of bitterness, just the appeal of a loving father for his wayward children.

The Corinthians had simply become mixed up regarding what were true values and what were not.

Verse 15

“Countless tutors . . .” An element of humor is in this, for certainly that many tutors is too many; and if the word is rendered “guides,” as by some, it would still be far too many. Just how many guides could one follow, anyway? J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 70, said, “The large number rebukes their itch for teachers.” The meaning both of tutor and of “guide” derives

from the Greek word here *paidagogos*, “who was a slave who escorted his master’s child to school. (Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1057)

“I became your father through the gospel . . .” Men are begotten only by the gospel. F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 136, wrote, “We are begotten only by the will of God, by that word of truth (James 1:18), to which Paul alludes here in the words ‘though the gospel.’”

Verse 16

Paul never meant this in any absolute sense, but in the sense of, “Be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ.” (11:1)

Verse 17

From this, it is clear what Paul meant regarding imitation of Himself, namely, that they should imitate his ways “in Christ.”

Verse 18

Some considerable time had elapsed following Paul’s dispatch of Timothy to Corinth; and when the word came of Timothy’s arrival, some of the factionists said, “Ah, Paul is afraid to show his face here and is sending Timothy instead of coming himself.” However, Paul would explode that misconception with the stern warning written a moment later.

Verses 19-21

”If the Lord will . . .” Paul’s purpose of going to Corinth to set things in order was dependent only upon the Divine pleasure. These words have the effect of “unless providentially hindered.”

“Kingdom does not consist in words, but in power . . .” Paul was conscious of his own apostolic power. Elymas had been stricken blind for opposing Paul’s teaching at Paphos (Acts 13:11), and many other notable miracles had been wrought by him; and there can be no doubt that Paul counted fully upon the confirmation of the word of God which he proclaimed at Corinth by just such signs and wonders and mighty deeds as God had enabled previously.

"What do you desire? . . ." has the effect of, "All right do you really want to put me to the test?, if so, I am ready." Paul concludes this particular admonition with a suggestion that it would be far better if they amended their behavior to enable Paul to come to them in loving affection, rather than for the purpose of punishing their wicked behavior.

CHAPTER 5

This entire chapter is devoted to the case of the incestuous member of the church in Corinth. The woman involved having apparently no connection with the church; as no rebuke or teaching of any kind concerning her is recorded.

Verse 1

Donald S. Metz, Beacon Bible Commentary p. 346, wrote, "Paul was vitally concerned about a new morality!" The old morality of the Corinthians had already been discredited, exposed and revealed in the degradations and shameful debaucheries which invariable resulted from it. The new morality had come to Corinth in the preaching of Jesus Christ. Chastity, sobriety, honesty, truthfulness and kindness were among the features of the new ethic being the only "new morality" ever heard on earth.

Donald S. Metz, *Ibid.*, p. 347, wrote. "Paul was also relevant in his preaching!" He pointed the finger of Divine condemnation squarely at the offender, also making the whole congregation to blame for the complacency with which they had looked upon so brazen a resurgence of the old morality.

"Fornication . . ." is here used as a general term for all sexual vice, incest being made the specific sin here.

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 49, wrote, "Shocked as Paul was at this sin, he was even more shocked by the attitude of the Corinthian church, "Which condoned it and went on being puffed up with pride." S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 601, thought that they might had been "even proud of their liberty;" and Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible*

Commentary, p. 1058, also believed that their leaving such a glaring sin without condemnation was “presumably on the ground of their ‘liberty’ in Christ.”

“Does not exist even among the Gentiles . . .” This does not mean, that incest was not practiced by the Gentiles, but that such vice was unacceptable among them.

“Has his father’s wife . . .” F. W. Grosheide, *The New International Commentary*, p. 120, said, “Has refers not to just one trespass, but to a life of sin.” Speculations on the circumstances attending this sin, as to the question of whether the incestuous couple was married or not, are all fruitless. The relationship itself was sinful, no matter what the circumstances; and if it had been profitable to know more of the details of this sordid incident, it is safe to conclude that Paul would have provided them.

Verse 2

“You have become arrogant . . .” Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 83, understood this thus, “They were not puffed up on account of this wickedness, but they were filled with pride notwithstanding it, or in spite of it.”

“Have not mourned . . .” William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 49, wrote, “This is the word that is used in mourning for the dead.” When such a sinful condition exists in a congregation it should be an occasion of the most intense sorrow.

Verses 3-4

Paul said, “I do not have to be present in Corinth to judge such a shameful sin as this. My spirit is already with you in the general assembly which I now order you to convene for the purpose of throwing the offender out.”

“In the name of our Lord Jesus . . .” may be applied to a number of things in this passage; but the principal thrust of the words is to invoke the authority of Christ Himself (through the apostle) for casting out the offender. They must not seek to separate from him privately, or in any hushed-up manner, the whole church was commanded to pronounce the apostolic judgment on the sinful member.

Verse 5

“Deliver . . . to Satan . . .” This was the apostolic sentence; but the full meaning of it is not fully clear, there being a great many things that men simply do not know concerning what is here revealed.

Some things are crystal clear. Paul denounced this sin in the strongest language found in the New Testament; and such a judgment could have been pronounced and executed only by an apostle of Christ.

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* wrote, “The sinful man was delivered to Satan, to suffer physical affliction, to bring him to repentance and turn out for the good of his soul,” is an example of what he thought the passage teaches.

Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* pointed out that, “No such power as this remains in the church of God; none such should be assumed; and the pretensions to it are as wicked as they are vain. It was the same power by which Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, and Elymas the sorcerer struck blind. Apostles alone were entrusted with it.” Even an apostle like Paul exercised such power and authority only upon rare occasions. (1Timothy 1:20)

Verse 6

“Your boasting is not good . . .” Their glorying failed to take any note at all of the cancer of immorality in their very midst.

“A little leaven . . .” Although there are exceptions, leaven in the New Testament usually refers to some evil principle, in this case unrebuked immorality, which was fully capable of destroying the whole church. This would account for the severity of the judgment imposed.

Verse 7

“You are unleavened . . .” This is a figure for “you are not contaminated with sin.” Despite the sinful lapses visible in the church, that action of their being cleansed in the blood of Christ was constant and effectual. Serious sins would be punished and purged from the Lord’s church; and the essential purity of it was affirmed even in this moment of the shameful deficiency.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

In the above verse, Paul affirmed that Christ is our Passover; but as in most analogies, there are points of likeness and unlikeness.

I. Points of likeness:

- A. In both the Jewish Passover and the Passover of Christians (who is Christ), there is the death of a sinless, blameless victim. (John 14:30; 8:46; Hebrews 4:15)
- B. In both, there is the design of deliverance from the wrath of God; in the Jewish Passover, it was from the destruction of the death angel, and for Christians it is from God's eternal wrath. (Romans 1:18)
- C. In both, deliverance came through the vicarious death, in their case, that of the lamb, in our case, that of Christ who died for us. (Romans 3:25; 5:3; Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 3:18)
- D. In both, the slain victim became the food of the redeemed. The Jews actually ate the Passover lamb; and Christians partake of Christ who is their spiritual food. (John 6:53)
- E. In both, a personal participation on the part of the redeemed was an absolute requirement. The lamb had to be slain for every family; each member had to eat; the blood was sprinkled on every door. Every man must be "in Christ" to be saved. (1 Corinthians 12:13)
- F. In both, the line of demarcation between the saved and lost is clear and emphatic. Egyptians did not partake of the Passover. The evil men of the world do not partake of Christ.
- G. In both there is a pledge of fellowship. Eating together is one of the oldest bonds of fellowship; and, in both dispensations, God made use of this instrument to cement the bonds of fellowship among His people.

II. Points of unlikeness:

- A. There is a contrast in the redemptions procured, one being temporal and earthly, the other being heavenly and eternal.
- B. There is a contrast in the victims provided. Is not a man of more value than a sheep?
- C. There is a contrast in the efficacy of the blood offered, that of animals being unable to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), but the blood of Christ providing remission of sins. (Hebrews 9:14)
- D. There is a contrast in that which was purged out, in the case of the Jew being the old leaven of actual bread, but in the case of Christians the purging of sin from the hearts of those saved.

III. The entire institution of the Passover was typical of the entire institution of Christianity:

- A. The Passover lamb, sacrificed the first day, was fulfilled by the crucifixion of Christ at the very hour the lambs were slain.
- B. The lamb was a type of the person of Christ in that: it was innocent, died vicariously, was a male of the flock, and without blemish, and in that not a bone of it was broken. (Psalm 34:20)
- C. Just as the Passover was slain and eaten in Jerusalem so Christ suffered, died, and rose again in the same city.
- D. The Passover was typical of the Lord's Supper in some ways, though not in others.

Both were Divinely instituted, both were commemorative, both were continuative, moving for millenniums through history; both began a new kingdom, the Passover that of the Jews; the Lord's Supper distinguished the kingdom of Christ; and in both cases the actual beginning of the kingdom was a little later than the institution of the rite. Who but God could have so designed the religious economy of Israel that all of it would have served to typify and identify the Christ who would come into the world?

Verse 8

“Let us therefore celebrate the feast . . .” It seems incredible that anyone would apply this to keeping the Jewish Passover. F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 126, wrote, “We are obliged to keep the feast, that is, the feast of unleavened bread.”

When Paul commanded the Corinthians to “purge out the old leaven,” he referred to purging out sin. Therefore “feast” in this place has the meaning of Christian life and fellowship. F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 168, wrote, “Keep the feast of Christ’s resurrection in the spirit of holiness.” Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 88, wrote, “Let us engage in the service of God by putting away evil.” Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 355, wrote, “Keeping the feast suggests the continuous life of the Christian, a day-by-day walking in holiness, strength, and joy.”

“Not with old leaven . . .” This is reference to the old morality of the Corinthians, under the figure of the Jew’s action at Passover. All sexual sin, as well as malice and other forms of wickedness, are specific examples of what Paul meant by “leaven.”

“The unleavened bread . . .” refers to the new life in Christ from which the old works of the flesh have been purged and replaced by “sincerity and truth.”

Verses 9-10

The crux of Paul’s teaching is that when he had commanded the Corinthians not to keep company with fornicators, the congregation had taken it to mean that they were not to associate with anybody guilty of that sin, whether in the church or out of the church. Paul here stated that he did not mean that “at all;” and, if he had meant that, they could have obeyed him only by leaving the present world!

“Immoral people . . . with the covetous and swindlers . . . idolaters . . .” Significantly, Paul here extended the prohibition to include association with any grossly wicked people, specifically the four classes mentioned, who might be called “brethren.”

Despite the fact of its being allowable for Christians to associate with the wicked in the necessary business and commerce of the world, such persons

having no connection with Christianity, this is definitely not meant to encourage such associations. Every time a child of God is in the company of the wicked, even in cases where it is necessary and allowable, he runs a certain risk; and there is no way that he should be satisfied and comfortable in such associations.

Verse 11

“I wrote to you . . .” carries the meaning of “what I meant when I wrote to you.” The blanket rule laid down here requiring the Christian to forego any association with unfaithful Christians who are false to their profession.

Verses 12-13

Despite what is said under verse 5 of the unique authority involved in delivering the sinner “to Satan,” it may not be supposed that putting away evil men out of the Christian fellowship has no relevance now. However, if it is to be done, it must be done. Leon Morris, *Tyndale Commentary*, p. 93, wrote, “Paul’s main point is that the church must not tolerate the presence of evil in its midst, and this is clearly of permanent relevance.”

Paul also guarded against any thought that the wicked “without” shall escape judgment; God will judge them. Regarding this verse, James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 80, wrote, “The apostle wrote this and the preceding verse to show the Corinthians the reason why, after commanding them to pass so severe a sentence on the man, he said nothing to them of the woman who was guilty with him. The discipline of the church was not to be exercised on persons out of it. Hence it appears that this woman was a heathen.”

CHAPTER 6

Just as chapter 5 was devoted to the subject of the incestuous man and related thoughts, so this is devoted to another serious problem at Corinth, that of Christians going to law with one another before pagan judges (1-11), and a special paragraph on sexual vice (12-20), the entire subject matter in both chapters being discussed in the light of the conceited glorying which characterized the Christian community in Corinth.

ON GOING TO LAW

Verse 1

“Against his neighbor . . .” means “against a Christian neighbor,” because it would be impossible to force a pagan into a Christian tribunal unrecognized by the law of the land.

“Before the unrighteous . . .” This is not a charge that all the pagan judges were unrighteous, but distinguishes between those within the church and those without, all of the latter being unrighteous in the sense of not being Christians.

“Not before the saints . . .” Christ Himself had laid down the rules for any follower of the Lord having a matter against his brother; and this rule involved:

- (1) A personal confrontation between wronged and wrongdoer,
- (2) Another attempt at reconciliation if the first failed, with witnesses present, and
- (3) A general examination before the whole church. (Matthew 18:15-17)

J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 74, stated that, “By going to law before the pagan tribunals, they were not only disobeying the Lord but committing treason against their own brotherhood.”

George W. De Hoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 56, stated, “It is sometimes necessary for Christians to appear in courts for justice; Paul himself appealed to Caesar.”

Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1058, wrote, “The Rabbis taught the Jews never to take a case before the Gentiles;” and there were reasons excellent enough why the Christians would have likewise stayed out of pagan courts, except through the utmost necessity. Not only were the Christians more competent in an ethical sense, but the use of pagan courts would involve oath-taking in the names of pagan deities and other practices abhorrent to Christians.

Verse 2

“Do you not know . . .” These words are the key to understanding this difficult passage. James McKnight, *Apostolical Epistles and Commentary*, p. 84,

said, “Because this question is repeated six times in this chapter, Locke thinks it was intended as a reproof to the Corinthians, who boasted of the knowledge they received from the false teacher, (but) were extremely ignorant in religious matters.”

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 901, interpreted this and the two following verses as sarcasm on Paul’s part writing, “They appeal to the “knowledge” of the Corinthians, who were puffed up with spiritual pride; and in their conceit had spoken of their hope to judge men and angels. If this be their expectation surely they can judge in matters of daily life.”

The matter of human beings judging men and angels is just such a thing as would have been advocated by the conceited false teaches in Corinth; but there are many other reasons.

- (1) The greatest importance attaches to the words, “Do you not know,” which occurs ten times in the letters of Paul to the Corinthians, and only twice in all the rest. F. W. Farrar, *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 19, p. 192, says that, “(These words) are a fitting rebuke for those who took for knowledge their obvious ignorance.” These words are a sarcastic reference by Paul to conceited arrogance of the Corinthians who professed to “know” so much.
- (2) Jesus never promised that even the apostles would judge angels. The passage in Matthew 19:28 speaks of their “judging the twelve tribes of Israel;” and as Leon Morris, *Tyndale Commentary*, p. 94, noted, “There is no record of Christ having said that all believers would share in that.”
- (3) What angels did men judge? Does it mean the devil’s angels?” They have already been judged and cast down and reserved in chains of darkness. (2 Peter 2:4)
- (4) The matter of Christians judging men and angels is no valid Christian doctrine at all, but the speculative nonsense of the vainglorious experts in Greek philosophy at Corinth.

- (5) Christians themselves will be judged at the last day; and in 4:4, Paul had just declared that the one who judges “is the Lord.” Although it is said of saints that they shall “reign” with Christ, it is nowhere said that they shall judge with Him.

Verses 3-4

You who know all about judging angels in the last day, how about judging some of these petty disputes you are disgracefully airing in the courts of the pagans? In your practice of resolving these little earthly matters, how is it that you set the pagan judges over such trivialities, such judges being of no account at all in the church, as they are not members of it.

The words “do you appoint them as judges” would be imperative, that is, a command, that they should choose some humble member of the congregation to be a judge of disputes.

Before leaving this subject, a word with regard to Daniel 7:22 is appropriate. The passage reads; “Until the ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.” The judge in this place mentioned in the first clause, being the Ancient of Days; and it was His judgment upon their behalf, and not a judgment made by them. The great passage from Matthew 25:31-46 is in complete harmony with the interpretation of Daniel 7:22. In all probability, the false teachers at Corinth had indulged in some very wild speculations.

Verse 5

“I say this to your shame . . .” The sharpness of Paul’s biting sarcasm in the previous three verses was no doubt keenly felt in Corinth; and by this expression Paul means, “I meant for it to hurt.”

“Wise man . . . to decide . . .” Paul dropped the sarcasm for a moment asking, “Why don’t you appoint one of the wiser members to settle such disputes?”

Verse 6

Ellicott, as quoted in One Volume New Testament Commentary, in loco, paraphrased this as, “Your dragging these disputes before the tribunals of the heathen would imply that it is not possible to find a Christian friend to settle these trivial disputes.”

Verse 7

Passing beyond the question of “where” their lawsuits should be settled, Paul in this rebuked them for having any “lawsuits with one another.” The Christian is of a different temperament from the man who is always screaming about his “rights,” it being a far better way of life to “go the second mile . . . give the cloak also . . . and turn the other cheek.” (Matthew 5:38-42)

Verse 8

There were some in the Corinthian congregation who made a habit of defrauding their brethren, using sinful devices, procuring advantage by the instrumentality of the pagan system of justice. The Christians were being defrauded by other members of the church.

Verses 9-10

A vast proportion of the whole Corinthian population participated in such sins as are catalogued here; and the prevalence of such wickedness throughout the ancient empire resulted in its total destruction. It was not the destruction of an empire that Paul had in view here; it was the loss of souls.

The various actions mentioned in this paragraph are designated as unrighteousness. The people who continue in such wickedness “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

“Fornicators . . . “ is a general term for several kinds of sexual vice. It is here made the head of a shameful list of sins.

“Idolaters . . . “ This referred to the patrons of the temple of Aphrodite atop the Acro Corinthus, which dominated the Corinthian scene. As Henry H. Bailey, Bible Handbook, p. 546, wrote, “A thousand public prostitutes, kept at public expense, were always ready (in the temple) for immoral indulgence as

worship to their goddess!" The Corinthian's were finding it difficult to adjust to the strict code of Christina morality.

"Adulterers . . ." has special reference to persons not faithful to the marriage vows.

"Effeminate . . ." James Macknight, op. cit., p. 88, wrote that this word is translated from a Greek word meaning "catamite," the technical word for a "a boy used in pederasty, meaning a lover of boys, a form of sodomy. Catamites were the passive partners in sodomy.

"Homosexuals . . ." were the sodomites. Regarding the passive and active homosexuals referred to in these words, it should be remembered than an apostle of Jesus Christ condemned such persons in the judgment that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. What is to be thought of churches which not only condone this sin, but in widely publicized cases have actually ordained homosexuals to the ministry?

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 60, wrote, "Homosexuality was the cancer in Greek life that invaded Rome, and brought the vaunted empire to destruction. Fourteen of the first fifteen Roman emperors practiced this vice; others guilty of it were Socrates and Plato. Nero castrated and married a boy called Sporus, which he held as his wife, and at the same time married Pythagoras and called him his husband!

William Barclay's, conclusion may not be denied that, "In this particular vice in the time of the early church, the world was lost to shame; and there can be little doubt that that was one of the main causes of its degeneracy and the final collapse of its civilization.

"Thieves . . . covetous . . . drunkards . . . revilers . . . swindlers . . ." Paul classed thieves and swindlers as equally criminal, the later referring to organized, 'white-collar' crime, and thievery to common pilferage.

"Covetousness" is the inordinate desire, or love, of money, the same being a ruling passion, not only with the unregenerated, but also with many Christians themselves, who despite their prosperity give little or nothing to the church or

philanthropy. This vice is rated with idolatry, sodomy, extortion, etc, being essentially a denial of God in human life.

“Drunkards . . .” Who is a drunkard? The “wisdom” of this age recognizes no such character, the same having been elevated in the popular mind to the status of “an alcoholic!” As such he is not blameworthy in any degree, but merely suffering from a “disease,” the same required to be treated, tolerated, and even appreciated by the community. This is merely a part of the blindness of worldly wisdom. No man can become an alcoholic except by his own repeated violations of the Christian law of sobriety.

If one is really concerned with living the Christian life, by far the best thing for him to do is to deny beverage alcohol any place whatever in his life.

Verse 11

“Such were some of you. . . “ This was intended by Paul to call attention to the conditions from which they had been rescued by Christ. But you were washed . . . sanctified . . . justified . . .” This refers to the conversion of the Corinthians. F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 193, wrote, “By sanctified is meant, not the progressive course of sanctification, but the consecration to God by baptism.”

Justification has reference to the status of the believer “in Christ” who by virtue of his identity with the Savior does not deserve any punishment whatever; it is a total and complete justification bestowed upon the believer when he is baptized “into Christ.”

CONCERNING FORNICATION

Verse 12

The liberty in Christ which made “all things lawful” was a relative, not an absolute principle; and any notion that the existence of appetites justified their gratification was not true then, or ever. Henry H. Halley, *op. cit.*, p. 546, stated, “Some of them were evidently quoting this to justify their promiscuous sexual behavior; but Paul positively stated that it did not so apply.”

Verse 13

“Food is for the stomach . . .” This was probably another current proverb among the Corinthians with the meaning suggested by Paul W. Marsh, *op. cit.*, p.386, stating, “As one indulges an appetite for food, that being the function of the stomach, so should the physical urge for sexual indulgence be gratified. Paul refutes the argument, stomach and food being temporal; but not so the body.”

“The Lord is for the body . . .” The purpose of the body is not the gratification of its appetites; but it is for the Lord, a reference to the indwelling of the Spirit mentioned in verse 19. Sensuality is neither the highest nor the most satisfying use of the body. “Body” as used here has reference to the whole person including the physical body; and the highest happiness of the person is impossible of attainment through gratification, such happiness deriving only from the proper union between man and His Creator.

Verse 14

The resurrection of Christians is promised here, the proof of it already having been demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ. As the resurrection of Christ was bodily, so shall be that of Christians; and, in this light, an eternal purpose with reference to the body itself is indicated, the same being a telling argument against wasting the physical body through lust and sensuality.

Verse 15

“Do you not know . . .” is still being used sarcastically in this passage, not in the sense of denying that Christians’ bodies are members of Christ, but as protesting the incongruity of debasing such members in immorality. Paul’s use of body in this passage makes it certain that the physical body is meant.

Verse 16

“Or do you not know . . .” carries the thought of, “With all of your conceited knowledge, has it never occurred to you that participation with a harlot makes the participant and the harlot one flesh?”

Verse 17

“One spirit . . .” The true Christian, having been joined to the Lord through his conversion from sin, is one in spirit with the Lord, seeking all things to confirm his thoughts, words and deeds to such actions as are approved by the Lord and in harmony with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 18

“Flee immorality . . .” The sin of immorality (fornication) is against:

- (1) God (Genesis 39:9),
- (2) one’s body (as here),
- (3) the church,
- (4) the marriage institution,
- (5) the life of the nation, and
- (6) the very soul itself. (Proverbs 6:32)

“The immoral man sins against his own body . . .” No matter how body is understood, whether the physical body, the body of the family, the body of the Lord, the body of the social order, or even any corporate body—immorality is “against” any and all of these. Many a corporation has been wrecked through immorality.

Verse 19

What Paul had affirmed earlier with reference to the church’s being the temple of the Holy Spirit is here declared to be true of individual members of the church. God’s temple belongs to God, and therefore the individual who partakes of the nature of God’s temple belongs not to himself but to God, and thus he is not free to indulge his lusts and appetites but is obligated to conform his activities to those things which will honor and glorify the Lord whose property the Christian is.

Verse 20

“You have been bought with a price . . .” has reference to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which is the purchase price of the church. (Acts 20:28)

“Glorify God in your body . . .” identifies the body as an instrument to be used by the Christian in the service of God and for His glory. In true Christianity, there is no hatred of the body, no torturing of the flesh, and no asceticism.

Donald Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 1059, pointed out that Paul’s language here, “reflects a contemporary custom prevalent in Corinth. Resort to a temple prostitute meant resort to a strange god; and the participants in temple immorality became the property of the god of that temple, the pagan society holding such persons to be free or ‘liberated!’”

CHAPTER 7

This is one of the most interesting chapters in the New Testament, due to the nature of it, being Paul’s apostolic answers to no less than six questions propounded in a letter from the church at Corinth, that letter being lost.

