



I Corinthians

A COMMENTARY OUTLINE

THE CHURCH
WITH QUESTIONS

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Introduction

or “Meeting the Saints in Corinth”

I Corinthians 1:1-9

PERSPECTIVE FOR THE BOOK

The book of I Corinthians is written to a group of believers who are described as *men of flesh* (3:1), *babes in Christ* (3:1), and *still fleshly* (3:3). This letter deals with the problems that rise from the condition of such believers. The words *in Christ* assure us that they were Christians, while the other terms show their carnal condition. Paul will focus on the spiritual problems of carnal Christians and the divine solutions to these problems.

The book of I Corinthians may be outlined by noting the order in which Paul addresses the problems.

The Problem of Dissensions 1:10-4:21

The Problem of Morality 5:1-13

The Problem of Litigation 6:1-20

The problems dealt with in chapters 7-11 are Paul's response to a letter received from the Corinthian church.

The Problem of Marriage 7:1-40

The Problem of Liberty 8:1-11:1

The Problem of Worship 11:2-14:40

The Problem of the Resurrection 15:1-58

SALUTATIONS TO THE CHURCH 1:1-9

THE GREETINGS OF PAUL 1:1-3

“Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ²to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and

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

The Author 1:1

The first three verses follow the form of first century personal correspondence which contained three elements: the author, the recipients, and the greeting. This was followed by the body of the letter. Any one of these elements could be expanded as the author desired. Paul always expands these in some way. Two comments concerning the author are made.

The Divine Summons of the Author

The supernatural nature of Paul’s summons is expressed three ways. The first is by the word *called* found here and elsewhere. Paul did not volunteer his service; he was commissioned by God apart from his own choice. Second is by the historical event of Acts 9:1-4, 15-16. Paul was persecuting believers with no thought whatsoever that he would soon be the servant of Christ—God intervened on the Damascus road in the most dramatic way. Third is by the statement of Galatians 1:15 where he speaks of being set apart from his mother’s womb.

Specifically, Paul was called and set apart as an *apostle*. An apostle was a divinely chosen man selected to be the vehicle of divinely inspired truth. The words of the apostles became the foundational doctrine of the church and remain so today (Ephesians 2:19-20). An apostle needed two things: someone to represent and authorization to do so. The words of *Jesus Christ* point to the former; the words *by the will of God* point to the latter.

The Human Partner of the Author

The mention of Sosthenes in the greeting does not mean he is a co-author along with Paul. He is called a *brother*, not an *apostle*. When Paul begins to address the Corinthians in verse 4, he uses the pronoun *I*, not the pronoun *we*. Sosthenes is mentioned in connection with the Corinthian church in Acts 18.

The Recipients 1:2

Their Earthly Residence

The city of Corinth had a prime location that made it one of the cosmopolitan cities of the world. It was on a small neck of land that connected the East and the West. Ships would often unload their cargo on one side and relaunch it on the other. Today there is a deep canal that has been cut across the neck of land through which ships may pass.

The social conditions in Corinth could not have been worse from the Christian standpoint. It was no exaggeration to say that Corinth was the fountainhead of immorality in the Roman Empire. On a

high summit called Acrocorinthus stood the temple of Aphrodite. Oriental influence had permeated Greek religion, and sexual contact with the priestesses was considered a means of communication with the gods. The name of the city comes from a Greek verb that means *to be immoral*. It should be remembered that Romans 1:18-32 was written as Paul viewed Corinth.

Their Spiritual Position

The first thing Paul notes is that they are *in Christ Jesus*. This New Testament expression means *to be in union with Christ* and points to the essence of our salvation. As a result of this union, the Corinthians are said to be *sanctified*. The word means *to be set apart* and is the same root word as holy and saint. The last half of verse 2 shows us that sainthood is not limited to those addressed in this letter; it is for those who know the Lord everywhere. The material of I Corinthians is for believers of all ages everywhere and at all times.

The Greeting 1:3

Grace is the basic principle of life in the church age, and peace is the basic blessing of the church age. The order is important. Grace comes before peace; there is no peace with God until His grace salvation is known.