Paul had sternly reprimanded the Corinthians for the various sins already noted in the first six chapters, before getting down to the problem of their questions. In the next nine chapters he would deal with questions raised in the lost letter.

The six questions treated in this chapter are:

- (1) Should married couples continue sexual relations after becoming Christians?

Answer: Yes, it is their duty to do this. (Verses 1-7)

- (2) Should single persons get married?

Answer: Yes, in all normal situations; but for the gifted, such as Paul, celibacy was advantageous, especially in unsettled times. (Verses 8-9)

- (3) Is divorce permitted for Christians?

Answer: No. (Verses 10-11)

- (4) When one partner of a pagan couple becomes a Christian, the other refusing to do so, is such a marriage binding?

Answer: Yes, except when the unbeliever deserts the Christian partner. (Verses 12-16)

Becoming a Christian does not free any man from obligations already binding upon him. Evidently there was at Corinth, even at this early date, some impression that becoming a Christian wiped out all prior debts, contracts, even marriage and all other obligations existing prior to conversion. (Verses 17-24)

- (5) Should Christian fathers (or guardians) give their daughters in marriage?

Answer: The fathers and guardians were given authority to solve their individual problems, there being no sin involved, however the decision went; but certain guidelines were suggested. (Verses 25-38)

- (6) May a Christian widow remarry?

Answer: Yes, provided only that she marry, “in the Lord.” (Verses 39-40)

Like many other chapters which are sometimes labeled “difficult,” this one contains some of the most instructive teaching in the New Testament, and affords glimpses of the apostolic method which add greatly to one’s faith in the integrity of the apostles.

Verse 1

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman . . .” Paul first addressed himself to the prior question of celibacy, admitting here, that in a sense, it was “good.” The word “good” in this place does not mean morally good, but that it is for man’s best interests in some circumstances to remain single.” (Donald S. Metz, Beacon Bible Commentary, p. 372)

George W. DeHoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 63, wrote, “He is teaching that because of the persecution of Christians, it is better not to get married and bring children into the world to be killed and suffer persecution.”

Paul in no sense advocated celibacy, except in certain situations and circumstances, and that even in those cases it was merely “allowable,” and not commanded. Paul w Marsh, *A New Commentary*, p. 387, said, “He is not writing a treatise on marriage, but answering their questions within the context of current attitudes and circumstances.

David Lipscomb, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 95, noted, “Paul’s teaching here regards the persecution then raging against the Christians; and, on account of these, if a man could restrain his lusts, it was better not to marry.”

Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. VI, p. 220 wrote, “The Jews absolutely required that every man should marry, and reputed those as murderers who did not.”

Verse 2

Celibacy being an absolutely unattainable state for the vast majority of mankind, marriage is required as the only practical alternative.

“But because of immoralities . . .” By these words and the command following, Paul refuted absolutely the false argument of Jerome who said, “If it is good for a man not to touch a woman, it must be bad to do so; and therefore celibacy is a holier state than marriage.” (F. W. Farrar, *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 19, p. 223) Far from being a holier state than marriage, celibacy enforced upon the clergy of the historic church contrary to nature, became the worst of evils.

Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, 1 Corinthians, p. 111, said, “How much evil, how much deep pollution, how many abominable crimes would have been avoided, which have grown out of the monastic system, and the celibacy of the clergy . . . if Paul’s advice had been followed by all professed Christians!

“Let each man have . . .” This was an apostolic order, “a rule and not a mere permission; and Paul applied it equally to women as to men.

Verse 3

“Fulfill his duty to his wife . . . also the wife to her husband . . .” The sexual relationship in married couples, far from being wrong, is a lawful and necessary function of Christian marriage. There existed a view among ascetics that sex relations were in and of themselves wicked, or evil; and the blight of this monastic error has fallen upon all succeeding generations.

Verse 4

The equality of husband and wife in the marriage partnership is in the foreground here. Neither partner in marriage was to subscribe to any form of “sexless” behavior, because there was a positive duty that each owed the other in marriage.

Verse 5

“Except by agreement for a time . . .” In such an apostolic directive as this, there disappears totally the notion that sexual relations between Christian marriage partners were allowable only for procreation. On the other hand, the refusal of one of the partners to cohabit is designated as fraud.

“May devote yourselves to prayer . . .” Abstinance from the normal marital relations was allowable only upon the consent of both partners, and even then only for purposes of prayer (in some special sense), and only “for a season.”

Verse 6

This verse indicates that such behavior as celibacy and married couples refraining from cohabitation for “a season” were allowable, but not required, a concession not a commandment.

Verse 7

“I wish that all men . . .” Paul could not have meant that he wished that all men were unmarried, like himself, but rather that all men had the gift of continence, which is clearly “his own gift from God.” “Even as I myself . . .” The question of whether or not Paul was ever married always surfaces here, being many dogmatic opinions supporting either view. It is not a matter of great import either way.

Verse 8

“It is good for them if they remain even as I . . .” This was the permission of the apostle, and even his approval, that for those who were able to live chastely without marriage, it would be better for them not to marry due to “the distress that is upon us” (verse 26). A savage persecution against the church was then raging, and it was an inopportune time for marrying; but even so, Paul did not forbid it.

Verse 9

J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 80, analyses Paul’s answer as this, “He advises the unmarried who have the gift of self-control to remain unmarried, but those lacking it should avoid unlawful lusts by marriage.”

“Better to marry than to burn . . .” has reference to being on fire with passion.

Verse 10

“Not I, but the Lord . . .” has been construed by some as an admission on Paul’s part that some of his advice in this chapter was not, but no such meaning is logically derived from what is said here. What Paul declared here is that it was unnecessary for him to give any inspired utterance on such a subject, because the Lord Himself had given specific commandment on this very thing. (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:9; Luke 16:18)

Verse 11

Paul left out of view in this verse the exception Jesus gave in Matthew 19:9, “Except it be for fornication but this may not be construed as a denial of it.” Paul’s failure to mention the exception was likely due to the fact that it did not apply in the case propounded by the letter from Corinth.

As Dehoff said, “Paul told her either to remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. Divorce never solves a problem; it only creates more problems.” Of course, exactly the same rule applied to husbands who left their wives.

Verse 12

“ I say, not the Lord . . . ” The meaning here is not that Paul’s injunction here had any less inspiration and authority behind it, but that its authority derived from his own apostolic commission, and not from any direct commandment uttered by Jesus during His ministry, such as that He had just cited. Paul W. Marsh, *op. cit.*, p. 388, expressed it, “In this instance Paul cannot refer to any direct command of Christ, as he could for the previous case; but His words carry the full weight of inspiration and authority.”

Jesus’ teaching on marriage was directed to the Jews who were all in covenant relationship with God; and his words had no application at all to mixed marriages which Paul dealt with here; hence the necessity for Paul to issue the command himself in the fullness of his apostolic authority.

This verse through verse 16 deals with the problems of divorce in mixed marriages, that is, marriages between Christians and pagans, a situation which arose, not from Christians marrying pagans, but from the conversion of one out of a pagan couple. Paul’s command here is that the marriage stands unless the unbeliever is unwilling and will not allow it to stand.

Verse 13

The teaching here is the same as in the previous verse, except it applies to the Christian woman, just as verse 12 applied to the Christian man, with an unbelieving marriage partner.

Verse 14

“Sanctified . . . ” “This verb cannot mean ‘holy in Christ before God,’ because that kind of holiness cannot be predicated of an unbeliever.” (Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 378) Paul here uses such a term in a ceremonial sense, rather than in a sense suggesting the salvation either of the unbelieving partner or of the children.

Those who seek to find here any authority for infant church membership are frustrated by the fact that nothing of the kind is even intimated. “There is not

one word about baptism here, not one allusion to it; nor does the argument in the remotest degree bear upon it.” (Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 117)

Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 110, pointed out, the “holiness” here ascribed to children applies only “until the child is old enough to take responsibility upon himself.”

Verse 15

“The brother or sister is not under bondage . . .” Donald R. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 379, was doubtless correct in the comment that, “Paul’s directive does not grant permission for a Christian to marry an unbeliever.” The guidelines apply to situations in which one of a pagan couple accepts Christianity, and the other does not. Even then, the marriage is binding unless the unbeliever deserts the faithful partner.

Verse 16

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 92, wrote that, “A mixed marriage of the kind Paul had in mind is fraught with missionary possibility.” Paul’s meaning here is that perhaps the faithful partner might be able to convert the unbeliever. There is another possible meaning: “God’s aim for us in peace, which will best be secured by separation; the possibility of saving the heathen partner is, after all, quite uncertain.”

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 903, wrote, “God’s aim for us is peace, which will best be secured by separation; the possibility of saving the heathen partner is, after all, quite uncertain.”

Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 111, preferred the view, adding that, “Marriage is not to be regarded simply as an instrument of evangelism.” Despite this, it seems that Bruce’s view is preferable.

It is a known fact that many a marriage with unbelievers has proved to be the means of converting the unbeliever; but Paul certainly did not advocate marriage with such an end in view. This verse concludes Paul’s teaching on mixed marriages; and, as always, there is evident in it the most devout and sincere desire for the salvation of men’s souls.

Verse 17

The problem of the innocent party in a mixed marriage disposed of, Paul here made a digression to legislate in the power of the Holy Spirit on the larger question behind it, that greater question deriving from an error being advocated at Corinth by certain false teachers.

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 108, wrote, “The Judaizers taught that by embracing the true religion, all former obligations under which the convert lay were dissolved.”

Any widespread acceptance of such an error would have resulted in social chaos and precipitated even more savage and relentless persecutions against the church; therefore, for both practical and ethical reasons the error had to be struck down.

“As the Lord has assigned to each one . . .” refers to the status of each man in the fabric of the social order; some being wealthy, others poor, some free, others slaves, etc.

“As God has called each, in this manner let him walk . . .” Accepting the gospel did not change prior conditions and obligations of the convert in any legal sense, despite the fact that the holy principles of Christianity were inherently changed with power to destroy many shameful institutions in the pagan society. James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 108, wrote, “The gospel, instead of welcoming any moral or just political obligations, strengthened them all.”

Verses 18-19

“Let him not become uncircumcised . . .” Through surgery, it was possible to do this; and Macknight related how, “Apostate Jews (by such action) fancied that they freed themselves from their obligation to obey the law of Moses.”

“Circumcision is nothing . . .” Three times Paul made this statement; each time concluding with a powerful statement that which is everything here. “It is “keeping the commandments of God.” In Galatians 5:6, it is “faith working through love;” and in Galatians 6:15, it is “a new creation.”

“Let him not be uncircumcised . . .” is an order applicable to all of every class who become Christians; and it may not be allowed that the practice of this rite, which is essentially racial and religious, could be acceptable under any circumstances in the church for any persons whomsoever. Pau’s circumcision of Timothy has no bearing whatever on this.

Verses 20-21

There is nothing in this passage which forbids any man to strive for betterment of conditions in his life; but what is forbidden is any thought that such “better conditions” could denote any higher spiritual condition. A slave could be just as noble and successful a Christian as anyone else.

Many Christians have destroyed their spiritual lives, or greatly damaged them, by inordinate desire to improve their economic or social status. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

“But if you are able to become free, rather do that . . .” There is an amazing uncertainty among the wisest scholars as to what Paul meant by this, and this is reflected in the various versions. The Revised Standard Version reads: “If you can gain your freedom.” The New English Bible reads, “If a chance of liberty should could.”

Was Paul addressing the slave of pagans, or Christians? If it should be allowed here that Paul advised continuation in servitude, even for one who might have procured his liberty, it should not necessarily follow that such was intended as the will of God for all ages to come. J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 82, believed that Paul meant that, “If freedom can be obtained, it is preferred” and if master and slave are both Christians, it should be bestowed, as Paul clearly suggested to Philemon.

Although the word emancipation seemed to be always trembling upon Paul’s lips, he never uttered it. Why?

If one single word could have been quoted in Rome as tending to excite slaves to revolt, it might have quadrupled the intensity and savagery of the imperial government’s hatred and persecution of Christians at a time when

persecution was already under way; and that fact could have resulted in Paul's recommendation here.

Paul only hinted that Philemon should free Onesimus; and here he advised that slaves continue to serve God in their condition of servitude.

The apostolic commandment regarding what was preferable under those peculiar and exceptional circumstances may not be understood as binding at the present time and in far different circumstances.

Verse 22

Donald R. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 382, wrote, "The man who is a slave is free in Christ, and the man who is free is the servant of Christ." "But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because; like flowering grass he will pass away." (James 1:9-10)

Verse 23

What is meant is that, "Christians should not be dragooned by others in the way they should live." (Donald Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 1061) Paul could have meant, "Do not allow yourselves to be made bondservants of those who are agitating the slavery question. You do not belong to them; you belong to Christ, having been purchased by His precious blood."

Verse 24

This verse is a pointed recapitulation of the whole paragraph (verses 17-24).

Verse 25

This is the fifth question answered in this chapter. Donald R. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 383, wrote, "Apparently, the church at Corinth had asked Paul's opinion regarding unmarried daughters and the responsibilities of parents in such instances."

"Virgins . . ." John Wesley, *One Volume NT Commentary*, *in loco*, said this means "of either sex." William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 74, objected saying that, "It is hard to see why Paul used the word virgin if he meant daughter" is refuted by the fact that Paul did not mean daughter, but unmarried

young people of both sexes. Adam Clarke noted, “The word in this place means young unmarried persons of either sex, as is plain from verses 26-27, 32-34, and from Revelation 14:4.”

The fact that the word virgin has a different meaning in our day does not alter its evident meaning in this place.

“I have no command of the Lord . . .” is not a disclaimer of inspiration on Paul’s part at all; it is a statement that the Lord during His ministry did not make a specific pronouncement upon this subject.

“As one who by mercy of the Lord is trustworthy . . .” In context, this is a full affirmation of Paul’s apostolic power and authority, added to prevent any misunderstanding of the fact that the Lord had not personally legislated on this question.

Verse 26

That the meaning of “virgins” in verse 25 includes both sexes is implicit in the specific mention of “men” here. As James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 97, wrote, “Paul declared, beginning with the case of the male virgin, that it was good in the present distress to remain unmarried.” Here again, as in verse 1, “good” denotes not what was commanded but what was advisable.

Verse 27

“The present distress . . .” mentioned in the previous verse looms ominously in the background of these remarks. It should be remembered that both Jewish and Gentile enemies of the faith would have seized any opportunity to exterminate, if possible, the Christian religion. The situation at Corinth was probably a local outburst of the persecutions which became more general at a later date.

It may not be denied that some terrible onslaught against the faith of Christ was under way in Corinth at this very time.

Verse 28

Regardless of the practical wisdom against it, Paul still allowed that marriage was honorable and that those entering such a state did not sin.

“But if you (virgins) should marry . . .” This refers to virgin daughters making it clear that both sexes are in view here, men having been mentioned in verse 26.

“Yet such will have trouble in this life . . .” is a reference to the sufferings and deprivations invariably associated with persecutions in the first century. Such tribulations would be more severe upon the married than upon the unmarried.

Verses 29-30

All earthly pursuits should be made and all obligations and conditions considered in the light of the tragic fact that, “Upon my day of life the night is falling!”

T. Teignmouth Shore, p. cit., p. 312, wrote, “Let us not for one moment think that this principle was evolved by Paul from a mistaken belief that the Second Advent was close at hand.” There is not the slightest hint in this passage of Christ’s second coming, except in the general sense of its being always proper for Christians to live as expecting it and being prepared for it. The time of Christ’s return was one point upon which Jesus declared that the apostles could not be informed; and it was the one point upon which they were not enlightened.

All of them with even elementary knowledge of what Jesus taught knew that the time of the Second Coming had not been revealed not even to the Son of God. (Matthew 24:36)

Instead of a conceited glorying in their so-called “mistake” on such exhortations, it would be far better for Christians today to take the attitude as the apostles and pray, “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 21:20)

Verse 31

This really belongs with the two previous verses, being a part of the same exhortation to prudence in view of the transience of earthly existence and the swift changes that accompany our mortality.

Verse 32

This was the basis of Paul's recommendation of the single status for those whose self-restraint made it possible, the unencumbered being able more wholeheartedly to serve the interests of true religion than those pressed down with cares and obligations.

Verse 33

Paul is pointing out the preemption of time and efforts required in the support of a wife and family, such a division of the Christian's energies inherent in such a thing as marriage. All of this was said as persuasion to induce any who could to avoid marriage during that "present distress."

Verse 34

The teaching here is the same as there, except that it would appear that Paul, in the word "unmarried" included widows along with virgin daughters as subjects of the same advice. James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 114, very probably has the true meaning in his rendition of this verse, "There is difference also between a wife and a virgin: the unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit: but she that is married cares for things of the world, how she may please her husband."

Verse 35

Paul's personal preference for celibacy on the part of persons who were capable of it, and in certain circumstances, for more complete dedication, has always appealed to some in every age; and it is not right to depreciate such behavior. The Revised Standard Version has butchered this text in the most deplorable and high-handed mistranslation of it that could possibly be imagined.

"If any man . . ." was used by Paul here for the purpose of including guardians of young women of marriageable age as well as parents; and to make "any man" in this passage refer to any man shackled up in some kind of platonic partnership with a member of the opposite sex is nothing but a shameful rape of this passage.

Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A Review of the New Versions*, p. 433, noted, “They made the virgin daughter in this place the girl-friend of another man to whom the virgin was betrothed, advising him to be free in his behavior.” The Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *Ibid*, caught the spirit of the RSV exactly in his words, “This passage is perverted to allow sexual satisfaction ‘if his passions are strong,’ and ‘to do what he will,’ and ‘he does not sin’ in such pre-marital relations.”

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 904, affirmed unequivocally that “any man” in the above passage means “any parent or guardian.”

There is no way to understand this passage except in the light of the customs of the day, S. Lewis Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 610, wrote, “And the father (or guardian) had control of the arrangements for his daughter’s marriage.”

The kind of situation assumed to have been the object of Paul’s remarks (as in the RSV and NEB) was absolutely impossible in the first century. No father or guardian would have allowed such an arrangement (as that supposed) under any threat or circumstance whatever.

It was not some passionate suitor Paul had in mind, but the daughter’s father; because, as F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 93, said, “The word rendered gives in marriage twice in verse 38 (RV) is normally used of a father’s giving his daughter in marriage.”

“If she should be of full age . . . and if it must be so” Any denial of marriage of an aging daughter would indeed seem unseemly to a loving parent, who should feel no sense of sin in giving his daughter’s hand in marriage.

“Let her marry . . .” This was the injunction to parents and guardians and it has no reference at all to some passionate suitor shackled up with his girl-friend.

“Let him do what he wishes . . . he does not sin . . .” This means allow the parents or guardians in such cases to do what they believe is best; no sin is involved in contracting marriages, despite all that Paul had said about celibacy.

Verse 37

“To keep his own virgin daughter . . .” here is the opposite of “gives his own virgin daughter.” (Verse 38) The sense of this verse is that a Christian

parent or guardian fully determined to withhold his daughter's hand in marriage might do so without sin, and might even be commended for it.

Verse 38

Either solution of the problem on the part of parents and guardians was acceptable.

Verses 39-40

This was the sixth question Paul answered in this chapter; and the answer to this one is easy. Yes, widows might indeed marry again, but only "in the Lord." It was never intended that Christians marry unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 6:14ff)

William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 79, said, "One thing it must be, Paul laid down here; it must be a marriage in the Lord Long, long ago, Plutarch, the wise old Greek, laid it down that "marriage cannot be happy unless husband and wife are of the same religion."

"I think that I have the spirit of God . . ." This is not the expression of any uncertainty but the polite insistence of Paul that his words in this chapter and throughout his writings were inspired by God' Spirit.

John Wesley, *op. cit.*, p. 79, also thought that the words "I think," as used here and elsewhere, "always imply the fullest and strongest assurance."

CHAPTER 8

Beginning here and through 11:1, this epistle discusses food (especially meat) sacrificed to idols. In the culture and society of the people who first received it the problems here dealt with were paramount and practically universal.

The total meat supply, in any practical sense, came from the sacrifices to the idol gods of the Gentiles, a portion of each sacrifice being prerequisite of the pagan priest, and the rest of it consumed in the temple area itself, carried to the homes of the worshipers, or sold, either by them or the priests, in the common meat markets.

The apostle Paul established the timeless principles of Christian behavior in the course of his writing on this subject, these being:

- (1) That what is permissible behavior for one man may, in certain circumstances, be dangerous and sinful in another.
- (2) That no Christian conduct should be evaluated solely from, the standpoint of knowledge, but in the light of the love of brethren, with regard to its possible influence upon others, and in the light of what others may think of it.
- (3) That no Christian has a right to practice anything, however innocent it may be to him, if in so doing he shall damage the faith of another.
- (4) That whatever is done, even to the weakest member of the body of Christ, is also done to Christ Himself, and that weakening or destroying the faith of even the least and weakest of Christ's members is a sin of the greatest magnitude against Christ Himself.

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 85, wrote, "A pleasure or an indulgence which may be the ruin of someone else is not a pleasure but a sin."

Verse 1

"Now concerning . . ." These words indicate that the Corinthians had asked Paul questions in regard to these matters, a fact that also indicated by the use of quotations marks to set off portions of this verse and in verses 4 and 5.

"We all have knowledge . . ." This was the conceited declaration of the questioners from Corinth who evidently indulged themselves in the pagan temples without regard to weak brethren; and the first thing Paul did was to nail down the fact that "knowledge" without love was the grossest ignorance.

"Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies . . ." Knowledge without love only puffs up the one who fancies he is wise and does nothing for others, whereas love builds up both its possessor and others.

The evident concern of Paul's questioners did not refer to themselves (they already knew everything), but "they wanted how to deal with people who refused

to eat meat sacrificed to idols.” Despite this conceit some of them were actually “setting at meat in an idol’s temple!” (Verse 10)

The problem regarded several possibilities:

- (1) May a Christian partake of the feasts in the idol temples?
- (2) Was it permissible for him to buy food in the public markets, where most if not all of it had been procured from the sacrifices?
- (3) Might he, when invited to a friend’s house, eat flesh which had been sacrificed to idols?

Verse 2

“Supposes that he knows anything . . .” All earthly knowledge is partial and fragmentary. Attributed to Kay by Leon Morris, Tyndale Commentary, p. 125, “Knowledge is proud that it has learned so much—Wisdom is humble that it knows no more.”

In thinking that they knew everything and at the same time despising the brethren they denominated as ignorant, the Corinthians indeed knew nothing as they should have known.

Verse 3

This verse ends surprisingly with, “He is known by Him.” F. W. Farrar, Pulpit Commentary, p. 264, was probably correct in the observation that, “Paul did not wish to use any terms which would foster the already overgrown conceit of knowledge which was inflating the minds of his Corinthian converts. Furthermore he felt that “God knows them that are His.” (2 Timothy 3:19)

Leon Morris, op. cit., p. 264, wrote, “The really important thing is not that we know God, but that He knows us!”

Verse 4

The sophisticated arguments of the “knowledge” party in Corinth are apparent in this. Since idols had no existence in fact, they felt safe in ignoring the popular superstitions regarding them; and Paul allowed the argument to stand

for the moment, it certainly being true that there is no God but one, and that an idol actually had no existence in reality.

However, although Paul did not recognize idols “as having any real existence, even as false deities, he was certain that evil spirits and demons exist, and that in reality these were behind the idols and were using them to seduce men from the worship of the true God.” (10:20)

“No such thing as an idol in the world . . .” Of course, the world was full of idols; but as John Wesley, One volume New Testament Commentary, in loco, said, “Idol here does not mean a mere image; but, an inevitable transition of thought, the deity worshiped in the image. By this, Paul says that Zeus, Apollo, etc., have no existence; they are not to be found in the world.”

Paul does not by such a statement (that they are not in the world) leave room for the thought that they may be anywhere else. The “world” as used here refers to the whole universe.

“There is no God but one . . .” He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Old Testament and of the Christian Scriptures. He only is God in the true sense. He alone may rightfully be worshiped, and that through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verses 5-6

The multitude names of pagan mythology illustrate the truth Paul mentioned regarding gods many and lords many; but the very fact of their being thought of as operating in heaven or on earth proved that none of them controlled “all things,” hence the fragmented nature of deity as misunderstood in paganism.