THE PREAMBLE OF HOPE 1:4-9

"I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

They Possessed God's Grace 1:4

When Paul speaks of his continual thanks for them, we could easily ask, "Paul, how could you?" It is not possible to find a more confused, irresponsible, carnal group of believers than those at Corinth. We are led to wonder what the basis of this thanks might be, for it certainly does not lie in their conduct. The answer is introduced by the word *for*, a Greek preposition meaning *upon* that is used to introduce the basis on which a thing rests. They had been recipients of God's grace, and for this reason Paul is thankful for them.

They Possessed God's Wealth 1:5-7

These verses make it clear that possession of spiritual gifts is not the same as spirituality. Corinth is the most gifted church in the New Testament and, at the same time, the most reprehensible in terms of conduct—the only church that is charged with mass carnality. Compare I Corinthians 1:7 with 3:1. They were fully gifted, but they were not spiritual.

They Possessed God's Guarantee 1:8-9

There is nothing in the conduct of the Corinthians to justify the statement made in these two verses. Assurance about the ultimate destiny of every believer rests in two things—the sovereign plan of God that we will be blameless in the day of Christ and the faithfulness of God. The believer's security lies, not in himself and his merits, but in God and His ever faithful character.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

In spite of the many manifestations of carnality in Corinth, Paul considered the good things first. We should always seek to commend before we condemn, an especially important principle in raising children as well as in dealing with fellow believers.

Paul speaks of the position the Corinthians have in Christ first because it is the highest motivation for good conduct. What we are in Christ should move us to align our thinking and our conduct with that position. We should learn to live in harmony with the position that is truly ours in the body of Christ.

I Corinthians 1:4-9 is a preamble of hope because our position in Christ and the faithfulness of God is the guarantee of our ultimate conformity to Christ.

The Problem of Dissension

or “Has Christ Been Divided?”

I Corinthians 1:10-4:21

THE PROBLEM STATED 1:10-12

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the some judgment. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ ”

THE CORRECTION NEEDED 1:10

The Appeal 1:10a

Paul frames his appeal as an exhortation. It is important to catch the flavor of the word *exhort*. The basic idea in the word is that of encouragement, not command. When writing to Philemon, Paul says he has the confidence to *order* him but instead *appeals* to him (Philemon 8-9). The word translated *appeal* is the same as *exhort* in I Corinthians 1:10. An exhortation is an encouragement to make a willing choice. God’s word is not meant to be a club to beat us into submission; it is rather meant to be a teacher that convinces us to make right choices based on the understanding of truth.

The Details 1:10b

The exhortation *that you all agree* is literally *that you all say the same thing*. The Corinthians needed to have harmony of viewpoint. Unity was to be achieved by doctrinal agreement, not doctrinal compromise.

From the negative standpoint, there are to *be no divisions among you*. The word *divisions* is *schisma* and refers to different or wrong opinion (John 7:40-43, 9:16, 10:19). The term *made complete* is used in medical literature for mending a broken limb. It was also used for the repair of fishing nets. Healing needs to take place in Corinth.

THE CARNALITY DEFINED 1:11-12

In General 1:11

The general problem is defined by the single word *quarrels*, which denotes bitter discussion and bitter words. It is specifically said to be a product of the sin nature in Galatians 5:20 and is translated *strife* in that verse. Its widespread existence in Corinth is beyond question because the words *have been informed* were used in the papyri for official evidence.

In Particular 1:12

The problem involved everyone in the church and centered about personalities. Peter and Paul did not differ doctrinally in any way; yet parties had been built around them in the Corinthian church. Note that no guilt is placed on those around whom these parties had been built. It is possible that the four parties are not literal groups. This may be the meaning of I Corinthians 4:6 where Paul says “I have figuratively applied (these things) to myself and Apollos for your sakes....”