“One God, the Father, from whom are all things . . .” There is no limitation with God, who cannot be localized like the false gods of the pagans. He is the Creator and sustainer of all things in heaven or upon earth.

“For us there is but one God . . .” There is a difference in Christianity and false religions. Donald S. Metz, Beacon Bible Commentary, p. 392, wrote, “The

Christian is not a syncretistic who attempts to harmonize the teachings of all religions.”

“Gods many and lords many . . .” F. W. Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 192, distinguished between the so-called deities of the pagans and their “heroes or demigods;” but the terms are here considered synonymous. “Lord was the usual way of referring to deity in the various cults of the time, which makes Paul’s frequent application of it to Jesus Christ significant. Paul simply made it clear that the heathen world worshiped a multitude of deities, putting no difference between them.”

“One Lord, Jesus Christ . . .” There is affirmed here the oneness of God and Christ. God is honored as the Creator of all things and Christ His Son as the Creator of the New Creation. Jesus Christ is called “God” no less than ten times in the Greek New Testament.

“Through whom are all things, and we exist through Him . . .” means for whom we exist . . . and is co-extensive with the “all things” in the preceding verse, that is, the universe.

Verse 7

“Not all men have this knowledge . . .” Some facts are of a different quality from the ordinary; and, whereas the existence of an idol is no fact at all, there is the psychological fact of its existence in the minds of men; and Paul here drew attention to that fact, so totally passed over by the “knowledge” crowd at Corinth.

Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 391, wrote, “The great mass of the heathen world did regard the dumb idols as the proper objects of worship, and supposed that they were inhabited by invisible spirits.”

Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 141, declared that, “Although the more intelligent put no confidence in them, yet the effect of the great masses was the same as if they had had a real existence.”

“Their conscience being weak is defiled . . .” When a man violates his conscience, he assaults the central monitor of his spiritual life; and regardless of whether or not the conscience is properly instructed, the violation of it is a

spiritual disaster. That is why a person who thinks a certain action is a sin may not safely take such action.

“Defiled . . .” means polluted, sullied and damaged; and when the conscience is defiled, any true spiritual life becomes impossible.

Verse 8

In a sense, it was absolutely immaterial where the meat came from, whether sacrificed to idols or not; because salvation is simply not a matter of diet at all. Christ took away all prohibitions, “making all meats clean” (Mark 7:19); and Paul himself wrote that, “Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected,” (1 Timothy 4:4); but for a Christian who had not learned such vital truth, and who considered it sinful to eat certain things, it was definitely a sin for him to do so.

Verse 9

Many of the Corinthian Christians, so recently won over from paganism, still had lingering impressions of the reality of idol gods; and, besides those, there were many of Jewish background whose entire lives and training were absolutely incompatible with any kind of indulgence regarding meat offered to idols. For both classes, it was against their conscience to eat such things.

“This liberty of yours . . .” If through the example of those who boasted “knowledge” to eat such meat, the weak brethren were induced to follow their example, irreparable damage to their souls would result. Paul here prohibited such heartless indifference toward the weak brethren. He said in effect, “Let your motto be forbearance, not privilege, and your watchword be charity, not knowledge.”

It is considered significant that Paul here made no reference whatever to that so-called Council in Jerusalem which had directed all Christians to “abstain from things sacrificed to idols.” (Acts 15:29)

Verse 10

“Sees you who have knowledge . . .” There positively has to be a vein of sarcasm in this. What kind of “knowledge” did any Corinthian have that could

justify sitting down in the degrading festival carried on in an idols temple? Henry H. Halley, Bible Handbook, p. 517, wrote, “Many of these functions were often accompanied by shameful licentiousness.”

Paul did not digress here to point out that spiritual damage was almost certain to be sustained even by those who professed to have "knowledge" in such a participation as sitting down to a banquet in the temple of an idol, especially in a place like Corinth. Paul's great concern was damage to the weak brother and the wound thus inflicted upon the body of Christ, which is the church.

James Macknight, Apostolic Epistles and Commentary, p. 126, said, “Paul could not have meant that they had a right to eat of the sacrifices in the idol's temple.”

Verse 11

This was a hand grenade detonated in the faces of the “knowledge” group in Corinth. It was not knowledge but the most incompetent ignorance that would approve of behavior capable of murdering an immortal soul.

That school of interpreters holding to the impossibility of apostasy on the part of believers strive to soften the impact of “ruined.” Albert Banes, op. cit., p. 140, saluted this verse with “No one who has been truly converted will apostatize and be destroyed.”

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Wycliffe Bible commentary p. 613, declared, "This refers to bodily perishing, not eternal perishing," but he did not explain how eating meat against one's conscience could kill him!"

John Wesley put it regarding, “He that is weak perisheth” (is ruined) wrote, “He is from that moment in the way of perdition . . .if this state continues and becomes aggravated, as is inevitable in such cases, eternal perdition is the end of it.”

Leon Morris' words regarding the last clause of this verse are beautiful. He wrote, “The last clause could hardly be more forcible in its appeal; every word tells “the brother,” not a mere stranger; “for the sake of whom” precisely to rescue him from destruction; “Christ,” no less than he; “died,” no less than that!”

Verse 12

“Sinning against the brethren . . . you sin against Christ . . .” Whatever is done to the church, even in the person of its weakest and most insignificant members (as men count insignificant), is done to Christ.

Paul learned this on the Damascus road and he never forgot it. Was it right to override the scruples of young and weak Christians by indulgence of the appetite for meat? A million times NO! To do so was an unmitigated sin against the Redeemer Himself. Paul did not require the support of any opinions from Jerusalem to add any weight to such a decree.

Despite such an apostolic order, however, Paul diligently strove to evoke a feeling of tenderness in the conceited boasters of their “knowledge.” The two words repeatedly stressed in the passage are weak (5 times) and brother (4 times). Paul W. Marsh, *A New Commentary*, p. 391, wrote, “These should have evoked tenderness and love, but received only the callous disregard of a misguided knowledge.”

Verse 13

Paul did not lay down rules for others which he was unwilling to honor himself, being of a different sort altogether from the wicked Pharisees. (Matthew 23:4)

Despite his firmness, however, Paul’s pledge here is conditional. “If meat causes my brother to stumble,” is the qualifying clause; and this has the meaning of “stumble, so as to fall and be lost.” George W. De Hoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 71, wrote, “On, the other hand, there is such a thing as a brother who is not nearly so weak as he thinks, but who has been in the kingdom for years and is a crank and a fanatic. He has a tender conscience, he claims; and he tries to use it to control everybody else. His favorite passage is what Paul said about meats, which he applies to anything he wants to keep other people from doing. Of course, we shall just have to get along with this fellow as best we can!”

This whole chapter exposed the shallowness and conceit of the “knowledge” which had no loving concern for weak and immature Christians, and bound upon all true Christians their responsibility for setting the correct example, regarding

the scruples of others and for establishing a pattern of behavior which will build up others in the holy faith of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 9

This whole chapter is devoted to the discussion of the rights of an apostle, and by extension, the rights of ministers of the gospel to support by their congregations, seven distinct and convincing arguments are given in verses 1-14.

Verses 1-3

These verses begin with a pointed proof of his being a genuine apostle. By the last sentence Paul took knowledge of the slander then current in Corinth to the effect that he was not a true apostle, the alleged proof of it being that Paul had supported himself financially.

George W. De Hoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 73, noted, "It is a common occurrence for some minister to preach on an evil and have the evil-doer condemn the preacher instead of repenting of the evil."

Paul refuted the charge that he was not a genuine apostle with two unquestionable proofs:

- (1) he had seen the Lord Jesus, and
- (2) God had marvelously blessed his apostleship, the Corinthian church itself being the stark proof of it, "the seal," as Paul called it, of his apostleship.

FIRST ARGUMENT

Verses 4-6

"Do we not have a right . . ." is a Hebrew idiom for, "We certainly do have the right."

"To eat and drink . . ." J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 89, said this means "entitled to be fed by the church."

“Take along a believing wife . . .” The thing in view is the right to lead about a wife, maintaining her (along with her husband) at the church’s expense.

“The rest of the apostles . . . and Cephas . . .” This means that all of the other apostles, and Cephas (Peter) in particular, carried their wives with them on their missionary journeys; and Paul as a true apostle in this passage not as a celibate, but as a family man. It will be recalled that his mother-in-law was healed by Christ. (Matthew 8:14)

“Brothers of the Lord . . .” These were James, and Simon and Judas (Matthew 13:55); and there is nothing in the New Testament that requires these to be understood in any other way than as the half-brothers of Jesus, the natural children of Joseph and the Virgin Mary, her virginity following the birth of Jesus being nothing but a superstition.

“Or do only Barnabas and I . . .” It appears that Barnabas also gave up his right to be supported by the churches. This renunciation of the right of support on the part of Paul and Barnabas resulted in their being looked down upon by some who were steeped in the culture of the Greeks.

Paul’s argument is simply that he was as fully entitled to be supported by the churches as were any of the other apostles, a right proved by the general acceptance of it throughout the brotherhood of that day.

SECOND ARGUMENT

Verse 7

This argument derives from the inherent right of soldiers to be supported by their government, the right of the owner of a vineyard to eat the crop, and the right of a shepherd to drink of the milk of the flock.

Such rights have been universally recognized and accepted in all ages. These examples are pointedly appropriate in their application to ministers of the gospel.

Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1062, wrote, “The Christian minister fights evil (as a soldier), plants churches (like the planter of a vineyard), and shepherds congregations.”

THIRD ARGUMENT

Verses 8-10

Paul's argument here is founded on the quotation from Deuteronomy 25:4, which Paul affirmed to be applicable to support of ministers of the word of God.

However when Paul said that, "God does not care for oxen" (the meaning of the interrogative), it is not a denial that God commanded righteous men to regard even their beasts. In the sense that God sought to protect even a beast from abuse, God did indeed care for oxen; Paul's point here is, he would care infinitely more for the proper care and support of His ministers.

The scene in view is that of an ancient threshing floor, the like of which may still be seen in some places. The wheat (or other grain) was placed upon a threshing floor; and the oxen were driven, treadmill style, around the floor until their hooves had beat out the grain. No Jew, in the light of the Law of Moses, could muzzle the ox and prevent his eating during his work on the floor. Pagans of course, muzzled the ox to prevent his eating any of the grain.

FOURTH ARGUMENT

Verse 11

F. W. Grosheide, *The New International Commentary*, p. 207, wrote, "Carnal is not here identical with sinful; the contrast is between the heavenly and the earthly; between the spiritual and the material,"

J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 91, noted, "What was earthly support in comparison with the riches of the gospel?"

FIFTH ARGUMENT

Verse 12

The right pointed out in this verse is the superior right of one who planted and nourished a congregation over the claims of others who came afterward; and, by their admission of the claims of many teachers who succeeded Paul, they were bound to admit the prior rights of the founder on their congregation. Paul was not willing to be supported by any gifts from Corinth.

“That we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ . . .” In order to disarm any evil thought to the effect that Paul was preaching the word of God for money, the grand apostle chose rather to suffer privation and hardship.

SIXTH ARGUMENT

Verse 13

Paul doubtless had in mind the sacred things of the temple in Jerusalem, but his words have even a wider application, including the universal practices of all the world in such matters, the same things being true of the pagan temples as well as of the temple of the Jews.

Paul’s mention, only a moment previously, of not being a “hindrance” to the gospel, was precisely what prompted the thought of the rich emoluments and perquisites of all priests, pagan, and Jewish, and of the “hindrance” which the conduct of such priests certainly causes.

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 89, gave a detailed account of all the profitable benefits which Jewish priests claimed under the temple system, pointing out that, at a time when the average family had meat only once a week, many of the priests were suffering: “From an occupational disease caused by eating too much meat.”

They had grown indolent, wealthy, and disdainful of the poor. Paul would not be like them. Paul did not deny, but rather affirmed, the propriety of the servants of temples living from the temple revenues, the application being that ministers of the gospel should live from the revenues of the churches.

SEVENTH ARGUMENT

Verse 14

Most commentators believe that Paul here had reference to the Lord’s statement that, “The laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7); but it might be true that “They that proclaim the gospel should live by the gospel” is a verbatim from the Lord found exclusively in Paul’s writings, another example of the same thing being in Acts 20:35, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” There is no logical reason why this may not be another such statement of the Lord Himself.

In any case, here was the climax of Paul's argument that ministers of the gospel should be supported by the churches.

The balance of the chapter deals with a further explanation on Paul's part of why he had renounced on his own behalf a right of so much consequence to the growth of the church in all ages. The nobility, self-denial, altruistic motivation and benevolent love of others are set forth in the following verses.

Verse 15

Why did Paul take such a viewpoint? He clearly foresaw that, in so doing, he would rob Satan of any excuse to allege that the eternal gospel of Christ had been advocated by men seeking their own gain. He would simply rather die than to give the devil any such opportunity to slander the truth.

"My boast an empty one . . ." has reference to boasting in a gospel freely proclaimed without cost to those who heard it."

Verse 16

"Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel . . ." It is to be feared that many ministers of the present day are lacking the essential compulsion which moved the apostle.

Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 164, wrote, "Men who leave the ministry and voluntarily devote themselves to some other calling when they might preach, never had the right spirit. A man whose heart is not in the ministry, and who would be as happy in any other calling, is not fit to be an ambassador of Christ."

What an indictment of one's life must it be for him to turn away from preaching the truth of God to a perishing world in order to avoid inconvenience, poverty, deprivation, and hardship, and with a view of possessing a greater share of earth's wealth, honor and privilege! It is to be feared that the spirit of the apostle Paul is as rare upon earth now as it was then.

Verse 17

"For if I do this voluntarily . . ." This probably refers to "preaching the gospel without financial support," as indicated by the consequence, "I have a

reward.” It was pointed out that this reward consisted of thwarting Satan in a most important particular, the same thing being stated in the verse immediately following.

“I have a stewardship entrusted to me . . .” T. Teignmouth Shore, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 320, wrote, That the meaning here appears to be correct. He said if Paul’s preaching the gospel (without charge) was a thing voluntarily done, then, in that case, he would be merely a steward, a slave doing his duty.”

Throughout this passage, it is clear that Paul aimed at going beyond all duty and obligation. The phrase “over and beyond the call of duty” finds its noblest application in the person of Paul the apostle.

Verse 18

“The gospel without charge . . .” This was Paul’s reward, to be able to preach the gospel without charge to dying men.

Verse 19

From this it is clear that it was not merely a matter of justifiable pride that Paul should have insisted on making the gospel free; but it was relating to thwarting Satan, as noted under verse 15, above, and for the purpose of procuring a more abundant harvest in the gospel.

In all ages, there are men of little minds who suppose that every servant of the gospel is more interested in the pecuniary rewards of his work than in the salvation of souls. It must be confessed that many times the conduct of preachers themselves supports such allegations.

“Under bondage to all . . .” This has the same ring as Paul’s debtor both to Greeks and barbarians” (Romans 1:14). He accepted for himself the obligation of preaching the gospel “to the whole creation.”

Verse 20

“I became as a Jew . . .” has the meaning that Paul did not then any longer consider himself as a Jew, except in an accommodative sense. At a time when it is being alleged that Jews do not have to give up their Jewry to become Christians, it

is significant here that Paul did, in some very real sense, consider that he was no longer a Jew. If not, he could not have declared that, "To the Jews he became as a Jew."

"Not being myself under the law . . ." This is "a remarkable statement which emphasizes how completely Paul had broken with the Law of Moses." This is one of his strongest statements in his writings.

On all matters of innocence or indifference, Paul accommodated himself to the life-style of those whom he hoped to win to the gospel. In keeping with such conduct, he ate with Gentiles without raising any question of where they had purchased the meat; and when in the homes of Jews, Paul avoided flaunting any of the liberty which he enjoyed in Christ.

This conformity to the views of others on Paul's part, however, was limited to incidental or indifferent things; for Paul made it clear in the next verse that he was always under the Law of Christ.

David Lipscomb, Commentary on First Corinthians, p. 137, wrote, "Paul accommodated himself to the prejudices and preferences of men so far as he could without sacrificing truth and righteousness, in order to win them to Christ."

Paul felt no obligation whatever to keep the forms and ceremonies of the Law of Moses; yet he observed and kept such things in circumstances where his failure to do it would have antagonized the Jews, and in cases where their observance did not violate the spirit of the new law in Christ Jesus. Thus, Paul shaved his head; but there is no record that he ever ate the Jewish Passover. As he said, "Christ is our Passover."

"That I may by all means save some . . ." S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., op. cit., p. 616, said, "This does not remove salvation from the hands of God," and when it is declared in the word of the Lord that men should "save themselves, Acts 2:40, it is likewise true that their doing so cannot remove salvation from God's hands. When one is baptized unto the remission of their sins, it does not make them their own savior; because, when one obeys the gospel, he saves himself in the sense that he does that without which not even God can save him. In that same

sense, not even God could save sinners without the preaching of the word; and by preaching the word, Paul, in that sense, saved men.

Verse 23

Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI p. 239, translated this, “I do all this for the sake of the prize, that I may partake of it with you.” Paul’s use of the word “prize” in the verse immediately following also seems to indicate that it was the prize of eternal life which he had in view here.

Verse 24

There are important differences, as well as similarities, in such a contest as Paul referred to here.

Analogies are:

- (1) to win, a man must contend legally, being properly enrolled in the contest, suggesting that a Christian must contend along with others in the church, and not as some kind of free-lance operator;
- (2) discipline is required (Hebrews 12:1);
- (3) some win; others do not win;
- (4) a host of spectators views the contest (Hebrews 12:1);
- (5) patience is necessary;
- (6) the winner receives the prize.

The contrasts are:

- (1) only one may win an earthly race; all may win the heavenly;
- (2) the earthly reward is but a trifle; the heavenly reward is eternal life.

“The prize” in which Paul hoped to participate with all Christians could hardly be anything else, other than eternal life.

REGARDING THE GAMES

Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 169-171, wrote, “The prizes given in these various games were usually garlands bestowed upon the victors, being constructed of the

leaves of olive, pine, apple, laurel, or even parsley, their worth being totally symbolical.” It was for such worthless prizes that men endured all kinds of rigorous training and hardship; but it is a far different kind of prize that may be won by the Christian.

Verse 25

In focus here is the dedication and discipline which men enforced upon their bodies in order to win such prizes.

“But we ... imperishable . . .” This is the phrase that requires “prize” in preceding verses to be understood as eternal life, that being the only imperishable crown, all others being sure to perish with time and using. This is the reward which is called “the crown of righteousness,” which shall be bestowed upon the faithful by the Lord Himself “at that day,” that is, judgment day (2 Timothy 4:8). It is the crown of glory” that fades not away” which shall be given to the redeemed “when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested” (I Peter 5:4). It is the “crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Verse 26

“Not beating the air . . . “ is a reference to boxers who missed with their punches and so lost the fight. “Not with aim . . . “ has reference to contestants in a race who through lack of training, wobbled to defeat, not victory.

Verse 27

“I buffet my body . . .” is metaphorical and does not refer to any type of beating such as was practiced by ascetics as a means of religious discipline. It indicates that every Christian, as Paul did, should exercise the sternest self-control over the body, its desires and appetites being a powerful source of temptation in all men.

“I myself should be disqualified, (or reprobate) . . .” As Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A review of the New Versions*, p. 435, said, “The translators (in this place) were evidently attempting to circumvent the possibility of apostasy.”

It is crystal clear that the apostle Paul, even after the world-shaking ministry of the word of God which characterized his life, considered it possible

that he himself could become reprobate and lose the eternal reward. It was for the purpose of avoiding that possibility that he buffeted his body, walked in the strictest discipline, and devoted every possible effort to the service of the Lord.

His example should put an end to all thoughts of “having it made” as a Christian and being certain to win eternal life apart from the most faithful continuance in God’s service.

The hope of eternal life is not sealed in a single glorious moment in one’s experience of conversion; but it is a life-long fidelity to the risen Lord, the running of life’s race all the way to the finish line.

George W. De Hoff, *op. cit.*, p. 78, wrote, “Not until every thought and imagination of man’s heart is brought into subjection is his conversion complete. In this sense, conversion goes on as long as we live; and we are finally free from sin only when the day dawns and the shadows flee away, and we stand justified in the presence of God with the redeemed of all ages.”

CHAPTER 10

In this chapter, and through verse 1 of the next, Paul completed his answer to the triple question regarding the possibility of Christians.

- (1) Sitting down at idol feasts,
- (2) purchasing meat in the common markets, and
- (3) being guests where facts about the origin of the meat were unknown.

The very first words in this chapter demands that a close connection with the previous two chapters must be recognized. That word is “FOR.”

It will be recalled that in chapter 8, the apostle effectively blasted the conceit and arrogance of his Corinthian questioners by warning them:

- (1) that knowledge puffs up, but does not build up (verse 1);
- (2) that those who thought they knew, actually knew nothing as they should have known (verse 2);

- (3) that their actions defiled the consciences of the weak (verse 7);
- (4) that such “liberty” was a stumbling block to the weak (verse 9);
- (5) that sitting down in an idol’s temple encouraged idol worship (verse 10);
- (6) that through their conduct the weak perished (verse 11); and
- (7) that their actions were not merely sins against brethren but a “sin against Christ” verse 12. In this light, it is ridiculous to make chapter 8 to be in any manner permissive with regard to the worship of idols.

Paul in this chapter returned to make an unqualified demolition of the thesis that any Christian could have anything whatever to do with idol worship.

Verse 1

Apparently, the inherent error in the philosophical Corinthians was their impression that the Lord’s Supper and Christian baptism had made them immune to any contamination from the idol feasts, especially in the light of their presumed “knowledge” that idols were actually nothing anyway.

“For . . .” This connective requires the understanding that this section of the epistle is a continuation of the argument in previous chapters.

“I do not want you to be unaware . . .” was a favorite expression with Paul. It is not likely that Paul thought his readers would have been ignorant of the history of Israel, but rather that they would not have been aware of the typical nature of that history.

“Our fathers . . .” Many of the Corinthians were not of Jewish extraction, and therefore the reference here regards Israel as the spiritual ancestry of all Christians.

“All under the cloud . . . all passed though the sea . . .” The word “all” repeated five times in these first four verses, emphasizes the fact that the entire Jewish people enjoyed the high privilege of covenant relationship with God, being fed miraculously, and that they were thus constituted as God’s chosen people.

Some of the Corinthians seem to have regarded the fact of their being baptized into Christ as some kind of endowment that made them immune from dangers, or in some manner exempt from sin even while indulging themselves at idol feasts. Paul would teach them that high privilege does not mean immunity from sin and death.

Verse 2

Paul made the marvelous deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea from the pursuing armies of Pharaoh as a figure, or type, of Christian baptism.

F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 62, presented the analogy between Israel and Christians writing, “Their (the Christians) baptism is the antitype of Israel’s passage through the Red Sea; their sacrificial feeding on Christ by faith is the antitype of Israel’s nourishment with manna and the water from the rock; Christ the living rock is their guide though the wilderness; the heavenly rest before them (the Christians) is the counterpart to the earthly Canaan which was the goal of the Israelites.”

Verse 3

Just as Israel’s commitment “unto Moses” by their passage through the sea corresponded to the Christian’s baptism, their being fed with “spiritual food,” that is, food of supernatural origin, as in manna, and the water from the rock, corresponded to the Christians eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood in the manner of John 6:54-58. John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, in loco, said that this spiritual food was, “Typical of the bread which we eat at Christ’s table.”

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 307, wrote, “That only here in the New Testament are the two Sacraments mentioned side by side,” giving three reasons why the term “spiritual food” was used in this verse:

- (1) it was miraculous;
- (2) it was typical; and
- (3) it assured them of God’s presence.