Why would Paul select these four names, or why would Christians in Corinth have aligned themselves with these four? The answer lies in that each of the four would reflect a particular facet of the dissension problem. How would each one do so? Since Paul was the founder of the church, he would stand especially high in the eyes of some. In Acts 18:24 Apollos is described as *eloquent*, which would explain why a group might gather about him. Cephas (Peter) was Jewish, energetic, and always in the middle of things, which would explain his appeal. The Christ party would describe the exclusivists of the church—“We are above the rest; we serve only Christ!” The whole problem literally bristled with ego. Each of the four statements begins with the emphatic personal pronoun *I*. With I Corinthians 1:13 Paul begins to give us the solutions to these dissensions.

THE PROBLEM SOLVED 1:13-4:21

UNITY IS ACHIEVED BY CONSIDERING THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST 1:13-17

“Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵that no man should say you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.”

There Is Only One Christ

The word *divided* means to *distribute or portion out*. Jesus Christ is one person and is fully shared by all believers. There is no such thing as Christ for one group and Christ for another group. The question is stated in such a way as to expect a “no” answer—“Christ is not portioned out is He?” Dissension is not only sinful, it is absurd! One Christ argues unity among those who are truly His.

There Is Only One Cross

Only one person died a death that brings salvation to men. One single cross argues for unity and against dissension. Every believer has this in common: The salvation of each is totally dependent on the cross work of Jesus Christ.

There Is Only One Baptism

The word *in* found in the words *in the name of Paul* is literally *into* and therefore speaks of union and fellowship and allegiance. The mention of baptism leads Paul to make the comments of verses 14-17. He first comments on those he baptized; he then comments on the nature of his mission as an apostle. When Paul says he was not sent to baptize, he does not mean he did not baptize certain ones, as the immediate context makes clear; but rather, baptism was not his primary mission. Paul’s primary mission was to preach the gospel.

As Paul carried out the mission of preaching the gospel, he did so using a definite method. He did not present the gospel *in cleverness of speech*. The word *cleverness* is the Greek word *sophia*, which means *wisdom*. Wisdom was very important to the Greeks. It referred to any well conceived philosophy that gave explanation of God, man, and the universe. Paul did not cater to man’s desire for a philosophical system. Eloquent and powerful speech was also important to the Greeks. Great emphasis was placed on selling one’s message by all sorts of rhetorical devices. Paul set all of these aside and proclaimed the gospel in simple terms because to do otherwise is to destroy its inherent power. More of this appears in Chapter 2.

UNITY IS ACHIEVED BY CONSIDERING THE TRUE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL 1:18-25

“For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’ ²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²²For indeed Jews ask for signs, and

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

The Two Evaluations of the Cross 1:18

The phrase *word of the cross* is important. *Word* is *logos*, which means *message or doctrine*. The doctrine of the cross becomes the theme of I Corinthians from here to the end of Chapter 2. Think of it as the caption that stands over I Corinthians 1:18-2:16.

What is the doctrine of the cross? The doctrine of the cross is the teaching that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died a death wherein the guilt and penalty of man's sin was placed on Him, making it possible for salvation to be extended to those who believe in Christ.

The Evaluation of the Perishing 1:18a

The word *perishing* is a present tense participle. The present tense emphasizes that they will not merely perish in the future, but they are on the way to destruction now. They are named relative to their destiny just as the saved are designated as to their destiny.

The perishing view the cross as *foolishness*. The Greek word is *moria* and carries two ideas with it. First, it refers to anything that does not appear to fit the framework of human logic. Second, it refers to anything that is considered to be the product of a feeble mind.

The Evaluation of the Saved 1:18b

The saved view the cross from the standpoint of what it displays—the *power of God*. This is why the message does not need the adornment of human eloquence or the approval of human wisdom.

In the evaluation of the perishing, the gospel is measured by man's intellect and is rejected. Those who are saved measure it by its effectiveness and thus believe it. In the first, man is the measure; in the second, God is the measure.

The Two Evaluations Analyzed 1:19-25

The Evaluation of the Perishing Explained 1:19-22

HIS ATTITUDE IS PROPHESED BY SCRIPTURE 1:19 Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14. This passage in Isaiah deals with what may be called judicial blindness. It centers about the fact that there are consequences for coming into contact with truth and rejecting it. It was a judgment that was to come about through the preaching of the prophet (Isaiah 6:9-10). The more Isaiah spoke the truth, the less intelligible it became to those who heard it. Men are always free to refuse God's truth, but they are not free to do so without consequences.