Verse 4

“A spiritual rock which followed them . . .” This is not to be understood as Paul’s reference to the Jewish legend about a literal rock that followed the Israelites in their wanderings. The rock to which Paul referred here was clearly stated, “The rock was Christ.” The miracle of Moses’ bringing forth water from the rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:5ff) provided literal water for Israel; but much more than that is in evidence here. As Paul W. Marsh, *op. cit.*, p. 394, said, “The rock was Christ, not ‘is’ or ‘is a type of’ . . .” and this is a clear statement of the pre-existence of Christ.”

One of the most beautiful and instructive titles of Christ in all the Bible is “Christ the Living Stone.”

George W. De Hoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 79, wrote, “The story of the Israelites and their journey from Egypt into Canaan is a type of our journey from the Egypt of sin into the everlasting Canaan.”

THE GRAND ANALOGY OF ISRAEL

- (1) Egypt is a type of sin and bondage.
- (2) God’s sending Moses to deliver them is a type of God’s sending Christ to deliver us from the degrading slavery of sin.
- (3) Pharaoh is a type of the devil.
- (4) The compromises he offered Moses are like the compromises Satan still suggests to Christians.
- (5) Moses is the most eloquent type of Christ in the Bible.
- (6) Israel’s crossing the Red Sea is typical of Christian baptism.
- (7) Their spiritual food is typical of the Lord’s Supper.
- (8) Israel’s entering the wilderness is typical of the Christian’s entering the church.
- (9) The wilderness is a type of the church.
- (10) That Israel sinned is typical of the sins and rebellions of Christians.

- (11) The majority of them failed to enter Canaan; and this is typical of “the many” Christians who will not be saved eternally.
- (12) Canaan is a type of heaven.
- (13) Some of Israel entering Canaan is typical of the final victory of Christians who shall enter into the joy of the Lord.
- (14) That some of them “fell” is typical of Christians who fall away and are lost.
- (15) God’s providential care of Israel in the wilderness is typical of His providential care of Christians till “the end of the world.”
- (16) The fact of Israel’s being “baptized” and having the “Lord’s Supper” (in the analogy) did not make them immune to sin and death, as Paul was teaching here; and the same is true of Christians now.
- (17) Canaan was entered when Israel crossed Jordan, making Jordan a type of death, beyond which Christians enter heaven.
- (18) The dangers which beset Israel in the wilderness are typical of the dangers confronting Christians during their probation.
- (19) They were tempted to commit fornication, even as the Corinthians were being tempted, and by the same means, through the licentious celebrations of idol worship.

Verse 5

Of the great host who passed through the Red Sea and witnessed God’s mighty act of delivering them from slavery, all of them except Caleb and Joshua failed to enter Canaan. (Numbers 14:30-32)

This brief, pungent verse is the apostle’s summary of one of the most tragic and pathetic failures of all history. Passing over, except for the brief references in the first four verses, the startling parallels between fleshly and spiritual Israel, Paul here called attention to the pitiful defeat of an entire generation in the wilderness and made their overthrow a warning to the Corinthians and the Christians of all generations of the dreadful consequences of disobedience.

Verse 6

The blunt meaning here is that Christians should not suppose that their having been baptized into Christ and having been made partners of the Lord's table, nor the fact of their sharing high privileges of spiritual life in God's kingdom, could endow them with any immunity to sin, a conceit which it seems some of the Corinthians had.

“Examples for us . . .” After having been totally and completely “saved” from Egyptian slavery, they were lost and rejected; and, corresponding to that, Christians who are completely and totally saved may fall into sin and lose their hope of eternal life.

“We should not crave evil things . . .” Although the technical meaning of “crave” or “lust” is “to desire either good things or bad things,” its use in the Holy Scriptures is invariably a reference to illicit and harmful desire. The inspired author James identified this inward desire ever burning in men's hearts as the embryonic source of all sin. To paraphrase James, “Lust has a child, which is sin, and then sin also has a child, which is death.” (James 1:12-15)

Self-denial is the soul's rejection of all unlawful desire. The surrender to Christ is the subordination of all selfish desire to the will of the Lord. The lust after evil things is the first of five rebellious actions of fleshly Israel; and, enumerating them one by one, Paul demanded that Christians avoid committing them.

Verse 7

The idolatry Paul mentioned was that of Israel's worshiping the golden calf. The mention of idolatry almost in the same breath “crave” or “lust” (verse 6) shows the close connection, the one leading to the other, indicating that idolatry depended for its motivation upon the gratification of fleshly lusts. It is of great significance that in the incident thus cited by Paul, the Old Testament specifically revealed that “the people were naked” (Exodus 32:25) (KJV); and this may not be dismissed as a mere reference to their spiritual nakedness!

“Sat down to eat and drink . . . stood up to play . . .” The “playing” was not some innocent diversion, or game, this being a reference to the wild naked dances which concluded the idol feasts. As John Wesley, *op. cit.*, *in loco*, said: “(The word play) means to dance in honor of their idol.”

Verse 8

Notice the list of sins:

- (1) we should not lust after evil things;
- (2) neither be idolaters;
- (3) neither let us commit fornication. The whole sequence was the normal procedure in idol worship.

“Twenty three thousand fell in one day . . .” Numbers 25:9 gives the number who fell as 24,000; and many have been perplexed by this. David Lipscomb, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 149 said, “Why this discrepancy, I am not able to explain.” The explanation is in the words “one day,” a phrase not in the Old Testament narrative. Paul’s 23,000, therefore, did not include those slain by the judges before this “one day.” It will be recalled that, before the plague broke out, God through Moses had commanded the judges of Israel to “hang all the heads of the people” who condoned and encouraged the worship of Baal-Peor, the idol god of the Moabites, especially the Moabitish women who had used the device of idol worship to seduce the Israelites to commit fornication. It is clear that the judges hanged a thousand men in connection with this disaster which were not counted in Paul’s 23,000 who perished in one day.

Verse 9

“Nor let us try the Lord . . .” refers to provoking the Lord through disobedience and grumbling against His benign government, in a sense “testing” the Lord to see whether or not He will punish the disobedient. (Numbers 21:5-6) All sin and disobedience of God fall into the category of making “trial” of Him.

Verse 10

The sin of grumbling rounds out the five: lusting, idolatry, fornication, making trial of God, and murmuring. The murmurers are the complainers, fault-

finders, objectors, and critics who form a part of every congregation that ever existed. The attitude represented by such behavior is not a minor or negligible “fault” but an atrocious sin, standing in sequence here as the climax involving even greater guilt than idolatry and fornication.

Verse 11

“Now these things happened . . .” This is a bold testimony to the Old Testament record, which contains not legends, myths, or traditions, but what “happened.”

The Old Testament is for the “learning” of Christians, and making it clear that the Old Testament is a legitimate part of the teaching which applies to every Christian, only with this limitation, that all of its forms and ceremonies and types have been replaced by the great realities of the new covenant.

“Upon whom the ends of the ages have come . . .” This is similar in thought to “this is the . . . last days.” Acts 2:16-17, mentioned by Peter on Pentecost, and a number of other similar references in the New Testament; and the usual interpretation is to refer these to the final dispensation of God’s grace, the Christian age, which at that time was only beginning.

In this interpretation, the meaning is that the present dispensation is terminal, which is believed to be true of course, but the words have a more immediate application to the end of the Jewish dispensation which had already occurred in the crucifixion of Christ; but that terminus of the whole Mosaic age would shortly be marked by the destruction of the Jewish age, the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

It was indeed the “ends of the ages” shortly to be fantastically demonstrated before their eyes in 70 A.D.

Verse 12

Whether taken alone or in context, this verse may not be referred to anything else other than to the danger of apostasy, which is an ever-present possibility for all of the saved in Christ as long as they are under the probation of earthly existence.

J. W. McGarvey, op. cit., p. 102, wrote, “The history of Israel not only showed the mere possibility of apostasy, but demonstrated its actual reality and the sad prevalence of it.”

Verse 13

“No temptation . . . what you are able to bear . . .” William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 100, wrote, “Any temptation that comes to us is not unique! Others have endured it, and others have come through it.”

All temptation, while allowed by God, is also controlled by Him; and the Father will simply not allow a child of God to be tempted above what he is able to bear. In the wise providence of God, He has made a way out of every temptation, and as William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* p. 100, noted, “There is the way out, and the way out is not the way of surrender, and not the way of retreat, but the way of conquest in the power of the grace of God.”

Verse 14

This is Paul’s dramatic summary of the whole epistle from 8:1 to this place, tying the whole passage together as one ardent and sustained plea against any indulgence whatever, by any persons whatever, including both the weak and those who thought of themselves as “strong” demanding absolutely that they “flee from idolatry.”

The meaning of that is to get as far away from it as possible. Such dilly-dallying with idolatry as that being engaged in by the “knowledge” party at Corinth was the stupidest kind of folly.

Their acceptance of any kind of participation in the idol feasts was a violation of their status as participants in the Lord’s Supper; and Paul’s saying, “I speak as to wise men,” in the next verse, far from complimenting them on their wisdom, it is a bitter irony spoken in rebuke of their phenomenal spiritual density.

Verse 15

”Wise men . . .” To those who were sitting down in the temples of idols and criticizing the “weak” who would not do likewise, these who were boasting of

their “liberty” and declaring that “all things were “lawful” for Christians, Paul’s remark here has the weight of, “All right, you smart people, listen to this.”

Verses 16-17

“The cup of blessing . . .” This was one of the four cups which marked participation in the Jewish Passover, being the final one, over which the patriarch pronounced a blessing at the end of the Passover. F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 324, said, “It is here transferred to the chalice of the Eucharist.”

“Which we bless . . .” Paul’s use of the plural “we” reveals “his representing the entire company present, and not as individually possessed of some miraculous gift.” (T. Teignmouth Shore, *Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 324)

The thought of this whole verse is that participants in the Lord’s Supper were unified and bound together in one spirit. Their taking the supper was a declaration that James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles and Commentary* declared, “They had the same object of worship, the same faith, the same hope, with others whom they joined in such a religious act.”

The great principle behind Paul’s remarks here is the truth that S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* said was the “Partaking of a religious table, whether Christian, Jewish, or heathen, involving fellowship with the being to whom it is directed,” as well as with the participants themselves. This great principle was not even guessed at by the Corinthians who partook of the idol feasts.

Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 191, said, “In almost all nations, the act of eating together has been regarded as a symbol of unity and friendship.” This is even truer with reference to eating a sacred meal such as the Lord’s Supper.

Verse 18

Paul thus removed the evaluation of idol worship altogether from the consideration of any “intention” in the heart of the worshiper either of God or of idols. Here again the question of “What is worship?” demands consideration; and it is a principle laid down dramatically in Scripture that worship is “an action,”

not some kind of subjective feeling. The subjective feelings of Jewish worshipers made no difference whatever; if they brought their sacrifices, they had communion with the altar and were invariably accounted as worshipping God.

Verse 19

The idol was actually nothing at all; and the intentions of the “knowledge” group in Corinth was nothing at all; but none of this made any difference with the fact that actions engaged in the worship of idols were sinful.

Verse 20

“To demons . . .” Despite the fact of an idol’s being nothing at all, there is nevertheless, a Satan in the world, and a great number of malignant, spirits perhaps even fallen angels, who are used by the evil one to attain his goals regarding human corruption and destruction. The device of the idol is used by Satan as a means of destroying men’s souls; and Paul brings such facts as these into sharp focus here. One of the great blind spots in modern thinking regards the very existence of Satan as a person; but the most universally prayed prayer on earth says, “Deliver us from the evil one.” Paul here identified such things as idol feasts at a theater where the forces of Satan are operative.

Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p.410, wrote, “The essence of the matter lay in the participation in idol worship, which was a reversion to heathenism.”

Alford, *Ibid* wrote, “Heathendom being under the dominion of Satan . . . he and his angels are in fact the powers honored and worshiped by the heathen, however little they may be aware of it. Demons are the real force behind all pagan religion.

Verse 21

“You cannot . . . “ has the weight of, “I forbid you to . . . “ Of course, it was not a physical impossibility for some to lead such double lives; and it may be inferred that some in Corinth were actually partaking of both; but it was a sin, the words here indicating that it was morally impossible to do such a thing.

Verse 22

Even in the Old Testament, idol worship was spoken of as provoking the Lord to jealousy; and as James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 163, said, “This is an allusion to Exodus 20:5, where after prohibiting the worshipping of images, God adds, “I the Lord your God, am a jealous God!”

“We are not stronger than He, are we . . .” This carries the thought, “Do you really wish to be an enemy of God?”

Verse 23

“All things are lawful . . .” If this was the watchword of the “knowledge” party in Corinth, and if they had been pressing Paul for permission to engage in idol worship, which seems likely, then the words here are spoken by way of identifying those to whom these stern words were addressed.

Verse 24

This does not forbid conduct which is in keeping with enlightened self-interest, but requires that every action shall also be weighted in the light of its effect upon one’s fellow Christians. The purely selfish person is by definition non-Christian.

Verse 25

In verse 21, Paul had commanded, “I forbid you to partake of idol feasts;” but there were two other questions which had troubled the Corinthians, a second being whether or not to eat meat from the common markets, where the likelihood was strong that the meat had been sacrificed to idols. The apostolic answer to this second question was, “Pay no attention to the possibility of its having been sacrificed to idols, there being no intrinsic change whatever wrought in the meat by such an act.” Paul reinforced this by an Old Testament quotation in the next verse.

Verse 26

This meant that the meat did not really belong to an idol, no matter if it had been sacrificed. It may therefore be eaten in gratitude as a gift from the Lord, and having no connection at all with an idol.

Verses 27-28

This was Paul's answer to the third question, which regarded eating as a guest in the home of an unbeliever. Paul's command was full of reason and consideration. The Christian was not to ask any question whatever about the meat served; but on the other hand, if the meat was definitely identified by "any man" as having been offered to idols, then the Christian should not indulge in it.

Paul enforced the absolute abstinence of the part of Christians from anything that was identified as a sacrifice to an idol.

Verses 29-30

It will be remembered that Paul frequently had resorted to the old diatribe manner of presenting his arguments, in which a question is raised from the viewpoint of the opponent and then devastated with a concise reply. Something of that is certainly in evidence here; and Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 412, caught the spirit of these verses perfectly, writing, "Paul writes as though he has an objection from one of the "enlightened," Corinthians. Living Letters paraphrases it thus: "But why, you may ask, must I be guided by what someone else thinks? If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why let someone spoil everything just because he thinks I am wrong?" In verse 31, Paul replies, "Well, I'll tell you why."

Verse 31

The overriding question which must determine all that any Christian does is the question of whether or not his actions will build up, edify, strengthen and encourage the church of Christ; and if any action whatsoever falls short of such futility to bless and honor God's kingdom, then it is forbidden to the child of God. Paul was a great leader who refused to do anything that might hinder men outside the church or alienate those within it.

Verses 32-33

"Give no offense (stumbling). . ." If our human brethren, either in or out of the church, may be offended by any action, that action for the true Christian is proscribed and forbidden. We are not living the Christian life for the purpose of

blessing ourselves, merely, but for the purpose of saving as many immortal souls as possible.

“That they may be saved . . .” This was the passionate desire of the holy apostle; and everything was subordinated to that goal.

What a revival would break out upon earth today if all those who profess to follow Christ should adopt such a rule of conduct.

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

Note: This verse would probably be better placed at the conclusion of chapter 10.

Throughout this epistle, the apostle Paul dealt with miscellaneous church conditions and disorders, making it nearly impossible to fit the epistle into any form of classical outline.

The first paragraph regards the veiling of women (2-16), and the second teaches concerning the Lord’s Supper (17-34).

REGARDING THE VEILING OF WOMAN

David Lipscomb, Commentary on 1 Corinthians, p. 167, wrote, “Whether the woman prays in the closet at home, or in the assembly, she should approach God with the tokens of her subjection to man on her head.”

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 622, limited the ruling to the worship meeting, saying, “This alone is in view.” He interpreted the words head as “Paul’s ruling that women must cover their heads during the meeting.”

Note: If Paul really meant that women should be veiled, then no fancy little hat will do it. This writer is adamantly opposed to tokenism.

J. W. McGarvey, Commentary, on 1 Corinthians, p. 113, said, “In western countries a woman’s hat has never had any symbolism whatever. The problem in western assemblies is how best to persuade women to take their hats off, not how to prevail upon them to keep it on!”

Drawings in the catacombs do not beat out the assumption that Christian women wore veils at services in the early church.

The women as fully veiled; was derived largely from the Roman Catholic culture of that era. In fact the culture may be viewed as the source of the custom of wearing hats (by women) in church services in the present times, the same having been accepted in Reformation and post-Reformation times.

Paul's teaching here is invaluable and relevant to all generations with regard to the Christian's relation to the culture in which he lives.

Before proceeding to a study of this paragraph, one other colossal fact should be noted, at the end of the paragraph. The word "custom" clearly identifies the subject under consideration in this paragraph as the customs of the times, and not as an apostolic treatise on what either men or women should wear in religious services, except to the degree that one had a bearing on the other. Sex differentiation as indicated by hair-length is outlined; and it is hair, not clothes, of which Paul spoke.

Verse 2

Traditions of men are not necessarily binding, but the holy traditions delivered by the apostles of Christ were of the highest authority.

"Hold firmly to the traditions . . ." John William Russell, Compact Commentary on the New Testament, p. 421, wrote: "This ordinarily means 'handed down from generation to generation;' but here it refers to the doctrine orally delivered by the apostles to the churches in the first Christian generation."

Verse 3

Paul, who was about to speak of the subordination of woman to her husband, would first speak to man with a reminder that he himself is subordinated to Christ the Lord.

The wisdom of the ages and also the word of God concur in teaching the necessity that every organism must have a head; and there cannot be any denial that in God's basic unit of all civilization and all progress, which is the family, the

head must be either the man or the woman; and God here commanded man to fulfill that function of being the head of the family.

“God is the head of Christ . . .” The Godhead itself could not function in the project of human redemption without the subordination of the Son for that purpose.

The subordination of woman to her husband does not set aside the equality of both male and female “in Christ,” but it is for the purpose of making the family a viable and successful unit.

Thus the same equality, unity of purpose and unity of will should exist between a man and his wife as exists between the Father and the Son.

Verse 4

“Every man who (has something on his head) . . .” Here is where the misunderstanding of this passage begins. Echols noted, “Having his head covered” is a commentary, not a translation. Lenski translated the sense correctly; “having something down from the head.” What the “something” is, is neither stated nor implied in verse 4.

The logical understanding of this would refer it to “long hair,” being long enough to hang down from the head, as clearly indicated by the apostles’ words a moment later, “If a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him.” (Verse 14)

The ancients accepted Paul’s dictum on this and went so far as to define the length of hair that was considered an infraction of Paul’s words.

Clement of Alexandria, in *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol. II, p. 286, wrote, “The hair of the head may not grow so long as to come down and interfere with the eyes . . . cropping is to be adopted . . . let not twisted locks hang far down from the head, gliding into womanish ringlets.”

Significantly, the words “hang down” strongly resemble Paul’s words “having something down from his head.” The above is from Clement of Alexandria and was written in the second century.

We may therefore interpret this verse as a simple admonition that it was a disgrace for any long-haired Christian male to participate in praying and prophesying.

Verse 5

“Every woman . . . praying or prophesying . . .” David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 163, said, “In all the history of Christ and the apostles no example is found of women speaking publicly or leading in public prayer, although they were endowed with miraculous gifts, and did prophesy and each in private and in the family circle.”

“Her head uncovered . . .” The passage falls short of mentioning any kind of garment. To suppose that Paul here meant “mantle” or “veil” or any such thing is to import into this text what is not in it. We have seen that he was speaking of hair in verse 4; and that is exactly what he is speaking of here.

“Head uncovered . . .” would then refer to the disgraceful conduct of the Corinthian women in cropping their hair, after the manner of the notorious Corinthian prostitutes; which if they did it, was exactly the same kind of disgrace as if they had shaved their heads. It is crystal clear that Paul is not speaking of any kind of garment; because he said in verse 15 below, “Her hair is given to her for a covering.” Only in verse 15 does Paul mention any kind of garment and even there he stated that the woman’s hair took the place of it.

“Disgraces her head . . .” Understanding the “unveiled” in the preceding clause as a reference to cropping her hair, explains this phrase. Any man’s wife adopting the style of the notorious “priestesses” on the Acro Corinthus would bring shame and dishonor upon her “head” that is, her husband, who would thus be scandalized in the conduct of his wife. Also, from this, it is clear that in verse 4 man’s “head” which is Christ, is the one dishonored there. Thus the thing which concerned Paul here was the arrogant adoption of the hair style (by women) of the shameless priestesses of Aphrodite.

Is there any lesson for modern Christians here? Indeed there is. Any time that Christian men or women adopt styles, whether of clothing or hair, which is

widely accepted as immoral, anti-social, anti-establishment, or in any manner degrading, such actions constitute a violation of what is taught here.

Verse 6

No artificial covering of any kind has thus far been mentioned by Paul in this chapter. There will not be any reference to any kind of garment or artificial covering until verse 15, where it is categorically stated that her hair is given her “instead of” any other covering. Paul is only repeating here the obvious truth that for a woman to adopt the Aphrodite hair style was the same thing as being shaven. The shaving of any women’s head was considered either a sign of deep mourning, or a fitting punishment for adultery.

Verses 7-9

“Man ought not to have his head covered . . .” Verse 4 stated that, “Every man who has something on his head,” is an obvious reference to long hair.

The facts of creation reveal that:

- (1) woman was taken out of man,
- (2) that she was given to man,
- (3) that she was created for man, and
- (4) that she was intended to be the glory of man.

Verse 10

Paul was speaking of the proper subordination of woman and this is a reminder that the “angels who kept not their first estate,” lost heaven; and it is not far-fetched to draw the analogy that those precious angels called women should not go beyond the limitations imposed upon them by their creation.

“Symbol of authority on her head . . .” Here Paul referred to the woman’s head being properly covered; but the nature of that covering is not here specified.

The sin was not in cutting off hair, but in cutting it off in such a manner as to obscure the sexes or to imitate the shameless prostitutes of the pagan temples.

Verses 11-12

Man and woman are mutually dependent upon each other, each enjoying unique prerogatives and blessings under the will of God. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

While true enough that the first woman was made out of man, it has been true of all others since that time that they are born of woman.

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., op. cit., p. 623, believed that the point of emphasis is that “The man must always remember that he exists by woman, and that both are of God.”

Verse 13

“With head uncovered . . . “ has no reference to what is commonly referred to as a “veil.” A covering of some kind is meant; but the Greek text leaves totally out of sight anything that would enable this to be identified as some kind of an artificial covering, or man-made garment.

Verse 14

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., op. cit., p. 624, observed, “The fact of short hair for men and long hair for women is a Divine suggestion in nature itself.” It is quite evident throughout this whole paragraph that Paul is talking about “hair,” not clothes!

Verse 15

“It is a glory to her . . .” This would have been the ideal place for Paul to have said that a mantle thrown over a woman’s head and shoulders is a glory to her, if he ever had such a thing in mind.

“Her hair is given to her for a covering . . .” If a woman’s hair conforms to apostolic standards of propriety, she requires no artificial covering.

Verse 16

“If one is inclined to be contentious . . .” This was Paul’s way of saying, “Look, we do not intend to argue this question endlessly; the whole matter is already solved by the type of behavior which marks God’s churches everywhere.”

QUESTIONS ON ABOVE VERSES

If Paul meant “hair” why did he use the word “covered”? The answer is that in the vocabulary of the Old Testament, “to uncover the head” was to shave off the hair. When Nadab and Abihu sinned (Leviticus 10:1ff), God commanded Aaron not to “uncover his head” in mourning at their death; and this meant not to cut off his hair (the customary sign of mourning). (Job 1:20)

Echols noted, “Where ever the expression “uncover the head’ occurs in the Hebrew Old Testament, it means ‘remove the hair.’” The culture of that era as well as the environment at Corinth suggests that some of the Corinthian women (in the church) were violating decent rules of conduct, by adopting the cropped hair of Aphrodite’s priestesses. (It is even likely that some of them had been converted and had neglected to change their hair styles.)

What was the veil, actually, that was worn in those days? It was a large loose mantle which the woman wrapped around her head and face, leaving only the eyes visible, and sometimes only one eye.

Was the mantle (veil) a symbol of modesty and submission? It came in time to be so considered; but there was certainly a time when such a garment (designed to obscure the person) was considered the attire of a harlot. (Genesis 38:14-16)

What is Paul’s subject in these verses? Whatever it was, it could not have been the type of veil or mantle that obscures the person of women, that having been mentioned only once. On the other hand, hair is mentioned three times; shaved or shorn is mentioned four times; and, in this light, it appears certain that Paul’s subject here was hair. One could not speak of a mantle’s being shorn or shaved.

How could this passage have been so long misunderstood? Echols’ explanation is as good as any. He said, “A clear understanding has been obscured by ambiguous English translations, as well as by established custom. There can be little doubt that the custom itself derived largely from Roman Catholic practice during the middle ages.

CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER

The balance of this chapter (17-34) deals with abuses in the Corinthian congregation with regard to the proper observance of the Lord's Supper and the "love feast" which usually preceded it in the primitive church.

Verses 17-18

"You come together . . ." is a reference to the formal assembly of the congregation for worship as a body, the corporate worship, as it is sometimes called.

"Not for the better but for the worst . . ." Not merely were their assemblies so disordered and perverted as to deny all benefit to the worshipers, but they were actually productive of harm, so much so that those attending were actually worse off for having participated.

"When you come together as a church . . . divisions . . ." Paul had already discussed the shameful schisms, or parties, that had become prevalent in Corinth; and it seems here that he is referring to the intrusion of this party spirit into the worship itself.

Verse 19

Christians that become upset and discouraged because of schisms, factions and other disorders in the church make a tragic mistake. As God used Satan in the Paradise of Eden to test the progenitors of the human race, He still tests the faith of all Christians.

Church difficulties provide an opportunity for Christians to demonstrate that they are genuine followers of the Lord.

God never intended that any man should move through life in a constant environment of encouragement and spiritual delight. There is a place in the experience of every Christian where "the rubber meets the road" and his response to unfavorable, or even tragic situations, will determine whether or not he is "approved" of God. It should always be remembered that "many are called, but few are chosen."

Verse 20

"It is not to eat the Lord's Supper . . ." This cannot mean that it was physically impossible, but that it was morally impossible. The abuse of the agape, or love feast, which preceded the Holy Communion were so grave as to contravene any true participation in the sacred supper.

"The Lord's Supper . . ." Leon Morris, Tyndale commentary, p. 158, said, "Kurakon, translated "The Lord's Supper," is found only here and in Revelation 1:10 in the New Testament."

Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 211, made a deduction from this verse to the effect that the Lord's Supper should be observed in the evenings, not in the mornings of the Lord's Day." Note: Barnes' deduction should be rejected, because there is no hint in the New Testament that the time of day for the observance of this rite was ever the subject of any apostolic decree. The day is indicated, but not the time of day.

The Lord's Supper has reference to the hour of its institution, and not to the hour of its observance by Christians.

Verse 21

The abuse at Corinth was compound. The agape, or love feast which in early times preceded the Lord's Supper, had at Corinth been shamefully mixed with the sacred rite to the extent of the total corruption of both. The so-called love feast was somewhat like the "dinners of the gerunds" which were a feature of rural congregations throughout America in this century. However, at Corinth, the rich who brought bountiful provisions for such affairs were not sharing with the poor who had been able to bring little or nothing.

Drunkenness and gluttony were prevalent, in addition to the pitiless disregard of the poor and needy.

Verse 22

"Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink . . ." Paul did not condemn a congregation's eating upon the occasion of their formal coming together for worship, nor eating in any building or location where such meetings

were held. What he condemned was their intemperance, disregard of the need of others, and their shameless mixing of the Lord's Supper with a common meal.

The kind of eating and drinking they were doing belonged properly at home and not at church.

Verse 23

This is the fourth time in the New Testament that the institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded.

"For I received from the Lord . . ." Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 224, wrote, "Paul had doubtless heard the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper from the eleven, but he also had it by revelation from the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23). He received his gospel by direct revelation in Arabia."

Verse 24

"When he had given thanks . . ." In Matthew and Mark, reference to this act says, "Having blessed it;" but Luke has it as here. Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 224, declared, "The two expressions mean the same thing. Both express the act of consecration, by a grateful acknowledgment of God's mercy and invocation of His blessings."

"He broke it . . ." F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 365, wrote, "The breaking of the bread ought not to be abandoned, as in the case when wafers, are used." Some have supposed that breaking the bread contradicts (by symbolism) the fact that not a bone of Jesus was broken (John 19:36). The breaking of a bone is not the same as the breaking of the body.

The spear that pierced Jesus' side certainly broke His "body," but did not break any bone.

"Do this in remembrance of Me." For more comment on the commemorative aspect of the Lord's Supper, see *Nature of the Lord's Supper*, under verse 34.

Verses 25-26

“After supper . . .” This phrase is invaluable in that it shows why two cups were mentioned, one before the bread and the other afterward, in Luke 22:17-20. The first cup Luke mentioned was the fourth cup of the simulated Passover meal. Both the bread and the wine of the Lord’s Supper were given “after supper,” and in that order, the bread first, the cup afterward.

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood . . .” This means the same thing as “This is My blood of the covenant (Matthew 26:26); and in Paul’s statement here, it is absolutely clear that the meaning in Matthew in no sense favors the crass literalism of such doctrines as transubstantiation or consubstantiation.

Regarding the superstition that the emblems of the Lord’s Supper are, in their consecration, literally changed to the flesh or body and blood of Christ, Charles Hodge *op. cit.*, p. 225, gave this pertinent comment, “It is only by denying all distinctions between matter and spirit, and confounding all our ideas of substance and qualities, that we can believe that wine is blood, or bread flesh.”

“You proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 912, said, “The Lord’s Supper is “a living sermon.” Thus the instructive nature of this solemn rite is stressed.

The word for “proclaim” here is *katangelo*. Leon Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 162, gave the meaning as “announce” or “proclaim,” saying that, “It means that the solemn observance of the service of Holy Communion is a valid proclamation of the Lord’s death.”

“Until He comes . . .” The Lord’s Supper faces in two directions, back to Calvary and forward to the Second Coming, being retrospective in regard to one and prospective with regard to the other. The Second Coming is a major doctrine of Christianity; and it is fitting that it should be honored in this pivotal ordinance.

Verse 27

The rendition here makes the meaning clear that it is not the “worthiness” of the participant which is in view, but the “worthiness” of his manner of partaking of it. Indeed, who was ever worthy to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God?

Nevertheless, there is a real danger here. If any person shall partake of this solemn rite without discernment of the event it memorializes, or without regard to the obligations imposed by it, or without any consistent effort to partake of it continually and faithfully throughout his life, or until the Lord comes, or without the due reverence and appreciation due such an ordinance—then such a person becomes guilty of the body and the blood of Jesus, the meaning of this being that he, in a spiritual sense has become a crucifer of the Lord himself.

Verse 28

Leon Morris, *Ibid.*, p. 163, wrote, “Before taking part in such a service, the very least we can do is to conduct a rigorous self-examination.”

The word used here means “to test” and was used in the testing of metals. The point is that no Christian should observe the Lord’s Supper in any causal or flippant manner, treating it as something ordinary.

Verse 29

“Judgment . . .” may be rendered “condemnation,” in any event meaning consequences both serious and eternal.

“Does not judge the body rightly . . .” This would apply either to the precious body of Christ sacrificed upon Calvary for all men, or the church which is His spiritual body, the offense being the same either way the text is read. Significantly, it was the failure of the Corinthians that they disregarded the spiritual body (Despise you the church of God?); and it is a fact that unfaithfulness at the Lord’s table in all generations has become one of the most prevalent and hurtful means of despising God’s church. Countless souls are continually guilty of this very thing.

Verse 30

God did send visitations of Divine wrath against wrongdoers, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, and perhaps also the incestuous man mentioned earlier in this epistle; nevertheless, the conviction here is that, if that had been in Paul's mind, he could hardly have said that "some sleep"— sleep being too mild a word to use with reference to victims of Divine wrath.

The meaning which appears to be most likely is that Paul was speaking of those who had become spiritually weak and sickly, some no doubt having perished spiritually.

Verses 31-32

In these verses, it seems quite clearly indicated that Paul was still speaking of the weak and sickly Christians and of them that "slept."

It is therefore quite difficult to support a dogmatic opinion with regard to the meaning of verse 30. One thing that may be definitely learned from it; that is the dreadful consequences of unfaithfulness at the Lord's Table.

Verse 33

What Paul said here, of course, was that the affluent should not bring their provisions and eat them all before the poor arrived. The relevance of the passage still holds.

Considerations of love and helpfulness should always be extended to brothers by brothers in Christ, even to the tardy.

Verse 34

The Lord's Supper was here elevated to a position higher than that of merely satisfying the appetites. The hungry should eat at home.

Nevertheless, the beauty of the agape as practiced in the primitive church, has always enthralled and captivated the imagination; and there can be little doubt that meals served in the present times by churches "on the grounds," in their building, or in parks and public places, are vestigial recurrences of that once glorious custom which perished in the shameful abuses at Corinth.

It was selfishness, greediness and lust of the natural man insufficiently subdued by the indwelling Spirit which perverted, and by that perversion destroyed an age of loving innocence. The church, it seems has never been able to recapture that lost innocence.

NATURE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The central ordinance of Christianity is the Lord's Supper standing in a metaphor as a summary of the whole Christian religion. (John 6:53) The nature of this precious rite is discerned in seven words, as follows:

(1) RETROSPECTIVE

It looks back to Calvary, bringing to the worshiper's mind the night of betrayal; agony, blood and tears, and the awful scenes of the crucifixion itself.

Upon that fixed interval recurring every Lord's Day, the child of God turns his thoughts and meditations back to the cross, in his heart living with the Savior those awful events of His Passion, reviewing over and over again the scenes and circumstances which marked the Lord's supreme act of atonement for the sins of the whole world.

(2) PROSPECTIVE

The ancient pagan god of war was the two-faced Janus (from whence the name of the month January), facing in both directions, forward and backward.

In a far more wonderful manner, the Lord's Supper faces toward Calvary in respect, and also forward to the Second Advent, prospectively.

Unless Christ is coming again, all true meaning of the Lord's Supper disappears; for there is (in every proper observance of it) the conviction of that time when the skies will be bright with the coming of the Son of God—the second time apart from sin to reward the righteous and to bring about the summation of all things.

(3) INTROSPECTIVE

In Paul's writings in this chapter, the necessity of every man's examining himself is affirmed. (Verse 28)

It is in that rigorous self-examination in the Lord's Supper that the introspective nature of it is seen. One's life, his sincerity, his devotion, dedication, and love for the Lord who redeemed him at such awful cost should all appear within the thoughts of the participant. How can any wickedness bear the light of such an introspective searching?

(4) COMMEMORATIVE

"In remembrance of Me," Jesus said. (Verse 25) The Lord's Supper is one of the great memorials to the event of the Dayspring's visitation from on high, the Lord's baptism and the Lord's Day being two others. What a memorial is this! No tower of stone or marble palace, no tablet or inscription, no name conferred on cities or places, no granite obelisk or shining monument could have a fraction of the effectiveness of this world-wide memorial of the Lord's Supper.

Under Judaism, men remembered their sins; in Christ they remember their Redeemer who has forgiven their sins. (Jeremiah 31:31-35)

(5) INSTRUCTIVE

"You proclaim the Lord's death until He comes . . ."

If one wishes to preach a sermon of redemption to a dying world, let him faithfully observe this sacred supper. Jesus identified it as a proclamation. If one would instruct dying men to turn their hearts to the cross of Christ, the way to do it is to exhibit unvarying fidelity to this Christian duty.

The weakness of churches in this generation may not be so much attributed to weak preaching, but to weak living on the part of her members. The man who neglects or abandons the Lord's Supper has hidden his light, stifled the message of salvation and denied his Lord.

(6) CORRECTIVE

Implied in the self-examination mentioned under 3 above, is the requirement that elements of personal life out of harmony with the high profession of Christianity will be recognized and corrected.

This is inherent in the meaning of, “Let a man prove himself.” Faithful adherence to the duty of observing the Lord’s Supper will either remove one’s sins, or one’s sins will remove him from frequenting the Lord’s Table.

(7) SEPARATIVE

This ordinance, more than any other, reveals who is saved and who is not saved. Christ Himself said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” (John 6:53) Men may scream about this if they please, but it is the truth. Go to church.

The saints and the sinners alike sing the hymns; the believer and the infidel alike hear the sermon respectfully; the sons of light and the sons of darkness give of their money; the saved and the lost bow their heads for the prayers; but when the emblems of the Lord’s Supper appear, a separation is made.

His ordinance alone is not the terminator; the importance of it is such that Christ Himself used it as a metaphor of the whole Christian religion. (John 6:54)

CHAPTER 12

This and the following two chapters were written to correct disorders which had risen in the Corinthian church over the question of spiritual gifts, especially with regard to envy and strife over the relative importance of various gifts. The great test of all spirituality is its relation to Christ and His spiritual body the church.

“Gifts” that take people away from the church are not of God’s Spirit at all, but are derived from the evil one (Verse 1-3). There is diversity in the duty of the church, since the Lord has not given the same gifts to all Christians (Verse 4-11). The great metaphor of “the body” is developed as a figure of Christ’s spiritual body, the church (Verse 12-31).

Verse 1

The word “gifts” is supplied; and this does no violence to the text, since it may not be denied that the “gifts” were very much in Paul’s thought. It is with such miraculous gifts that this and the following chapters are concerned.

Raymond C. Kelcy, *First Corinthians*, p. 55, wrote, “Those gifts were necessary in the days of the infancy of the church when as yet the body of perfectly revealed truth was incomplete. They were temporary measures designed for a special purpose.”

Donald S. Metz, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, p. 424, wrote saying that the trouble was that in Corinth, “The whole idea of the gifts of God’s Spirit had degenerated, most of them being ignored, and the one being stressed above all others was speaking in tongues.”

Verse 2

This is a reminder to the Corinthians here that just as they had been carried away (led away) into idolatry, there was another danger that some were being “carried away” with charismatic gifts!

Leon Morris, *Tyndale Commentary*, p. 425, wrote, “There is something pathetic about idol worship. The heathen are pictured, not as freely following the gods their intellects have fully approved, but as under constraint, helpless, men who know no better.”

Verse 3

The genuine test of true spirituality turns upon the attitude that some of the tongue speakers in Corinth had (presumably) blasphemed the name of the Lord Himself, “anathema” meaning accursed! If this seems astonishing, then let it be compared with certain “charismatics” of our own times who deny many of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity “in the name of Christ”! John William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 423, pointed out, “Paul did not refer to those alone who actually used the words, “Jesus is anathema,” but to all those who practice “what amounts to the same thing.” To deny or denounce Christ’s teaching would be the equivalent error.

“Jesus is Lord . . .” The sure mark of spirituality is the soul’s confession of Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9), coupled with the exhibition of a life in harmony with such a profession.

The immaturity of the Corinthian church is evident in the fact of their seeking some shortcut to spiritual excellence. It should be noted in this connection that Corinth was the most carnal of all the churches mentioned in the New Testament; and it was precisely there that A. B. Bruce, *Saint Paul’s Conception of Christianity*, p. 247, said, “The church had mostly gone to tongues.”

VARIOUS SPIRITUAL GIFTS ENUMERATED

Verse 4

James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles and Commentary*, p. 194, wrote, “Here the apostle called the supernatural endowments of the first Christians gifts, because they were foretold under that name.” (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8)

All such supernatural wonders were scheduled to disappear (13:8); and their unique purpose was that of “confirming” the word of God (Mark 16:20)—certainly not that of flattering the ego of Corinthian charismatics.

“Diversities . . .” This was used nowhere else in the New Testament. Likewise the word “gifts” is “a typically Pauline word, and used only once by any other New Testament writer. (1 Peter 4:10) (Marsh, *Ibid.*)

It is derived from *charismata*, whence the term “charismatic,” another form of the word being *charis* (grace); thus these were “grace-gifts.” The big point Paul made here is that all gifts came from the same Spirit . . . same Lord . . . same God,” giving a strong Trinitarian emphasis.

Verses 5-6

The mere fact of some of the Corinthian Christians having one gift and others another gift really made no difference, since it was the same godhead working through all of them. Unlike the numerous idols of the pagans, the one true God is a unity, a unity which was denied by the parties and divisions in Corinth; and these words were written with a view to restructuring the broken unity.

Verse 7

“For the common good . . .” Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 427, says, “That these spiritual gifts were to benefit others.” Charismatic gifts were being utilized by the Corinthians for self-promotion, especially the more spectacular and showy gifts, like tongue speaking. This, of course, was totally wrong and contrary to God’s purpose.

Verse 8

Here begins Paul’s enumeration of those miraculous gifts with which God endowed certain men in the primitive period of church history.

“Given the word of wisdom . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 195, wrote, “This was the doctrine of the gospel, communicated by inspiration . . . peculiar to the apostles, and enabling them to direct religious faith and practice infallibly.” This is mentioned first because it was the first chronologically and first in importance.

“The word of knowledge . . .” This was the gift of that superior order of prophets, among who were Barnabas, Stephen, and Paul himself. This class of persons who unraveled the mystery, hidden before times eternal, who discovered the call of the Gentiles, the rejection of Israel, the salvation of all men through the faith and obedience of Christ, etc.

Paul received Divine knowledge with reference to all these things; Barnabas apparently discerned the mystery of the new name and Paul as the name bearer; Stephen unlocked the mystery of the Jewish temple, revealing that, from its inception, it represented a departure from God’s will.

Verse 9

“Faith” is the endowment of all Christians, but more than faith ordinary is meant here. F. W. Grosheide, *The New International Commentary*, p. 286, wrote, “It has a special meaning here. It must mean a faith that has special, visible results, a faith that enables one to do miracles.” (Matthew 17:20; 1 Corinthians 13:2)

“Gifts of healing . . .” Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 247, said, “This evidently refers to the miraculous healing of diseases.” Paul used such a gift for the indiscriminate healing of all who were sick.

There was a Divine purpose in miracles, that being conformation of the word of God.

Verse 10

Five other miraculous gifts are enumerated here, making nine mentioned in this paragraph.

“The effecting of miracles . . .” It appears that miracles would be a greater gift than healings, but J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, p. 123, thought that these included miracles of judgment, saying that, “The miracles of mercy stand higher in God’s esteem than those which execute His judgments, and mete out punishment.”

“Prophecy . . .” Gifts of prophecy, involving the ability to foretell future events, were the endowment of certain Christians in the apostolic age; and there would appear to have been two orders of these.

“Distinguishing of spirits . . .” This was a gift enabling its possessor to identify and expose false teachers.

“Various kinds of tongues . . .” The nature of the tongue speaking Paul discussed in these chapters has been the subject of much disagreement.

“Kinds of tongues” forbids the idea of there being only one kind; and, besides that, the special gift of interpreting tongues mentioned a moment later and the absolute necessity of having an interpreter make it impossible to identify the “tongues” discussed here with the miracle of Pentecost. There was no interpreter then!

The lack of any need to interpret on Pentecost, plus the opinion of outsiders that the tongue speakers were “mad” (14:23); plus the fact that there were many of them engaging in this activity all at once, requiring Paul to restrict it to one at a time (14:27); plus the impression that inevitably comes from reading

the entire context—all of these things support the conclusion that the phenomenon was different from that of Pentecost.

Why was it? Why did not Paul condemn it out of hand, instead of containing it by a series of regulations clearly designed to discourage and diminish it? We do not certainly know. Yet we shall hazard the opinion that whatever purpose of the Divine mind was fulfilled by it, the Corinthians had contravened it by their shameless distortion and abuse of it.

“Interpretation of tongues . . .” This is perhaps the key to understanding the whole passage. Through the influence of God’s Spirit some could speak languages they had never learned; but for this to do any good at all, someone was required to interpret what was said, the ability to do so being the “gift” in view here. Furthermore, such a thing raises all kinds of questions. Some have supposed that both gifts of tongues and interpretations were held by the same individual; but, if that is so, why did not such an individual speak in the proper language to begin with?

Any tongue speaking Paul did, it was in the mission field, and for the purpose of reaching people whose language he did not know. The fact of Paul’s doing such a thing at all, coupled with his refusal to do it in the presence of believers, emphasizes the limited nature of the gift and also refutes the conceit that what he did was merely ecstatic jabbering. The Corinthians had probably prostituted the gift of that low level; but Paul would never have done so.

The conclusion, therefore, is valid, which may be summarized thus:

- (1) all of the nine gifts in view here were miraculous.
- (2) all disappeared completely at the end of the apostolic age.

The mess at Corinth was a mingling of the true gift of tongues with emotional and psychologically induced ecstatic utterances, which were not miraculous at all but nonsense.

A further element of the disorder was the perversion and prostitution of the true gifts (on the part of a few), making it a device of self-glorification.

It was this mixture of genuine and false elements which made it impossible for Paul to condemn the false without appearing also to condemn the true gift. Remember, he was not present, but was writing the letter.

Therefore, he laid down the rules which would eliminate and destroy the false, but which would leave undisturbed the true gift.

Thus, there were three kinds of tongues in New Testament times:

- (1) those spoken by the apostles on Pentecost,
- (2) the gift of tongues in his passage which required an interpreter, and
- (3) the false tongues which had invaded Corinth.

Paul had the true gift of verse 10 here; but it may never be supposed that he engaged in the nonsensical blabbering affected by the Corinthian tongue speakers. The nine miraculous gifts mentioned here are:

- (1) wisdom,
- (2) knowledge,
- (3) faith,
- (4) healings,
- (5) miracles,
- (6) prophecy,
- (7) discernments of spirits,
- (8) tongues, and
- (9) interpretation of tongues.

Is the true gift of speaking in tongues on earth today? The answer has been negative. Wonderful as was the true gift of tongues, it cannot fail to be significant that it appears last in Paul's list, both here and in verse 30. Why? Perhaps it was the fact of its being so easily counterfeited. In those days, as now, anybody could do it, not the real thing of course, but the counterfeit.

Verse 11

Paul's evident purpose in this was to discourage the inordinate over-valuation of some gifts above others, the humble teacher of the word of God being no less honorable than the holder of some more spectacular gift. He at once presented the marvelous metaphor of "the body" to prove that there are no unimportant members; because the Spirit of God has created, endowed and maintains them all.

THE ONE BODY

Verse 12

The great Pauline teaching that the church comprises the spiritual body of Christ is among the most important teachings revealed to men. God's device of accounting men righteous is that of forming them into a corporate unity, of which Christ is head, all the saved being members of it, the body itself being identified as "Christ." and partaking of the perfect righteousness of the Son God Himself.

God saves men, not by injecting righteousness into them (on the grounds of their faith and or obedience), but by transferring them "into Christ."

Faith and obedience of the gospel are the conditions antecedent to God's transfer of sinners into Christ, baptism being the action through which God effects entry into Christ; but neither the faith of the sinner nor any act of obedience is the ultimate ground of his redemption, that all-important ground being the perfect faith, obedience and righteousness of the Christ Himself. Any man failing to fulfill the prior conditions of being "in Christ" is not a part of the body in view here, as evidenced in the next verse.

Verse 13

"By one Spirit we were all baptized . . ." Throughout the New Testament, Christian baptism is revealed to be one of the two essential elements of the new birth, without which no man may see the kingdom of God. These are: obedience to the ordinance of baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Jesus joined these two essential elements by His requirement that man be "born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:5ff)

“By one Spirit . . .” makes the Holy Spirit the agent or administrator. In a similar way, Christ was named as the actual administrator of the rite of baptism, even though His disciples actually did the baptizing. (John 4:1-2)

The unity of the godhead makes it correct to refer any action ordained and commanded by God, to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit and when the action is obeyed, it is proper to say that any one of them did it.

“We were all made to drink of one spirit . . .” It is true that all of them had themselves baptized, and in consequence had all received the gift ordinary of the Holy Spirit, common to all Christians.

“All made to drink of one Spirit . . .” This refers to the reception of the ordinary gift of the indwelling Spirit by the Corinthians in consequence of primary obedience to the gospel.