Wisdom that does not seek God is turned into the highest sort of ignorance.

HIS ATTITUDE IS PROVED BY EXPERIENCE 1:20 The logic of this verse is as follows. If the doctrine of the cross is true, as it is, and human wisdom rejects it, as it does, what can we conclude about human wisdom? The answer is found in the last part of verse 20—God has made it foolish. The point is enforced by rhetorical questions. “Where is the wise man?” This would be a reference to the Greek philosopher. How many of them understood and believed the message of the cross? “Where is the scribe?” points to the Jewish thinker. The *debater of this age* combines the Jewish and Greek logicians (Acts 6:9, 17:18).

HIS ATTITUDE IS JUDGED BY GOD 1:21 God has judged human wisdom because of its failure to achieve the highest good—to know God. As a consequence, God saves men by a message that insults human wisdom and pride. It will hear nothing of man’s logic and will have nothing of his works.

HIS ATTITUDE IS MANIFESTED IN HIS PURSUITS 1:22 The Jews seek for signs, which refers to tangible evidence that satisfies the senses; the Greeks seek for wisdom, which refers to that which satisfies man’s intellect. Both of these demands are brazen in that they set up human criteria that God must meet! God responds by offering a salvation through one who died with criminals and presents Him as the only Savior.

The Evaluation of the Saved Explained 1:23-25

THE FEATURES OF THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS 1:23A First, it is a proclamation of fact, not a discussion of theory. The word translated *preach* means *to proclaim an objective message*. Second, its content concerns the person and work of Jesus Christ. The word *crucified* points to the completeness of His work in that it is a perfect tense verb. Perfect tense refers to past completed action. The word also points to the present effectiveness of His work in that the perfect tense is past completed action with abiding results.

THE RESPONSE TO THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS 1:23B-24 First, it is a *stumbling block* to some. The word refers to anything that offends. What is so offensive about the message of the cross? It is offensive because it shows the gravity of man’s sin. God had to “pull out all the stops” in order to save us—God gave His utmost for man’s salvation. Man’s problem is not minor; it is of gravest proportions. Another aspect of the offensiveness of the cross is it reveals man’s total inability to save himself and thus leaves no room for the pride of human accomplishment. Second, to others it is *foolish*, revealing the two enemies of the cross: religious pride and intellectual pride.

THE GREATNESS OF THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS 1:25 What does Paul mean by the *foolishness of God* and the *weakness of God*? This must be answered because in reality there is no foolishness or weakness in God. The solution lies in that each word is a neuter adjective preceded by a definite article. We could therefore translate “the foolish act of God (as man views it) and the weak act of God (as man views it).” Nothing of human accomplishment even begins to rival the power of the cross to save men.

UNITY IS ACHIEVED BY VIEWING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH 1:26-31

“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, ²⁹that no man should boast before God. ³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’ ”

How Can Viewing the Membership of the Corinthian Church Contribute to Unity?

Discord often finds its roots in someone thinking he is superior to others. These verses will remind the Corinthians that they are all “nothings,” and no one has any real basis for boasting. The church was not made up of the noble and the mighty but of the “unknowns” in Corinth.

Taking a Look at the Kinds of People Found in the Corinthian Church Directory

Those Who Did Not Make Up the Corinthian Church 1:26

THE EDUCATED CLASSES WERE IN THE MINORITY The words *not many* point to the scarcity of these kinds of people; it does not, however, exclude them. Acts 17:34 speaks of a believer named Dionysius who was an Areopagite, which referred to the most important governmental body in Athens. Its major function was the supervision of education. Romans 16:23 speaks of a believer named Erastus who was the city treasurer. Nonetheless, these were very much in the minority as far as the church was concerned. The words *according to* translate the Greek preposition *kata*, which is used to introduce a norm or a standard. According to human standards, the church did not have many people of reputation.