Verse 14

The spiritual body of Christ, like the human body, is composed of many members, having various functions, and some—from the human viewpoint—being of lesser or greater honor; but, by the very fact of being “of the body,” each member is necessary, partaking of the destiny of the whole body.

Verses 15-17

The great lesson is that various members of Christ’s spiritual body have many various talents, perform many different services, some (in the eyes of men) receiving distinctions and honors; but no member of the holy body should be envious of any other. All are necessary; all are genuinely a part of the sacred whole. The differences among Christians are similar to the differences in nature, in which area there is infinite diversity, not even two snowflakes ever having been exactly alike. This is according to God’s will.

Verses 18-21

“Just as He desired . . .” God made people different, each person being unique; and there were never two “equal” people on earth.

“But one body . . .” Since the figure here represents the corporate body of Christians on earth, it must be accepted as God’s purpose, “That they all may be

one” (John 17:21), even as Christ prayed. The shattered unity of Christianity is due not to the will of God, but the devices of Satan.

“To the hand, I have no need of you . . . To the feet, I have no need of you .” The thought of Paul in his passage is that the learned, the famous, the talented and the honorable cannot possibly do without the rest of the body.

The nation could get along without its philosophers and politicians much better than it could get along without its farmers and plumbers.

The same principle holds true in the church.

Verses 22-24

“Necessary . . . abundant honor . . .” These are the big words that show the mutual dependence and indispensability which characterizes the relationship of every member of the body of Christ to every other member.

Verse 25

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 913, wrote, “What is true of the human body, through the nervous connection of all of its parts, should be true of the church.”

Verse 26

Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1068, said, “This means that all the members will feel involved in the misfortune or prosperity of fellow-Christians.” If a brother or sister suffers any kind of sorrow or loss, those who are really Christians will share in the hurt; and whatever honor or success or joy may come to a brother or sister in Christ, the same should be an occasion of rejoicing on the part of all the Christian brothers and sisters.

Verse 27

F. W. Farrar, *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 19, p. 399, wrote, “Paul did not mean that the Corinthian church was a member in the body of all the churches, but that each Christian is a member of the body of Christ.”

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 630, added, There is no definite article (you are the body of Christ); and this does not refer to the local church at Corinth, for

there are not many bodies, a thought contrary to the context. Rather, it points to the quality of the whole, which each of them individually helps to constitute.”

Verse 28

“Apostles . . . prophets . . .” There is a conscious ranking of offices and functions of the Lord’s church in this passage, as indicated by, “first . . . second . . . third . . . then.”

It is significant that teachers of God’s word are ranked next to the prophets. It is of no consequence that the order of “miracles” and “healings” is reversed, due to their similarity.

“Helps . . . administrations . . . kinds of tongues . . .” Note: It is significant that “tongues” is placed last. That which had so captured and carried away the Christians at Corinth was here made to be the lowest in God’s scale of values.

“Administrations” or “governments” . . . is a reference to church government and should not be downgraded nor overlooked for “God set some in the church, “ including elders of the church.

The book of Acts bears witness to the fact that apostolic churches did not exist without elders, except for the briefest time after their founding. (Acts 11:29; 14:23)

The “miracles” in view in this passage ceased; but from this it might not be inferred that the office of elders also ceased. Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 263, said, “The evidence that an office was intended to be permanent was the command to appoint to the office those possessing the qualifications.”

No such continuity pertains either to the miracles, the apostles, the prophets, the healings, or the speaking in tongues.

Verses 29-31

The tragedy at Corinth was that a few who had the genuine gift of tongues were displaying it for purposes of their own vanity in the public assemblies of the congregation, where it was never intended to be used, being absolutely unnecessary and unneeded there. There were evidently a great many others who were speaking (called ecstatic utterances) which had absolutely nothing to do with the

Holy Spirit, having only one utility, that of flattering the practitioners of it and bringing down the scorn of the whole community upon the whole church.

With marvelous diplomacy, Paul avoided condemning “tongues” abstractly, for that might have been to reflect upon those who really possessed the gift; but he promptly orders (chapter 14), he would show them “a more excellent way.” That way was the way of love, love itself being one of the fruits, indeed the first fruit, of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. (Galatians 5:22)

The immortal words of the thirteenth chapter comprise the apostle’s exhortation for the Corinthians to walk in the way of love.

CHAPTER 13

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 131, said, “For many, this is the most wonderful chapter in the New Testament,” but as J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, p. 127, said, “It has been admired by all ages, but, unfortunately, practiced by none!”

T. Teignmouth Shore, *Elliott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* p. 337, wrote, There are elements of misunderstanding, however, in the view that “This passage found in the middle of a protracted argument suggests that we have here the result of a sudden burst of inspiration.” Not part of, but all that Paul wrote was inspired of God.

The chapter falls easily into three divisions:

- (1) the absolute necessity of love (verses 1-3),
- (2) the characteristics of love (verses 4-7), and
- (3) the permanence of love (verses 8-13).

Despite this classification, verse 13 evidently stands apart.

Such words as “tongues . . . prophecy . . . knowledge . . . faith,” so as to move mountains cannot be understood, except as references to the miraculous gifts at Corinth. This chapter would never be construed as merely an abstract

teaching on love, parenthetically inserted. The situation at Corinth was still the center of Paul's attention here.

Verse 1

“Tongues of men and of angels . . .” No affirmation is made here regarding the language of angels. Paul made his argument more overwhelming with the contrast between the tongues of angels and the distressing tongues of Corinth.

“But do not have love . . .” Three Greek words for “love” are *eros* (erotic love) *philo* (affection), and *agape*, the latter word being used here. F. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 422, said, “The word was not classical Greek. No heathen writer had used it.”

Thus the Spirit chose a word for Christian love which was free of the sensual overtones of more common Greek words. *Agape* is considered to be one of the grandest words in the New Testament.

“Noisy gong or a clanging cymbal . . .” The pretense of heathen worship included the clashing and banging of gongs and cymbals and the braying of brass trumpets. William Barclay, op. cit., p. 131, identified such noises as characteristic: “especially of the worship of Dionysus and Cybele.”

Paul teaches two things by this:

- (1) that the exhibitions of the Corinthians tongue speakers were of the same significance as heathen worship, and
- (2) that both were noisy, empty and worthless.

Verse 2

“Prophecy . . . knowledge . . . faith so as to remove mountains . . .” These are to be added to “tongues” mentioned in verse 1, all of them being miraculous gifts which had caused so much trouble at Corinth.

“All faith . . .” Although this refers to a miraculous gift, faith is never to be viewed as appearing in various varieties, being of one kind only. In all the word of God, there is no mention of several kinds, or even two kinds of faith. It is always the amount of faith which is determinative.

Paul is not here speaking of some special kind of faith, but of “all faith” meaning the superlative amount, not some special “kind.” No greater misunderstanding exists among religious people today than the notion that there is any such thing as “saving faith”—understanding it as a special or variety of faith that inevitably procures salvation.

Paul’s words here are a sufficient refutation of the popular heresy regarding “faith alone” or “saving faith.” “All faith” cannot mean anything less than faith in its superlative degree (degrees of faith being often mentioned . . . “little faith . . . great faith . . . etc.” Not even “all faith” can avail any man salvation unless his heart is filled with the love of man and of God.

Throughout this chapter it will be observed that it is love of humanity as a reflection of the love which Christians have for God which is being discussed. (See verse 13)

“Prophecy . . .” The miraculous gift of prophecy belonged to Balaam, but his not having love, neither of God or Israel, caused his ruin. Caiaphas as God’s high priest uttered prophecy; but his loveless heart made him an enemy of God. (John 11:51; Numbers 24:1ff; 3:18)

“All faith, so as to remove mountains . . .” The “removing of mountains” was a well-known Jewish metaphor for solving difficult problems. (Matthew 10:1; Luke 17:6) It is clearly the miraculous manifestation of faith that is meant here. As John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, in loco, said, “This means the highest degree of miracle-working faith.”

Judas Iscariot was cited by David Lipscomb, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, p. 194 as being an example of faith to perform miracles, but with no love of Christ: “Judas had faith to work miracles (Matthew 10:1); but did not possess love, betrayed the Lord, and went to his own place.”

Verse 3

“Give all my possessions . . .” T. Teignmouth Shore, *op. cit.*, p. 338, wrote, “The Greek word here means to feed others by giving them morsels of food,

giving the meaning of giving away all the giver's property a little bit at a time so as to reach the greatest possible number.

“My body to be burned . . .” Coming as it did before the savage persecutions in which Christians were burned for their faith, this is surprising, being perhaps prophetic. Some have supposed that Paul was here thinking of the Hebrew children (Daniel 3:23), and William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 132, thought it possible that Paul, “referred to a famous monument in Athens called “The Indian's Tomb, which honored an Indian who had burned himself in public.”

Whatever may have prompted Paul's words here, the lesson is clear, that no liberal giver or fanatical ascetic may be assured of eternal life without the all-important, indispensable virtue of love. In the days of the persecutions, some were tempted to seek martyrdom as a sure means of attaining eternal life; but a proper regard for what Paul said here would have discouraged such a thing.

Verse 4

Patient endurance and active good are qualities of love. Paul enumerated fifteen qualities of love in verses 4-7; but this is far from being a methodical dissertation on love as an abstract subject. The qualities cited here have the utility of contrasting with the extraordinary gifts, and they are presented here as exactly opposed to the characteristic of the puffed-up Corinthians.

Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 269, said, “Those traits of love are therefore adduced which stood opposed to the temper which they exhibited in the use of their gifts. They were impatient, discontented, envious, inflated, selfish, indecorous, and unmindful of the feelings or interests of others, suspicious, resentful and censorious.”

Verses 5-7

The true meaning of all of these qualities is seen in their opposites as cited by Charles Hodge in verse 4.

“Does not seek its own . . .” William Barclay, *Ibid*, *op. cit.*, p. 135, rendered this: “Love does not insist upon its rights.” He also stated that, “It would be the

key to almost all the problems which surround us today, if men would think less of their rights and more of their duties.”

The essential selfishness in all human nature has been exploited politically in this generation, and the ultimate fruits of unbridled selfishness are yet to be reaped.

“Believes all things . . .” S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 632, said, “This does not include gullibility, but means rather that the believer should not be suspicious.”

Verses 8-10

Beginning here, and to the end of the chapter, it is the permanence of love, as contrasted with the supernatural gifts which were so highly treasured by the Corinthians which is stressed. And before moving to declare that of these things which had so dazzled and inflated the Corinthians were soon to end, Paul had just outlined the glory and desirability of Christian love, the same being the “most excellent way” mentioned in 12:31b. But here he made the unqualified declaration of the end of supernatural gifts in the church.

“Love never fails . . .” “Prophecies . . . shall be done away . . .” This cannot mean that prophecies shall be contradicted by events, but as Charles Hodge, op. cit., p. 271, said, “The gift of prophecy shall cease to be necessary, and therefore shall not be continued..”

“Tongues . . . shall cease . . .” This means that the true gifts of tongues would cease. Paul’s words here absolutely deny any authenticity whatever to the so-called charismatics of the present day. True, it is only here that “tongues shall cease.”

Any authentic speaking in tongues is here restricted by the apostle Paul to the age of miracles, and when that ceased, the tongues ceased, except for the affectations of those who indulge, from whatever motives, the counterfeit “tongues” of the present day.

The very fact of Paul’s showing “the more excellent way” declared that the supernatural gifts would soon pass away, otherwise that generation would not

have needed the instruction. Those gifts at Corinth had a purpose. In that day in Corinth, no man had a copy of the New Testament; therefore it was necessary that supernaturally endowed men should teach and lead them; but today, George W. De Hoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, p. 96, said, “No preacher or teacher has any message from God unless he gets it from the Bible.”

During the childhood age of the church, miracles authenticated the message of the inspired preachers. (Mark 16:20) Miracles were to confirm the word of God. De Hoff, *Ibid.* said, “No miracle today could confirm the word of God, it is already confirmed. Men need simply to believe and obey it.”

This writer believes that there are no miracles being performed today, by any persons whomsoever. Paul said they would cease; and they have ceased!

What about the answer to prayer? Yes indeed God answers prayer; and sometimes in the most astonishing ways; but such a thing bears no likeness to the supernatural and visible wonders of the apostolic age.

The character of men pretending to perform miracles in this generation refutes their claims. They get rich doing it; but the apostles never took money for healing anyone. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A Review of the New Versions*, p. 435, stated, “The miraculous endowments designated spiritual gifts have failed, having ceased, have vanished away and are therefore no longer in force. All such powers were temporary and provisional and cannot now be exercised.”

There is a meaning in such words as “cease . . . fail . . . vanish away...”—not merely of continuing no longer, but of being superseded by something else. As John William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament* noted: “Tongues, prophecies, and . . . knowledge shall be superseded.”

Note: In a sense this epistle superseded the tongues at Corinth.

“When the perfect comes . . .” J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 132, understood it as “the recorded word.” Raymond C. Kelcy, *First Corinthians*, p. 61, called it “the body of truth fully revealed.” George W. De Hoff, *op. cit.*, p. 61, identified it as “the New Testament.”

The comparison which Paul at once contrasted the childhood age of the church with the church's maturity, not the present dispensation with the ultimate condition of the saints in heaven; and this demands that the expression "that which is perfect" must be associated, not with conditions in heaven, but with the maturity of the church; and that condition is met only by referring the words of God's completed revelation, the Bible.

Regarding the biblical usage of "perfect," it should be noted that even of the Old Testament it was said, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7); thus "perfect" most assuredly is applied to the revealed word of God; and such being true of the Old Testament makes it even more applicable to the New Testament.

"The partial will be done away . . ." Failure to see that "miraculous knowledge, tongues, prophecies," etc., called in these chapters "spiritual gifts," are to be identified with the things in part that shall be done away involves interpreters in an impossible position." Take ordinary "knowledge," is this to be done away with when we get to heaven? Certainly not! Later, at the end of the chapter Paul gives a glimpse of eternity, but not here. The things in part which were soon to be done away were the supernatural gifts of the infancy age of the church.

However, who can believe that Paul was trying to control the outrageous situation in Corinth by assuring them that all of those miraculous gifts would disappear when they all got to heaven? The perfect illustration of what he really means was childhood giving way to maturity, stated in the very next verse.

Verse 11

Can this be anything if not a suggestion that the Corinthians should stop being children and grow up? "Do not be children in your thinking. (14:20)

Verse 12

In this there surely must be a glimpse of eternal things; and it evidently occurred to Paul in connection with what he had just said of the childhood age of the church giving way to maturity.

We may therefore refer the words about "seeing through a mirror darkly," and knowing "in part" to the present dispensation of God's grace, and the words about being "face to face" (presumably with the Lord) and knowing "fully" may be understood as descriptive of conditions in eternity.

That there is, in fact, just such an emphasis in this verse 12, is proved by Paul's prompt return to the "now" in the final verse immediately after this. A failure to observe this limitation of verse 12 is fatal to any true interpretation of his passage.

"See in a mirror dimly . . ." Ancient mirrors were of polished metal, easily tarnished, and any image was only dimly seen.

Nothing is dim about Christ as God's image except the tarnished mirrors by which mortal men behold it. There shines in these words the essential need for men to walk by faith; because what they may "see" even under the best of circumstances must be described as seeing "dimly."

"Then face to face . . ." In the resurrection, we shall behold the face of the Beloved. "We know that if He should appear, we shall be like Him; because we shall see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:2)

"Now I know in part . . ." Note the temporal "now;" and note also that Paul was not referring to the Corinthians who knew far less than he did; for it is of him that this is said. What a shocking rebuke of intellectual arrogance is this! The greatest mind of the apostolic age, other than that of Christ Himself, here stressed the partial and incomplete nature of that whole body of revelation which Paul, more than any other, delivered to mankind.

Verse 13

"But now . . ." This means "in the present state." J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 133, wrote, "If we give it any other sense, as though Paul said, 'now to sum all things up,' then we have him saying that faith, hope, and love are eternal."

"Now," in this verse meaning that Paul had returned to the present situation after the digression to speak of eternal things in verse 12, which should be treated, actually, as a parenthesis.

All the clever arguments adduced to show how we shall still have faith and hope in heaven fall to the ground in the light of the truth that both faith and hope deal with uncertainties, and there shall be no uncertainties in the eternal world.

“Now abide . . .” here has the force of saying that the miraculous spiritual gifts shall not abide; and, of course, they did not; nor do they exist now. It is in this dispensation that faith, hope, and love abide; but what is especially stressed is that, “Love is the greatest” of the three.

“But the greatest of these is love . . .” It is an unqualified disaster for advocates of the “faith only” theory that love should here be ranked ahead of faith; and, consequently, it is usually interpreted as meaning “God’s love of men,” not men’s love of God and of each other.

Throughout the chapter, it has been made clear that love as a virtue of men, not as an attribute of God, is meant. It is true of course, that the love in Christian hearts has been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit; but by the virtue of that very fact it becomes a Christian virtue.

WHY LOVE IS THE GREATEST THING

- (1) Love is the fulfillment of the law, which was never true of faith.
(Romans 13:10)
- (2) Love outranks faith in the power to motivate men.
- (3) Love includes obedience, which is not true of faith or hope.
(John 14:15)
- (4) Love is the heart of the Great Commandment to love God and one’s neighbor. (Mark 12:28-31)
- (5) Love shall abide eternally, whereas both faith and hope shall not, except in some exceptional sense.
- (6) Love, if lacking in the heart, would be a sufficient deficiency to prevent salvation, even if he possessed “all faith.” (Verse 2)

- (7) Love works the greatest miracle of transformation in human hearts, distinguishing it from faith, which exists in some pretty cold fish!

There is no wonder, then, that Paul extolled the virtue of love in his wonderful efforts to correct the puffed-up Corinthians. This chapter may be viewed as one of the most important in Scripture, not merely from the truly marvelous things said of love, but also for the firm word therein regarding the cessation of the miraculous age.

Concerning the subject of love, there is none other which so fascinates and inspires the hearts of men; for this gift ranks first among the fruits of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22ff) It is the signature of God Himself in the hearts of all the redeemed.

CHAPTER 14

In this third chapter of Paul's writings specifically related to tongue speaking and other spiritual gifts, the full thrust of his purpose is revealed. It is the conviction of this writer that nothing in the history of the church has been any more misunderstood than this chapter. One can only be amazed at the near-universal acceptance of the idea that what those Corinthians were doing was actually caused by the Holy Spirit. This is viewed as totally wrong with regard to all of the conduct which demanded Paul's attention.

THE GENUINE GIFT OF TONGUES

It may not be denied that there was a real gift of tongues belonging to some in Corinth. Many commentators believe that the legitimate gift of tongues at Corinth was no different from what it was on Pentecost; and there is a considerable weight of evidence to support this. Paul and Luke were friends; and the use of the same word to describe God's gift is used here which is used in Acts 2; and, since Acts was written by Luke at a time after Paul wrote the Corinthians, S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Wycliffe Commentary p. 634, wrote, "It would seem logical that Luke would have noted the distinction between the two phenomena, if any existed."

Paul taught that there was a genuine gift of “interpretation of tongues” (12:10); and this has the effect of denying the gift at Corinth any identity with the miracle of Pentecost, where no interpreter was needed. Furthermore, Paul allowed that when an interpreter was present, along with other prescribed conditions, the gift at Corinth might properly be used, (14:27). From this, it seems mandatory to view the genuine gift at Corinth as different from that of Pentecost, and also of far less importance, even that genuine gift (at Corinth) being by Paul ranked last among spiritual gifts. Paul’s use of the gift, it is generally agreed, was either privately or in some missionary effort, there being utterly no word of either in the New Testament. Certainly, he didn’t do it in church assemblies.

Whatever the genuine gift was at Corinth, there is simply no glimpse whatever of it in this chapter. The genuine gift had to be either identical with that of Pentecost, or a far lesser thing given for the encouragement of individuals and to be used privately, (14:4). The need for an interpreter of the true gift proves that the possessor of it would not have known what he said, unless, of course, he also had the gift of interpreting tongues.

Does this true gift come into view in the Corinthian assemblies? Yes, but only to the extent that it had been perverted by dragging it into the public assembly. The visible tongues of Corinth were totally sinful and contrary to the will of God, being either:

- (1) a prostitution of a private gift for public glory in the case of the true gift, or
- (2) a sensational orgiastic counterfeit demonstration having no connection whatever with the Holy Spirit.

This mingling of the true (even though perverted as to purpose and use) tongues with the false is evidently the reason for Paul’s tenderness in dealing with this sin. He simply did not wish to say anything that would discourage those souls who had indeed received of God the private gift of tongues for their encouragement.

THE FALSE GIFT OF TONGUES

By the above title is meant the counterfeit, faked and pretended gift of tongues.

It is clearly evident that the genuine gift of tongues, whether like those at Pentecost or at Corinth, perished with the age of miracles. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 142, wrote, "It (the true gift) was a dangerous gift . . . greatly admired, and the possessor was very liable to develop a certain spiritual pride in his gift. The very desire to possess it produced, at least in some, a kind of self-hypnotism and a kind of deliberately induced hysteria which issued in a completely false and deluded and synthetic speaking in tongues."

Such a thing, of course, can also be produced through the influence of a kind of mob psychology which is sometimes evidenced in religious groups. There is no understanding of this chapter without taking into account the falsity of those Corinthians tongues, but at the same time not denying a legitimate gift as then existing and having been prostituted to unholy ends. Paul's method of doing so was a marvel. He simply issued apostolic orders that would inevitably, if followed, diminish and destroy the false gift, while at the same time cautioning "not to forbid speaking in tongues." (Verse 30)

Why has the phenomenon of counterfeit tongues persisted? It has been produced by people earnestly desiring to do it, and who have been led to believe it is Scriptural.

There is another force operative in the tongue speaking of post-apostolic times, and that is satanic instigation. The pride, vainglory, envy, strife, factionalism, etc., which marked the original outbreak of counterfeit tongues was of Satan; and it may not be doubted that the evil one is still active in such things as the recurring appearance of tongue speaking throughout Christian history.

Verse 1

"Pursue love . . ." seems to connect with what was said in chapter 13. Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI, p. 273, wrote, "This clause belongs to the preceding chapter."

“Desire earnestly spiritual gifts . . . prophecy . . .” The spiritual gift of prophecy was largely a teaching gift (verse 3), but also included, at least in some cases, the ability to foretell future events. It was the teaching phase Paul stressed here, indicating that teaching was a much more desirable activity than tongue speaking. This gift, like all the infancy-age miracles, ceased. There are no miraculously endowed teachers today despite Satan’s having induced a few to fake even this.

Verse 2

“Does not speak to men, but to God . . .” This refers to the true gift of tongues as was spoken in Corinth and has the meaning that it was privately spoken.

“No one understands . . .” This probably means that, even if another heard it; and it appears that the speaker also could not understand it, unless he had the gift of interpretation.

Verse 3

The utility of the gift of prophecy was here said to perform the same services usually associated with ordinary teaching.

Verse 4

“Edifies himself . . .” The true gift of tongues benefited not others but the tongue speaker himself. No man today could need any such confirmation because the New Testament makes it clear that all believers who repent and are baptized into Christ enjoy the promise of the sacred Scriptures that they will in sequence of their obedience and subsequently to their obedience receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38ff); and that word is all the confirmation that any true believer really needs.

“One who prophesies edifies the church . . .” to the building up of an edifice; and Paul demanded that everything (all things, verse 26) be done unto edification of the church.

Verse 5

“I wish that you all spoke in tongues . . .” The true gift was referred to here; but even of it the apostle said that teaching and edifying the church constituted a far better thing.

“Unless he interprets . . .” It does not appear in this chapter that any of the Corinthians were said to have this gift. Only the possibility that they might have it is indicated.

“Greater is one who prophesies . . .” The teacher did more good and was therefore greater than the tongue speaker.

Verse 6

“What shall it profit you . . .” means, “it shall not profit you in any manner at all,” if I come to you, speaking in tongues. This was Paul’s refusal to speak in tongues in the Christian assembly at Corinth. The only way that even an apostle could benefit his hearers was by preaching to them.

“By way of revelation . . .” refers to what was revealed in Scripture.

“Or of knowledge” refers to the spiritual gift of knowledge which Paul assuredly had.

“Or of prophesying . . .” refers to intelligible teachings given by the Holy Spirit to Paul as a spiritual gift.

“Or of teaching . . .” refers to ordinary teaching of what was learned from others, orally or through study of their writings.

Verse 7

If such an illustration as this has any meaning, it has to be that uninterrupted tongues are as noisy, disagreeable, useless, cacophonous (discordant) and worthless as a kitten on the keys of a piano.

Verse 8

Non-interpreted tongues were as disastrous as the efforts of a military bugler whose unintelligent blasts could not be distinguished either as a call to charge, a call to retreat, or a call to go to bed!

Verse 9

The force of verses 7-9 is that the false tongues of Corinth were unintelligible nonsense, having no meaning whatever, being nothing more than jabbering of orgiastic demonstrators. It was a master stroke of the devil that he had prevailed upon some who had the true gift to bring it into the public worship; and therefore, when Paul condemned the false, his care not to discourage the true variety of tongues resulted in an occasion of misunderstanding of this subject for centuries afterward. What Paul said here is applicable to both varieties of tongues, both kinds being forbidden in public worship, the true kind because it was not interpreted and had no business in the public worship to start with, and the false kind because it was nothing but pure nonsense anyway.

Verses 10-11

Any kind of jargon or gobbledygook, such as tongues, which cannot be understood by the hearers, is condemned.

“Barbarian . . .” in ancient times meant merely one who did not speak Greek.

Verse 12

The teacher of the word of God is the true hero, not the tongue speaker. One humble teacher of the word of God does more good than a thousand tongue speakers, even if their alleged “gift” should be accepted as genuine. Why then should intelligent people bother with it, or be impressed with it or make any excuses whatever for it?

Verse 13

“That he may interpret . . .” Again, no certainty that any interpreters existed at Corinth appears here. Paul’s admonition that they should pray to be able to interpret is, on the contrary, a declaration that they could not interpret.

Verse 14

David Lipscomb, Commentary on First Corinthians, p. 208, wrote, “Neither the AV nor the RV is correct here. The thought evidently is, “I will sing as the Spirit directs or inspires, and I will sing in a language that those who hear can

understand.” . . . The following verse shows clearly that Paul’s meaning is: “I will pray and sing by the inspiration of the Spirit, and in a language that they will understand to their profit.”

Verse 15

“What is the outcome then? J. W. McGarvey, Commentary on First Corinthians, p. 137, understood this as idiomatic for: “What is the conclusion of the argument?”

We might state the argument as this: “Therefore, let’s have no more of this tongue business in the songs and prayers; let everything be done in a language everybody can understand.”

Verses 16-17

“Say the Amen . . .” It was customary from the earliest times for Christians to say Amen to the public prayers and thanksgiving of the church. Any use of a tongue in such prayers contravened the purpose of congregational participation in the public prayers.

It is the failure to see the essential sin of that whole tongue speaking outburst (of both kinds) which has blinded men to the teaching of this chapter. To suppose that the Holy Spirit was actually guiding those ostentatious leaders of the public prayers, or songs, so that they were doing so in tongues, is absolutely an impossibility.

Verse 18

This is the verse, beyond all others, that is supposed to take the lid off tongue speaking and to legitimize it for all generations; but this cannot be. We have already noted that Paul never used the gift in the presence of others, or in church assemblies. Furthermore, Paul’s speaking in tongues, “More than you all,” is tremendously significant.

His speaking in tongues was genuine, a true gift, to edify himself; the “gifts” he was correcting were:

- (1) either the misused genuine gifts, or
- (2) the affectations of the tongue counterfeiters; well, actually both of these were condemned.

What then was the apostle's purpose in bringing up the fact that he himself spoke in tongues? If Paul had not possessed the gift, some of the critics would have responded merely by saying, "Well, you know nothing about it." Paul's possession of the gift superlatively enabled him to pour a pitcher of ice water over the whole practice.

The tongue speaking fraternity cannot claim Paul as an advocate of their practices, there being no record whatever that he ever did it in the presence of another human being; and, besides that, his gift was the real thing!

Verse 19

Well, there it is! Anyone in possession of God's Spirit would have exactly the same attitude; but no, the tongue speakers would rather speak ten thousand words in tongues than five words that anybody could understand!

"In the church . . ." This refers to the Christian assembly. All of Paul's tongue speaking was apparently done in private devotions.

Verse 20

There is a continuation of the thought of the foolishness of tongue speaking. The three phases of mortal life: babes, children and men were intended to explain the whole matter of spiritual gifts, belonging as they did to the infancy and childhood age of the church, and not to its maturity. There is therefore a call for the Corinthians to stop chasing after tongues and to grow up spiritually. J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 132, wrote, "All Christians who mistakenly yearn for a renewal of those spiritual gifts, should note the clear import of these words of the apostle, which show that their presence in the church would be an evidence of weakness and immaturity, rather than of fully developed power and seasoned strength."

Verse 21

Paul here quoted Isaiah 28:11, where strange tongues were a chastisement for the unbelief of God's people, in that they were made to hear God's voice speaking to them in the unknown tongue uttered harsh commands given by the foreign invader.

Donald S. Metz, *op. cit.*, p. 450, said, "Paul now introduces an extremely sober note. Whereas the Corinthians regarded speaking in tongues as something to be desired, Paul pointed out that it might be a sign of God's displeasure and punishment."

Verse 22

Tongues in a church are not a sign of God's blessing at all, any more than the foreign tongue of the invader was a blessing to God in Jerusalem, but just the opposite! Tongues in a church? Not as long as there is a single believer in it! The notion that speaking in tongues is to convert unbelievers is foreign to this text. It does just the opposite of converting unbelievers, with the result that they turn aside in disgust, as Paul stated in the very next verse.

Verse 23

Far from being an instrument of converting unbelievers, or being some kind of sign that would help unbelievers to believe, tongues in a public assembly were a positive hindrance, resulting not in the conversion of any but in the judgment against Christians to the effect that they were all crazy.

Verse 24

"If all prophesy . . ." This answers to "if all speak with tongues" in the preceding verse but what is meant in both cases is reference to "all who participate publicly," instead of being an affirmation that all were speaking at one time. It was true of the tongue speakers that they were all speaking at once. This is a mandatory conclusion based on Paul's order that the speakers should speak "one at a time," or "in turn." (Verse 27)

“He is convicted by all . . .” has reference to the power of a decently ordered service featuring intelligible speakers to move the unregenerate to accept the gospel, as stated in the next verse.

Verse 25

Many in all ages have prostrated themselves before God in worship and prayers, and the admissibility of this as legitimate is plain enough in this verse. There is no rule, however, that this must always be done.

“Fall down on his face and worship God . . .” Henry H. Halley, Bible Handbook, p. 549, wrote, “The power to make unbelieving visitors fall down on their faces and worship God, O for such today, instead of dead formalism on one hand and irreverent monkey business on the other?”

Verse 26

The spontaneous, informal nature of the early church services is clearly visible. There could have been no set program in advance, with even the words that men would say written down a week ahead.

“Psalm . . .” probably refers to a song, or hymn composed by the worshiper during the previous week, or at least, one he had learned. There were no hymn books or congregational singing except tunes sung in unison; and four-part harmony had not been invented. A very early description of Christian worship stated that, “They sang by turns a hymn to Christ as God;” (Henry Bettensen, Documents of the Christian Church, p. 6) and there can hardly be any doubt that this was true.

“Teaching . . .” would refer to the instruction of ordinary, uninspired teachers; and in this, it corresponds roughly to preaching in the present time.

“Revelation . . .” is a reference to the words of an inspired, miraculously endowed teacher who had “the gift of prophecy” as used in this chapter.

“Tongue . . .” would mean, not the counterfeited nonsensical “utterings” of the fakers, but the real gift.

“Interpretation . . .” This was mentioned along with “tongue” to bind the two inseparably together; and it seems plausible that by this inclusion Paul did

not mean to certify the fact of there actually being interpreters of tongues in Corinth, but rather as a device of eliminating tongues altogether unless this condition was fulfilled (having an interpreter).

“Let all things be done for edification.” This has the weight of “no tongues in any case,” except of course, if such might have been duly interpreted by an inspired interpreter.

Verses 27-28

In a word, all the post-apostolic tongue speaking, for nineteen centuries have not contributed one authentic sentence to the revealed will of God like that in the New Testament. If this does not condemn the whole monstrous aberration, then how on earth could it not be condemned?

The blunt, dogmatic apostolic answer to tongue speaking is just this: but if there be no interpreter! We know there are no authentic holders of this gift today; and the strong suggestion persists in his whole chapter that there were none of that class in Corinth.

“Speak to himself and to God . . .” This stresses the private nature of the true gift; and the apostolic order for it not to be used in the church (without an interpreter) removed the only possible reason why the counterfeiters were faking it making it impossible for them to accumulate any flattery or “glory” from the display of their “abilities” publicly.

Verses 29-32

These four verses lay down practically the same rules for the prophets as those applying to those having the tongues (of either kind). There were not to be over three on any one occasion; two may not speak at once; and if one prophet was interrupted by another that was the end of the first prophet’s message!

“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets . . .” means that any true prophet could control his speaking; there was no any such thing as an irresistible compulsion for any true prophet to speak.

Putting together all of Paul's regulations, the conclusion persists that there were also false prophets engaging in the free-for-all orgiastic demonstrations going on in Corinth. Certainly, in the case of the tongue speakers:

- (1) they were all speaking at once,
- (2) perhaps dozens were participating every Sunday, and
- (3) such a thing as interpreting what was spoken in tongues had been ignored altogether.

Verse 33

This adds another dimension to Paul's picture of the Corinthian assemblies: they were scandalous examples of utter and complete confusion. Was God the author of it? Certainly not! Is He the author of similar confusion in our own time? Certainly not! Who is the author of such confusion? Both then and now the author is Satan.

Verse 34

Before dealing with this as it may be applied in all generations, it should be observed that the primary meaning has to be, "Do not let the women speak in tongues under any circumstances."

This command comes right in the middle of an extensive treatise on tongue speaking; and to blow this up on a universal law that no woman might open her mouth in a church service is simply contrary to all reason.

"They are not permitted to speak . . ." That is, it was not permitted for them to speak in tongues, that having been the subject Paul was discussing.

"But let them subject themselves just as the Law also says . . ." This prohibition was directed against the arrogant leadership of some of the Corinthian women in the promotion of a fad, that of speaking in tongues. Their vigorous advocacy of it had cast them in a role of immodesty and rebellion even against their husbands, hence Paul's use as stated here. It was this sinful usurpation of their husband's status as head of the family which was the essence of their wrongdoing.

Note: The impossibility of reconciling the radically opposed view of scholars and commentators on this passage has the effect of sending us back to the Old Testament, to which Paul appealed in this verse. Upon the occasion of the creation and fall, God said to Eve, “Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16) Even prior to that, Eve was designed as a “helper suitable for him.” (Genesis 2:18) Thus from the very beginning the authority of the family was vested in the man. The Corinthian women had violated that intention and Paul immediately assigned two reasons for forbidding the action (speaking in tongues publicly) which frustrated God’s purpose.

These reasons were:

- (1) The Old Testament gave man the authority over the family, as in verses cited above, and
- (2) the customs of the age made it shameful for a woman to speak in public. The first of these reasons, of course, is the greater, the other having been removed by the customs of subsequent ages.

George W. De Hoff, Sermons on first Corinthians, p. 99, wrote, “No verse in the Bible teaches that women must teach God’s word at home or in private, those limitations having been added by false teachers. Any teaching that does not usurp authority over a man does not violate this passage.”

Some things, however, are forbidden to woman in the Christian religion. By Scriptural definition, a woman may not be an elder of the church, nor a deacon, nor an evangelist.

Women may not be appointed to the eldership of a church, because, like most men, they are unqualified. None of them may be “the husband of one wife,” etc. Moreover the essential authority of the eldership is such that a woman’s place in it would violate the primal law regarding her lawful subordination to her husband. To make a woman an elder would indeed “usurp authority over a man,” in fact all the men of her congregation. The idea of a woman “teaching a man,” is a violation of God’s law, is far-fetched. Did Priscilla usurp authority over Apollos when she (and her husband) taught him the word of God? (Acts 18:24ff)

Women may not be evangelists. The notable violations of this during our own times have in no sense cast any reflections upon the wisdom of this rule, but rather have confirmed it as Divine. George De Hoff, *Ibid.*, p. 100, wrote, “She cannot be an evangelist for the reason that an evangelist must rebuke with all authority, the very thing the inspired apostle Paul has forbidden her to do (1 Timothy 2:11-12); but women who are faithful Christians may certainly teach God’s word in Bible classes, at home, or in the meeting house.”

What is said of women being elders, deacons, or evangelists is also true of their being “preachers” in any sense whatever; because it is the duty of all preachers to be evangelists, even if their preaching sometimes gives little evidence of respecting their commission. Every preacher or evangelist is commanded to “Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (1 Timothy 4:2)

Verse 35

The women under consideration in this order were married, nothing whatever being said of widows, spinsters, or the unmarried; and they were also ignorant, as indicated by “if they desire to learn anything.” J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 143, wrote, “To understand the passage we should know the ignorance, garrulity (talkativeness) and degradation of Oriental woman.”

This was addressed to abuses of the formal worship by women of a certain class in an ancient culture.

What about the woman whose husband is an ignoramus, an unbeliever, or an open enemy of God and all religion; should she comply with this rule? Until it is affirmed that she should, it is a sin to make this rule universal.

Verse 36

This was Paul’s sarcastic denunciation of the pretensions of the Corinthians, having the impact of, “Surely, you people could not believe that you are some kind of “Mother Church!”

Verse 37

All Christians of all ages should heed this verse. Tongue speakers may not set aside the rules designed to control and eliminate tongues; but it is equally true that churches may not set aside the limitations imposed upon women in the realm of authority, in evangelism, and in holding offices of authority in the church.

Verse 38

Raymond C. Kelcy, First Corinthians, p.69, wrote, “There is good textual authority for rendering this verse as: “If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”

Verses 39-40

“Desire earnestly to prophesy . . .” While still refusing to forbid tongues categorically, for fear of wounding some with the real gift, Paul again stressed the superiority of teaching, commanding here that the brethren should desire to teach, not to speak in tongues.

“Do not forbid to speak in tongues . . .” Throughout this chapter, it has been stressed that the existence of actual gifts of tongue speaking and interpretation made it impossible to declare all such things out of order. Despite this forbearance, there never was a church anywhere which could practice tongue speaking while observing Paul’s rules which inevitably diminished them to the vanishing point.

“Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner . . .” This is the golden rule for organizing and conducting public worship services of the church in all ages.

It is the failure to enforce it at all, which distinguishes many so called “free” religious groups today.

CHAPTER 15

When darkness falls upon the day of life, when death has come, and when men gather around a grave, then it is that they turn to this immortal chapter, where are recorded the title deeds of man's highest hope, the Christians gospel's promise of eternal life. Light from this chapter dispels the darkness surrounding the grave; its message reassures the sorrowful, redefines the meaning of life itself and writes upon the tomb the blessed words, "Asleep in Jesus." It speaks at every funeral.

The dimensions of this heavenly message are so vast that finite man may neither completely comprehend nor intelligently deny it; thus leaving every man the moral option of trusting the Father's promise or turning to the blackness of total despair. It is the voice of God the Father of mankind that speaks to men here; and, for all who listen, it promises that nothing can harm the Father's child, that there is no need to fear, and that even life's sorrows, infirmities and sufferings are not without purpose, and that none of life's labors are in vain "in the Lord."

CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION, BOTH CHRIST'S AND OURS

Most all of this chapter is devoted to teaching concerning the resurrection. While it may be questioned that, "This chapter is more important than any other part of this epistle," it is nevertheless true that the sacred Scriptures have attained some kind of climax in the verses of this chapter.

Verse 1

Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 308, declared, "Certain false teachers at Corinth had denied the resurrection."

Satan always has an advocate in every community; and those of Jewish background could have been contaminated by the Sadducees; while those of Greek origin could have cited a hundred of their philosophers who despised any such doctrine as the resurrection of the dead. (Acts 17:32)

Verse 2

Two clauses in this verse reiterate the principal that even for those already saved, it is yet required of them that they “hold fast the word,” and that otherwise even their glorious beginning is a total loss.

Verse 3

“Of first importance . . .” The doctrine of the resurrection was primary, cardinal, central and indispensable.

“What I also received . . .” John Wesley, *One volume New Testament Commentary, in loco*, was no doubt correct in the conviction that this meant, “I received from Christ Himself; it was not a fiction of my own.”

“Christ died for our sins . . .” Volumes of truth are embedded in this. Christ’s death was not a mere murder, designed and carried out by his enemies; but it was a conscious laying down of His life for the sins of mankind.

“According to the Scriptures . . .” David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 222, wrote, “The double appeal to the Scriptures (verses 3-4) in so brief a statement is deliberate and important.”

Verse 4

This dogmatic declaration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was written while the majority of that generation in which it occurred were still alive (verse 6); and the presence of many enemies who denied it but who were powerless to produce any evidence against it, makes this an argument of eternal power and dependability.

“And that He was buried . . .” This is one of three New Testament references to the burial of Christ. “It blasts the swoon theory; He really died; and it leads naturally to the empty tomb, a witness for the resurrection which has never been effectively denied.”

“He was raised on the third day . . .” The Scriptures which affirmed Jesus would rise on the third day are Jonah 1:17 and Matthew 12:40.

Verse 5

“Cephas . . .” is the name for Peter; and one significant thing is that the Lord made a special appearance to the apostle who had denied Him, giving hope to all who fall, and showing that the Lord is tender and merciful to forgive our sins. (Luke 24:34)

“Then to the Twelve . . .” This is a reference to the office of the Twelve, and the fact of Jesus’ appearances being to ten on one occasion and eleven on another is a mere quibble of no importance at all.

Verse 6

No infidel can get rid of this testimony. J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 917, identifies this appearance to over five hundred as identical with “the mountain appearance in Galilee. (Mathew 28:16ff)

“Most of whom remain . . .” F. W. Farrar, p. cit., p. 484, wrote, This “is of the highest evidential value,” because it was written by one who would rather have died than to tell a lie, and who could not possibly have been guilty of making a statement that could have been refuted by any enemy of the truth.

“Some have fallen asleep . . .” Reference to death as a sleep originated with Jesus Himself and was quickly adopted by Christians when speaking of the beloved dead.

Verses 7-8

“James . . .” This appearance is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament. James Macknight, Apostolic Epistles and Commentary, p. 256, identified this James as “James the Less, author of the New Testament book of James and a brother of our Lord.”

As the apostle James was already dead at the time of Paul’s writings, it seems probable that Paul would have been referring to the other James, who was also called an apostle in a secondary sense. He presided over the church in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts.

Jerome recorded a curious legend to the effect that James had made a vow that he would neither eat nor drink till he had seen Jesus risen from the dead, and

that Jesus, appearing to him said, “My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from the dead.” (Jerome as quoted by Farrar, op. cit., p. 484) Jesus’ brothers did not at first believe in Him. (John 7:3)

“Last of all . . .” has the meaning of “last in this list which I am giving.” Jesus did appear to John at a much later time. (Revelation 1:16ff)

“Untimely born . . .” The word here is used of an abortion and David Lipscomb, op. cit., p. 224, wrote saying it, “Denotes the violent and unnatural mode of Paul’s call to the apostleship.”

Verse 9

Raymond C. Kelcy, First Corinthians, p. 70, said, “This verse is explanatory of verse 8.” The extent of Paul’s persecutions, were probably much more extensive than the glimpses of them which appear in the New Testament might indicate.

Verse 10

“Labored even more than all of them . . .” Paul’s labors were the most extensive of any of the apostles, and the most fruitful. Such rewards of his efforts Paul ascribed not to himself but to the grace of God.

Verse 11

The gospel Paul preached was one and the same as that preached by all the others, the point here being that it made no difference whether from himself or others, the message had been received. It was one message only, with the same result of salvation, no matter who preached it.

“We preach . . .” There are two words in the New Testament for preaching. F. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 485, said this one means, “We proclaim, or herald.” The other is “prophecy” and refers to spiritual teaching and instruction.

Verse 12

The certainty of Christ’s resurrection was so solidly embedded in the convictions of the apostolic church that Paul made it to be here an argument

proving the resurrection generally of all the dead, a hope stubbornly denied by the Greek philosophers. (Acts 17:32)

Paul affirmed the resurrection of Christ as proof of the resurrection of all. This is the first in a series of arguments proving the validity of the Christian hope of the resurrection.

The philosophical conceit which Paul laid to rest by these arguments, Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1071, wrote, “The Greek idea of the immortality of the soul . . . that after death the soul escaped the body to be absorbed into the divine or continue a shadowy existence in the underworld.”

Verse 13

If there is no resurrection for all, then the resurrection of Christ itself is meaningless.

Verse 14

So-called “modernists” who pretend to be Christians while denying the resurrection are not Christian at all in any New Testament sense.

Verse 15

J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 149, said, “It was not an issue of truth or mistake, but of truth or falsehood.” There can be no middle ground in judging the words of that group of men who bore witness to Christ’s resurrection and then went up and down the ancient empire sealing the testimony with their life’s blood. It was either truth, or if was a bold calculated lie which perpetrated upon mankind the greatest hoax of all time.

“He raised Christ . . .” Christ’s resurrection is viewed in the New Testament as having been accomplished by the Son Himself (John 10:18), and by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:11)

Verse 16

The denial of any such thing as the resurrection included the resurrection of Christ with that which was denied; but there is more to this than that. The whole purpose of Christ’s entry into our earth life with its sufferings and death,

consummated by His glorious resurrection, was the purpose of conquering death upon behalf of all humankind; and if such a thing as the resurrection of men was impossible, Christ would never have undertaken the mission at the outset.

T. Teignmouth Shore, *op. cit.*, p. 291, expressed it, “In other words, if there is to be no resurrection, the only alternative is atheism, for otherwise one would have to believe that, though there is a God who is wise and just, yet the purest and greatest life that was ever lived is no better in the end than the life of a dog.”

Verse 17

Believing in the resurrection of Christ is absolutely mandatory for all who hope for salvation; and this applies equally to all individuals, institutions and even churches which deny it. There is no redemption apart from the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, inclusive of the doctrine of the resurrection and many other necessary deductions from the prime fact of our Lord’s Divinity.

Verses 18-19

The great proposition that undergirds Christianity is that the saved shall be forever with the Lord in that upper and better world where all the problems of earth shall be solved in the light and bliss of heaven. Christianity is not to be advocated merely upon the premise that it is good psychology, or that it leads to a better life in the present world, however true these tangential benefits might be. Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 291, said, “This does not mean that Christians are unhappy, or that their religion does not produce comfort.”

In the midst of all this reasoning on the resurrection, Paul discarded his line of argument for a moment, and thundered once more the apostolic oracle of Christ’s resurrection. (verses 20-28)

Verse 20

The only historical fact that could have produced the phenomenon known as Christianity was that cited here, the resurrection of Christ. The very existence of Christianity is proof enough that Christ actually rose from the dead. Only the spiritually blind or willfully evil mind may deny it.

“The first fruits of those who are asleep . . .” One of the great Jewish festivals was just approaching, in which the first fruits of the harvest were waved before the Lord; and, as surely as the first sheaves of the harvest carried a pledge of that harvest, so the resurrection of Christ carried a pledge of the resurrection of all men.

Verse 21

One great truth evident in the Bible is that men would never have been subject to death, if it had not been for the sin of Adam. By that one man’s sin, death has fallen upon all men. The analogy pointed out in this verse is that, in view of death’s having resulted from one man’s sin, it is not unreasonable that the resurrection of all men should come about through one man’s resurrection, that of Christ Himself.

Verse 22

All who ever lived on earth shall rise from the dead, the wicked and the righteous alike, and all of this as a consequence of resurrection.

Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29 teach the resurrection of all men, both the wicked and the righteous; and this, of course, is the obvious sense of “all” here which means the same in both clauses.

Verse 23

“Each in his own order . . .” The word rendered order is a military word, “denoting a company.” Christ outranks His followers, who in turn outrank the unbelieving.