THE RULING CLASSES WERE IN THE MINORITY The word translated *mighty* is a term that was used for those in the ruling class.

THE ARISTOCRATIC CLASSES WERE IN THE MINORITY The word *noble* is a compound Greek word made up of *eu*, meaning *good or well*, and *genas*, meaning *born*. Literally, not many *well born* were in the church. As is known to one familiar with the teaching of Scripture, God is never impressed with human greatness. As a matter of fact, as seen in these verses, it could well be viewed as a spiritual disadvantage. This is all basic to God's manner of dealing with man on a grace basis without regard to man's merit or demerit.

Those Who Did Make Up the Corinthian Church 1:27-28

A THEME TO BE NOTED IN THE REST OF CHAPTER 1 Not only do we learn here who made up the church, but we are also told that it was the plan and purpose of God for things to be this way. This is seen in the purpose clauses found in these verses. Greek introduces purpose clauses with the word *hina*, and there are four of them in these closing verses of Chapter 1. Verse 27 has two of them translated *to shame*. Verse 28 has one translated *that*, and verse 31 begins with one that is also translated *that*.

THE THREE SETS OF "WHO'S" AND "WHY'S" Who has God chosen? He has chosen *the foolish things of the world*. Why has God done this? He has done this *to shame the wise*. This is our first purpose clause showing that this choosing is part of God's sovereign plan and purpose. Who else has God chosen? He has chosen *the weak things of the world*. The repeated expression *of the world* means they are weak as the world views them. Why has God done this? He has done this *to shame the things which are strong*. Again we have a pure purpose clause—it is the purpose of God for things to be this way. At this point we should begin to ask, Why is this God's purpose? We will get our answer twice before we end the chapter. Who are the concluding ones that God has called? He has chosen *the base things...and the despised*. The word *base* should be compared to the word *noble* in verse 26 because there is a play on words here. As we noted, *noble* is *eugenas*, meaning *high-born*; and *base* is *agenas*—*no-born*! With the words *the things that are not*, we have reached the bottom—the zeroes with the circle rubbed out.

Why Has God Chosen as He Has? 1:29-31

GOD'S PURPOSE STATED IN NEGATIVE TERMS 1:29 The reason is simple: God will not tolerate human boasting. For that reason, He chooses those who have nothing to boast about.

GOD'S PURPOSE STATED IN POSITIVE TERMS 1:30-31 God desires for man to find all of his worth in Christ. Verse 30 begins with an emphatic phrase translated *but by His doing*. The Greek text starts with a preposition meaning *out of as a source (ek)*, followed by the pronoun *Him*. The believer's dignity is not derived from his earthly position, whether it be his education, his wealth, or his lineage. The word *you* is also an emphatic personal pronoun and thus should be

stressed. Paul's point is that *you* (emphatic) as believers are different from all others. The items of our personal worth are *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. The crowning purpose of God is His own honor and glory, and believers are the vessels chosen to reflect it.

UNITY IS ACHIEVED BY CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF TRUE WISDOM 2:1-3:4

Powerful Preaching: Its Content and Method 2:1-5

"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ²For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

I Corinthians 1 and 2 stand together around the theme of the message of the cross. We noted that I Corinthians 1:18 contains the words that summarize the content of the first two chapters of the book. Their theme is "the word (message) of the cross." In approaching Chapter 2, then, the topic remains the same.

I Corinthians 1 and 2 stand in contrast as to how the message of the cross is viewed. In Chapter 1 Paul calls the doctrine of the cross by the name men give it, i.e., *foolishness* (1:18, 21, 23). In Chapter 2 this changes, for Paul now begins to call the doctrine of the cross by its true nature, i.e., *wisdom* (I Corinthians 2:6-7).

The Nature of Paul's Preaching 2:1-4

WHAT PAUL'S PREACHING WAS NOT It was not structured after human rhetoric (2:1). This is conveyed by the words *superiority of speech or of wisdom*. The first expression refers to rhetorical skill and has to do with his method of preaching. The second item refers to philosophical depth and pertains to the content of his preaching.

It was not encumbered (2:2). The single issue of his preaching was the person and the work of Christ. This was all part of a predetermined choice. Paul was highly educated and could easily have been eloquent and philosophical, but he chose not to and for good reasons. It was not persuasive (2:4). Paul presented truth in a simple way, and the Holy Spirit did the persuading. Paul's oratory and manner of delivery was not compelling in itself.

WHAT PAUL'S PREACHING WAS It was a declaration of fact (2:1). This is seen in the word *proclaiming*, which is used for the simple announcement of fact. It is in the present tense, showing that this was Paul's habitual practice. This is also conveyed by the word

testimony, which takes us into the court-room. It incorporates the statement of objective truth.

It centered in the person and work of Christ (2:2). This simple presentation was the result of a conscious decision that Paul made sometime prior to his arrival in Corinth. Just prior to this arrival, Paul had been in Athens and had preached his sermon on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:19-32). In this sermon Paul approaches the eloquence of the philosophers. Could it be that this caused Paul to say "never again" to that kind of preaching? The words *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified* tell several things. *Jesus* tells us He was a historical person; *Christ* tells us He was a prophesied person; *crucified* tells us He was a saving person. The word *crucified* is perfect tense, which points to the completeness of His work and its abiding results.

It was proclaimed against a background of personal weakness (2:3). When Paul describes himself as among them *in weakness*, he uses a word that is used to describe his own physical ailment (II Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 4:13) and to describe his physical unattractiveness (II Corinthians 10:10). When Paul speaks of his *fear and trembling*, he is not referring to shame over the message that he preached or to anxiety over his personal safety, but rather to the grave responsibility that is his in preaching the gospel.

It was proclaimed in dependence upon the Holy Spirit for results (2:4). Paul was the proclaimer; the Holy Spirit was the persuader. It was that straightforward and simple.

The Purpose of Paul's Preaching 2:5

The contrast involved here is not between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God, but rather between the wisdom of men and the power of God. The emphasis, therefore, is not on what they know, but rather on how firm and well-grounded their faith is. Only that which is divinely done is permanent.

True Wisdom: Its Content and Source 2:6-3:4

Where True Wisdom Is not Found 2:6-9

"Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹but just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.' "

TRUE WISDOM CANNOT BE DISCOVERED BY HUMAN REASON 2:6-8 To this point, Paul has made it clear that he renounces wisdom (2:1); but now he tells us he proclaims wisdom (2:6). There is no contradiction here when we realize that wisdom is of two kinds: divine and

human. Human wisdom is spoken of in verse 6, divine wisdom in verse 7. Human wisdom is viewed as to its temporal significance—*of this age*; its source—*rulers of this age*; and its destiny—*passing away*. Paul rejects this wisdom as temporal, human, and doomed.

God's wisdom stands in total contrast, indicated by the first word of verse 7 which is *but* and is an emphatic adversative. God's wisdom is not some kind of abstract thinking because Paul says he *speaks* it, which means God's wisdom comes to us through the vehicle of human language, an idea that is developed in verses 10-13. The divine source of these words is indicated by the word *God*, which is emphatic. The word *wisdom* has no article in Greek, which means the emphasis is on its nature, its essence, its character. God's wisdom is different in character than man's, but in what way is it different? The word revealed in verse 10 gives us our answer. God's wisdom is revealed in the words of Scripture. It is not the product of human thought or ingenuity.

Verses 7 and 8 tell us five things about God's wisdom. First, we are told the form of His wisdom by the words *a mystery*. The word *mystery* as used in the New Testament refers to previously unknown truth that is now known. Second, we are told of the concealment of God's wisdom in the word *hidden*. Verse 7 has told us from whom it was hidden—namely, the *rulers of this age*. Third, we learn of the eternity of God's wisdom, for it was *predestined before the ages*. Fourth, the words *for our glory* point to the intent of God's wisdom. Finally, verse 8 focuses on the opponents of God's wisdom. Those who crucified Christ would not have willingly submitted to the carrying out of God's plan of salvation through the cross of Christ.