“At His coming . . .” The Second Advent will be the occasion of the general resurrection of both wicked and righteous, despite the affirmation that the “dead in Christ shall rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Both shall occur on the same occasion (Matthew 25:31ff); and the separation of the wicked from the righteous will take place then.

Verse 24

“The end . . .” means the end of the world.

“He delivers up the kingdom . . .” The Second Advent will not be the beginning of the reign of Christ but the end of it.

“When He has abolished all rule, authority, power . . .” The word “abolished” here does not in any manner suggest that all hostile powers opposed to Christ will submit to His will and obey the gospel at some time prior to the end, but that they will be abolished!

Verse 25

This has the weight of saying that “Christ must keep on reigning till He has put down His enemies,” with the necessary deduction that He is now reigning over His kingdom which is the church.

Verse 26

The general resurrection will thus occur at a time after the full and total authority of Christ has been demonstrated.

Verse 27

“For He . . .” refers to God. F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 487, wrote, “The words , spoken of man in general, are transferred to the Federal Head of Humanity—the ideal and perfect God-man, Jesus Christ.”

“He is excepted . . .” “All things subjected to Christ” did not mean, of course, that God was subjected to the Savior, all beings of the godhead constituting a sacred unity.”

Verse 28

It is a gross error to see this passage as reducing in any manner the status of Jesus Christ and His “equality with God” (Philippians 2:6) the thing in view here being the end of Christ’s mediating office. At the time of His kingdom being united with the godhead in heaven, the need of those special devices which were necessary in human redemption shall have disappeared. This verse marks the end of the digression which Paul began back in verse 20.

Verse 29

This is branded by many as a very difficult verse; but the proper regard of the third person plural pronouns in this verse makes it easy.

Paul used an argument based upon what men were doing, indicating clearly enough that some persons known to the Corinthians, were practicing a baptism for the benefit of the dead; but the one thing that makes it impossible to suppose that Paul approved of such a thing is the use of the third person pronouns.

Concerning Christian baptism, for example, it is always “we” or “you” who were baptized and addressed in the first or second persons, never in the third person. It is still “they” not “we” who baptize for the dead!

With reference to the practice itself, nothing is known of Christians ever doing such a thing till far later in the Christian era; and, even then, it is most likely that a misinterpretation of Paul’s words here was a contributing factor. Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 337, flatly declared that nothing was ever known of Christians doing such a thing “before the second century.”

Invariably throughout history, the Christian community has condemned this practice as heretical, there not being a word in the whole New Testament that countenances such a thing. Only the revival of the practice by the Mormons in our own times has appeared as an exception. The whole concept of proxy baptism is contradictory to biblical teaching.

Paul had already promised that he would correct certain unspecified disorders at Corinth when he returned personally to visit them (11:34); and it may be taken as certain that baptism for the dead was one of them.

Verse 30

If the apostles had not been extremely sure of the resurrection, why would any of them have endured such hardship and sufferings, even unto death? This argument is unanswerable.

Verse 31

“The boasting in you . . .” Paul’s one reason for earthly glorying was the conversion of men to Christ. His “hope, and joy and crown of rejoicing” was the conversion of men and the establishment of churches. (Romans 15:16)

Verse 32

“Fought with wild beasts at Ephesus . . .” Scholars are divided on whether to construe this metaphorically as a reference to great persecutions and dangers Paul endured at Ephesus, or as mention of an event in which the apostle actually did so.

The feeling here is that this refers to actual conflict; and Luke’s not mentioning it does not deny it. There were several shipwrecks that Luke did not mention, along with the many other hardships of the grand apostle. Besides that, there is a glimpse of some mortal danger to Paul for which he was saved by Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:4), for which the Gentile churches throughout the Roman Empire gave thanks to God; and that mystery could be related to this. In any case, the point should not be forgotten; what was the profit of such danger and suffering endured for the sake of Christianity, if there is no resurrection of the dead?

“Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die . . .” This was Epicureanism; and Paul’s words here may be construed as saying that paganism is as good as Christianity if the doctrine of the resurrection is denied.

Verse 33

Paul’s use of “do not be deceived . . .” here was to warn the Corinthians against toleration of the evil teachers who were denying the resurrection; for the toleration of them was certain to have corrupted some of the church.

Verse 34

Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 309, said this means, “Arouse from your stupidity on this subject!” The toleration of the skeptical teachers was a public disgrace to the church.

Verse 35

It is no objection to the hope of a resurrection that men are not able to explain it; and in conscience it must be admitted that Paul did not explain it in this great passage. He did, however, prove that it is no more marvelous than many other things, some known and some unknown to men.

Verse 36

Paul's reference to planting seeds that produce something far different from the seeds, yet identified with the seeds, is similar to Christ's use of the same analogy in John 12:24 where He applied it to His own death and resurrection.

Can anyone understand the principle of seeds dying, growing, and producing a crop? Certainly not! Jesus Himself said, "He himself does not know ." (Mark 4:26-29)

What Paul means by this is simply that the existence of the common miracle of seeds should enable the believer to receive as truth Christ's promise of the resurrection.

"You fool!" It is worth noting that the word "fool" is a different word from "the one that was forbidden by the Lord." (T. Teignmouth Shore, op. cit., p. 350)

Verses 37-38

The Greek word for "body" in these verses, and in 40-41 is *soma*, which is the same word used for a man's body. One may take a handful of various seeds which are superficially very much alike; but when they are planted an amazing difference appears. This is God's doing "as it pleased Him;" and Paul's argument must be allowed as valid, that the God who does such a thing as that also has the power to provide man with a resurrection body.

The mocking Greeks at Corinth denied the possibility of a resurrection, pointing out the impossibility of reassembling all the atoms of the body destroyed by fire, lost at sea, or disintegrated into dust; but the Christian holds that it is no more difficult for God to give one another body than it was to give him the one he now enjoys.

Verse 39

It is the infinite power and diversity of God's creative ability which is stressed by these words. There is hardly any environment upon the face of the earth, sky, land or sea, which is not inhabited by creatures that God has made and sustained through the ages.

Some creatures live in the depth of the sea under pressure and temperature conditions which would be fatal to a man in an instant; and so it is throughout the whole creation. Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 312, observed, "It is not necessary therefore to suppose that the body which shall be raised shall be precisely like that which we have here."

Verses 40-41

Albert Barnes, *Ibid.*, p. 313, wrote, "Can it be thought strange if there should be a difference between our bodies when on earth and when in heaven?" God who has wrought all of the wonders of the considerable creation, as well as all the wonders of earth, is most certainly able to perform what has been promised with regard to the resurrection. How filled with conceit and unbelief must be that mortal man, who is himself the creature made by an infinite God, and who must soon stumble into a grave, but who has the arrogance and pride to busy himself formulating postulates about what may be possible or not for almighty God! By such a sin, Satan himself fell into condemnation.

Verses 42-44

Incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual shall be the new body in the resurrection; and these qualities of it are contrasted with the corruption, dishonor, and weakness of the natural body at the moment of its being "sown" in death.

Paul does not say here that there is any "maybe" connected with this teaching; this reveals what is to be; and the certainty of the spiritual body's arrival at the due time in the unfolding of the Father's will is attested and prophesied by the very essence of the natural physical body itself. "If there is a natural body,

there is also a spiritual!" Men may believe it if they please, but that unbelief will neither prevent nor delay the fulfillment of God's will.

Verse 45

Of course, there were far more contrasts than similarities between Adam and Christ; but the position that each holds as head of the natural creation (of man) on the one hand, and the head of the spiritual creation on the other is similar.

The passage Paul quoted here is Genesis 2:17. "Living soul" is what Adam became. God had breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; but through disobedience Adam became this lower thing, the merely natural man. Through Christ, however, man may enjoy that higher existence which God intended from the first.

Verse 46

The time sequence here applies to men now, their first existence being merely physical, the natural life derived from Adam in whose "image" (Genesis 5:3) all men are born. God made Adam in God's image; but after the fall, it appears that men were not born in God's image (except in a limited sense), but in the image of the fallen ancestor.

"The natural . . ." Paul W. Marsh, *A New Commentary*, p. 412, said, "This is a general law; seed-time precedes harvest; and the physical is preparatory for the spiritual."

"Then the spiritual . . ." S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *op. cit.*, p.644, correctly viewed this expression as having been coined by Paul, "to indicate that there can be no third representative man, sinless, and without human father, as were both Christ and Adam."

Verses 47-49

"The second man is of heaven . . ." This epic declaration is meaningless unless it teaches the preexistence of Christ, His unity with God the Father, and the virgin birth by which He identified Himself with the earthy.

God created Adam, but he was still earthy, having been made of the dust of the earth; but Christ had ever been with the father. As Jesus expressed it in John 8:42: "For I proceeded forth and have come from God." And again, Jesus said in John 8:23, "I am from above, you are from this world." One can only marvel at the type of scriptural illiteracy which cannot find the virgin birth in Paul, John and other portions of the New Testament.

"Image of the earth . . ." All men bear the likeness of Adam. (Genesis 5:3)

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

"We shall also bear the image of the heavenly . . ." As certainly as men are like Adam and have the same physical nature that Adam possessed, that certain are they to bear the image of Jesus Christ and to possess, ultimately, exactly the same kind of spiritual body that Jesus displayed after the resurrection, despite that fact that it is but little.

- (1) He had flesh and bones.
- (2) He could appear and disappear at will through closed or locked doors.
- (3) He could ascend and descend.
- (4) He could vanish out of sight.
- (5) He could even change His appearance. (Mark 16:12)
- (6) He could be recognized or not, at will.
- (7) He was not merely a spirit. (Luke 24:39)

By the words of this clause, Paul clearly stated that just as our physical bodies are like that of Adam, our spiritual bodies are like that of Christ. Significant also is the fact that Christ was the same person after the resurrection as He was before, indicating that there shall be no loss of personality in the resurrection state.

Verse 50

“Flesh and blood . . .” has reference to man’s present state; and this is no comment at all upon the composition of the resurrection body. This merely says that in man’s mortal state, it is impossible for him to enjoy eternal life.

Verses 51-52

“We shall not all sleep . . .” There is nothing in this passage to support the notion that Paul believed the end to be in his own life time. Some of the Thessalonians got that impression from Paul’s teaching; but he at once wrote them another letter to dispel such a foolish notion and to point out that years of time were to unfold before the final day.

“We shall all be changed . . . In a moment . . .” F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 100, approved the rendition “moment” in this place calling it “perfectly correct.” He further wrote, “The Greek word *atomos* (whence our word atom) means “incapable of being cut;” and Paul used it here to indicate a division of time so brief that it cannot be subdivided farther, a “split second” if you like.”

“The trumpet will sound . . .” No man may say exactly what this is; but it is clear enough that God would have no need of any literal trumpet (9:14); and the symbolism would appear to be the same as when one might say, “Well, the boss blew the whistle on that practice, “meaning of course that he stopped it.” Something like that is meant here. Jesus mentioned the final day in these words: (Matthew 24:31)

Note, that it was not a trumpet, but “the great sound of a trumpet.” There will come the time when God will blow the trumpet on this world of ours and summon all men to judgment on the great day.

“I tell you a mystery . . .” this term in the New Testament ordinarily refers to some secret hitherto unknown, but now revealed through the word of God.

“We shall all be changed . . .”

Verse 53

The certainty of the change to spiritual bodies in the resurrection is here affirmed by the use of the imperative “must” which has such significant usage in the New Testament.

Verses 54-55

“Victory” in the presence of death! If men wonder why the holy faith in Jesus Christ continues from age to age, let them find at least a part of the answer in these immortal words before us.

Verse 56

“The sting of death . . .” Sin bought death into the world as a consequence. However enticing and beautiful sin may appear to be there is a stinger in it, as discovered by Adam and Eve, and all of their posterity.

“The power of sin is the law . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 920, wrote, “This is true because the law reveals sin and indeed, intensifies its power without giving power to overcome it.” (Romans 7:7-13; 8:2-3)

Verse 57

“The victory through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” In the New Testament, this always has reference to being “in Christ” as in the next verse where Paul said “in the Lord.” God’s way of saving men is by their being transferred “into Christ,” identified with Christ, and thus saved “as Christ.” F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 493, summarized it, “Paul’s hope of the resurrection rests, like all his theology, on the thought that the life of the Christian is life “in Christ.”

Verse 58

“My beloved brethren . . .” It is remarkable how frequently Paul used this term of endearment and affection. Not even the gross sins and mistakes of the sensual and carnal Corinthians could diminish his love for them nor his loving persuasion helping them to conform more perfectly to the will of Christ.

“Be steadfast . . .” Paul expected Christians to be able to “take it.” He wrote the Ephesians, “Stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:14) Through the ages , there has

been no more necessary virtue than the ability to be steadfast amidst changing scenes and times despite temptations and sorrows, and without regard to every “wind of doctrine” that creates some little stir among men.

“Unmovable . . .” The Christian is to be unmovable not in prejudice, but in faith.

“Abounding in the work of the Lord . . .” Far from advocating an easy way of salvation by merely believing, Paul demanded and encouraged that the redeemed should abound continually in the Lord’s work. He commanded the Philippians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (1:12)

He, like every true Christian, would have been outraged by any notion to the effect that people are “saved by faith alone.”

“Your toil is not in vain . . .” What is done for Christ and His kingdom is work for God; all else is idleness.

“In the Lord . . .” This expression, or its equivalent, appears 169 times in the writings of the apostle Paul; and by that fact, it may be claimed that this is the most important phrase Paul ever wrote, because he repeated it more than any other. Salvation is, “in the Lord” and nowhere else. Every man should ask himself the question, “Am I in the Lord?”

Men are baptized “into Christ” at a time subsequent to their having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and having repented and confessed His name. (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27) There is no other way to be in the Lord.

CHAPTER 16

Paul abruptly left off speaking of the glorious resurrection and plunged into practical matters, giving instruction with regard to the projected contribution for the poor in Jerusalem (1-8), recommending their acceptance of Timothy, and writing a five-point summary of the whole epistle (9-13). He concluded with the various greetings (14-20), and his personal salutation and signature (21-24).

Verse 1

The proposed beneficiaries of this collection were the poor Christians in Jerusalem; and Paul had busied himself extensively in the advocacy and promotion of this gathering of funds for their relief.

The reasons behind Paul's engagement in the fund-raising were as follows:

- (a) it had been strongly recommended at the so-called council in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:19); and
- (b) It was drastically necessary from a humanitarian viewpoint. The persecutions that arose around the martyrdom of Stephen had left many in a state of dire need.

As Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI, p. 296, said, "The enmity of their countrymen to the gospel of Christ led them to treat those who processed it with cruelty, and spoil them of their goods."

Furthermore, the excessive generosity of any during the days of that so-called communism (Acts 2:45) had brought practically the whole church to a state of destitution. Communism, even of the benevolent and non-violent kind practiced in the primitive church, has never been capable of producing anything except poverty, as attested this very day by the economic conditions of the whole Communist world.

- (c) As David Lipscomb, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, p. 248, wrote, "There was also Paul's effort to soften the prejudices of the Jewish Christians against their Gentile brethren."
- (d) It has a way of demonstrating the church. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 181, put it, "It has a way of teaching the scattered Christians that they were not (merely) members of a congregation, but members of the church."
- (e) It was a way of stressing giving as a vital doctrine of Christianity.
- (f) It was an implementation of the principle that Christians are saved to serve.
- (g) It was a way of strengthening the givers in the faith of Christ.

“The churches of Galatia . . .” Paul’s similar admonition to the Galatians is not found in the New Testament book of that name; and therefore it had been conveyed “either by messenger, or by a letter not preserved.” (J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 921)

The Galatian churches here mentioned were “those of Pisidian, Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra. (Acts 13-14-14:13)

Verse 2

“On the first day of every week . . .” There is no fact connected with Christianity any more certain than the apostolic custom of worship services every Lord’s Day.

Beginning with the very day of our Lord’s resurrection, and continuing upon successive Sundays thereafter, worship was observed by the apostles.

A careful study of Acts 20:6-7; 21:4; and 28:14 discloses not merely that the worship and observance of the Lord’s Supper took place on Sundays, but also that the Lord’s Supper was never observed by the apostolic church on any other day.

“Let each one of you put aside and save . . .” It is generally admitted that every Christian was to participate in the giving. The amount of giving was to be determined by the man himself, not by any tax or suggestion from others.

Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 364, wrote, “The only reason that can be assigned for requiring the thing to be done on the first day of the week, is that on that day the Christians were accustomed to meet, and what each one had laid aside from his weekly gains could be treasured up, that is, put into the common treasury of the church.”

“As he may prosper . . .” This does not mean that only the prosperous should give, but that every man, in the extent of his prosperity, should give to the proposed collection.

In the whole matter of Christian giving, these verses indicate that:

- (1) all should participate,

- (2) according to the ability of each, and (3) that it should be done regularly and continually.

Verse 3

Paul did not propose to take charge of the contribution himself, suggesting here that men duly appointed by the congregations should with proper screening and recommendation be dispatched with the money to its destination.

Note: A list of the seven faithful men appointed to carry the money is found in Acts 20:24, along with a list of the various congregations they represented.

Verse 4

James Macknight, op. cit., p. 293, thought that Paul here, “Insinuated his inclination” to favor an invitation to be in the group conveying the funds; and of course, as it turned out, he was included.

Verse 5

Paul’s postponement of his visit was founded in the highest wisdom. He would give them a little time to get their house in order before he came.

Verse 6

”You may send me on my way . . .” This is not a hint that he would expect to receive traveling expenses, rather having reference to the custom of the Christians accompanying departing guests for some distance at the time of their leaving. (Acts 15:3, 17:15, and Romans 15:24)

Verses 7-9

”I do not wish to see you now . . .” The reason given was that he desired a longer visit than was possible at present; but this was also related to the deplorable conditions at Corinth. A short visit would not give sufficient time for working out all of the problems; besides, given time for the letter he was writing to have its effect, there might be fewer problems to solve at a later time.

”If the Lord permits . . .” Paul’s plans were made like those of any other Christian, subject to the sovereign will of God.

“Remain in Ephesus until Pentecost . . .” Pentecost was one of the three great national feasts of the Jews which fell in the May-June period.

“Wide door for effective service . . .” The marvelous opportunity for Paul at Ephesus, was one of the reasons assigned for his intention of staying longer.

“There are many adversaries . . .” To some men, this hardly would have appeared as a reason for staying; but Paul reasoned that where Satan had stirred up great opposition to the truth, there must also be great opportunities for saving men.

Verse 10

“Without cause to be afraid . . .” Paul’s concern that Timothy might encounter some cause of fear at Corinth might have sprung from the fierce partisanship in the church there, or from the youth, inexperience and timidity of Timothy, or even from a combination of both.

“He is doing the Lord’s work as I also am . . .” No higher recommendation could have been written for anyone in this. The noble Timothy was a loyal and able helper of the apostle throughout his ministry.

Verse 11

This was a command that the Corinthians should accord full honors to the apostle’s helper, a duty that probably needed to be brought to their attention. Factionalism always results in the neglect of obvious duties.

Verse 12

Neither Paul nor Apollos were in any manner responsible for the ugly actions that had grown up around their names at Corinth. Paul’s desire that Apollos should go up to Corinth might have been prompted by the thought that he could give valuable aid in correcting the Corinthian disorders.

Despite their love and affection for each other, however, Apollos was not a pupil of Paul’s and felt justified in denying the apostle’s request, by promising to go later.

Verses 13-14

“Be on the alert . . .” Although originally directed as an admonition to Corinth, this is a timeless duty of all Christians. The things they were to be alert to were:

- (1) the danger of division,
- (2) the deception of false teachers,
- (3) the atheistic denials of the resurrection, and
- (4) the failing of love of the brethren, etc.

“Be strong . . .” What Paul plainly mean was that they should not depart from the Christian faith. This is the marching order for every Christian of all ties and places. Paul himself gave this the highest priority, saying near the end of life that “I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)

“Act like men . . .” This carries the weight of “Stop acting like spiritual infants, quarreling, boasting and indulging yourselves without discipline!” Many church problems are due to pure infantilism on the part of members who do not grow up spiritually.

“Be strong . . .” Strength is manifested by courageous and unwavering loyalty to the word of God, by the resistance of temptation, by fleeing from it, by regular and faithful attendance at worship service, by constant and liberal giving, by loving consideration of the rights, opinions and needs of others, and by the repudiation of the world’s value judgments.

“Let all you do be done in love . . .” This summarizes the teaching of the whole 13th chapter. A constant and unfeigned love of the Lord, of His church as a whole, and its individual members, is the mark of a strong Christian. Love is “the greatest” because it is always marked by obedience. (13:13)

Verse 15

Evidently, Stephanas had been baptized while traveling at Athens; for Paul’s first visit to Achaia (at Athens) resulted in the baptism of Dionysius, Damaris, “certain men” and “others” thus the name of Stephanas must be added to those.

Here it appears that later his entire house (as many as were adults) had also obeyed the gospel.

Have devoted themselves for ministry . . .” F. W. Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 551, recorded a curious opinion that Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were “perhaps slaves of the household of Chloe;” and that this paragraph might have been written to protect them against the wrath of the Corinthians due to their having delivered to Paul an account of disorders in Corinth. The men mentioned were giving diligent service to the church; and Paul ordered them respected.

Verse 16

Evidently there was some basis for fearing that this advice was needful; and the surmise that they might have been slaves could be correct, as there were many slaves among the churches of that era.

Verse 17

“Fortunatus . . .” This man is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament; but Clement of Rome (30-100 A.D.) credited him with having been one of the messengers by whom Clement sent a letter (The First Epistle of Clement) to the Christians at Corinth. (Clement of Rome in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, p. 21)

“They have supplied . . .” (J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 921, paraphrased the thought as: “Their visit has made up for our absence.”

Verse 18

The interpretation of Meyer as quoted by Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 371, may be correct, “You owe (to them) whatever in my letter serves to refresh you.”

Them that are such . . .” has reference to all persons of good will and Christian character who, by their very presence on earth serve to refresh and encourage the followers of Christ the Lord.

Verse 19

“Aquila and Prisca . . .” The whole world of Gentile Christians were under a debt of thanks to them for having saved Paul’s life, an event of which absolutely

nothing is known; but the New Testament affords several splendid glimpses of this remarkable Christian couple.

“The church that is in their house . . .” Aquila, to follow the order Paul himself sometimes used, were of sufficient wealth and generosity to provide a meeting place for Christians in their residence.

“The churches of Asia greet you . . .” This is a reference to the proconsular province of Asia and not to the continent.

Verse 20

“A holy kiss . . .” Why did this lovely custom, which certainly prevailed in those times, disappear? William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 187, said,

- (1) it was liable to abuse, and
- (2) it was liable to misinterpretation by heathen slanders, and
- (3) the church itself became less and less of a fellowship.”

The third reason cited by Barclay, above, is the principal cause of its disappearance. Christians do not always love one another as they should.

Verse 21

This was Paul’s authentication of the epistle, his signature. Paul’s letters were usually written by a secretary, an amanuensis, probably Sosthenes in the case of this epistle. (1:1)

Verses 22-23

“Accursed . . .” is a word that leads to the necessary deduction that a refusal to love the Lord makes one an enemy of God.

“Maranatha . . .” F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 100, wrote, “If this word is divided as Marana tha it means “Our Lord come;” but if we divide it Maran atha, it means “Our Lord has come.” Phillips translated this, “May the Lord come soon.” It is far more probable that the word Maran atha gives the true meaning that “Our Lord has come in His incarnation.”

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you . . .” This beautiful greeting, which Paul so frequently used, was not enough in this first epistle to Corinth. Paul had written some of the sternest rebukes in the Holy Scriptures, and he had borne down upon them all of his apostolic power to force a correction of their shameful abuses; therefore, he would not close with the usual greeting, adding to it an affirmation of his love for every one of them.

Verse 24

“In Christ Jesus . . .” This phrase beyond all others is the badge and signature of the gospel Paul preached.

If one is “in Christ” and if one is “found in Him” (Philippians 3:9), salvation is assured and heaven is certain! It was that relationship to the Corinthians as his fellow members of Christ’s spiritual body to which Paul appealed in this final loving word.