TRUE WISDOM CANNOT BE DISCOVERED BY HUMAN RESEARCH 2:9 The eye, ear, and heart refer to organs of perception. Spiritual truth, the only true wisdom, has never entered the mind of man. This prepares us for the biblical doctrine of revelation found here in I Corinthians 2:10-13.

Where True Wisdom Is Found 2:10-13

"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."

THE SOURCE OF REVELATION 2:10A The doctrine of revelation is the "top-side-down" doctrine. It means the order is strictly God to us. Notice that the verb has no object (*them* is not in the original). This means that Paul is not emphasizing *what* God revealed but *that* God

revealed. The content of the revelation is not the point here; the focus is on the divine act of revelation.

THE AGENT OF REVELATION 2:10B-12 The agent of revelation is the Holy Spirit. His qualifications are expressed by the words *searches all things, even the depths of God*. The act of searching means to investigate something with a view to fathoming it. Since the Holy Spirit knows all things, His investigation is complete and successful.

How could we illustrate that only the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God? Verse 11 shows us. The word *man* occurs two times and has the definite article *the* with it in both cases. Stress is on the individual, specific, particular man. Paraphrased, we could say, "What person knows the thoughts of another particular man except that particular man?" If we cannot read the mind of another human being, how could we possibly expect to know the mind of God? The only one who knows God's mind is God; the Holy Spirit is God and therefore knows God's mind, which qualifies Him as the agent of revelation.

The Holy Spirit is not only the agent of revelation, but He is the one who illumines us to that revelation called "the things freely given to us by God (2:12)." The Holy Spirit illumines *to* what has been revealed, not *beyond* what has been revealed. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit wherein He enables us to understand the word of God in terms of submission and obedience.

THE PRODUCT OF REVELATION 2:13 The words *we speak* do two things. First, they confine revelation. The pronoun *we* does not refer to just anyone; it refers to Paul and other apostles. An apostle was a divinely chosen man called to be the instrument of God's revelation. Second, they define revelation. Revelation is couched in human language.

Three features of divine revelation are found here. First, God's revelation is not expressed in words chosen by man. This is made clear as we are told that what Paul spoke "was not in words taught by human wisdom." God did not reveal truth to Paul without supervising the words Paul used to express that truth. Second, God's revelation is expressed in words chosen by the Holy Spirit. Notice that the Holy Spirit gave words, not concepts. We call this *verbal* inspiration of Scripture. Third, the words of Scripture fit the truth revealed perfectly. The word translated *combining* means *to join something together in a perfect fit*. The truth God chose to reveal is expressed perfectly in the words of the Bible. This conviction is the basis for expository preaching, the only method that fully honors the inspiration of Scripture. It is only in the word of God that wisdom and words find perfect union with one another.

Man's Response to God's Wisdom 2:14-3:4

THE RESPONSE OF THE PERISHING 2:14

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

Who is the *natural man*? The word *natural* always denotes the life of the natural world in contrast to the supernatural world (James 3:15). It refers to anything that is at home with Satan and his world system. It also refers to one who lives solely on the material plane—to one who is untouched by the Spirit of God (Jude 19). The absence of the Holy Spirit is prima-facie evidence that the natural man is an unbeliever for "...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9)."

What are the deficiencies of the natural man? In the first place, he is one who "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God." The word *accept* means *to welcome something or someone; to take something willingly*. He may understand what is said, but he does not appreciate what is said. But his condition is more serious than this: He does not welcome spiritual things because he cannot welcome spiritual things. The reason for his inability is the absence of the Holy Spirit. The word translated *appraised* was used of investigating evidence in a judicial proceeding and arriving at a conclusion. With the Holy Spirit absent, one does not have the ability to investigate and conclude correctly in the spiritual realm.

THE RESPONSE OF THE SAVED 2:15-3:4

"But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. ¹⁶For who has known the mind of the LORD, that he should instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. ^{3:1}And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men?"

First, the Spiritual Believer 2:15-16

Who is the spiritual? He is the man who is indwelt and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Indwelling alone does not make a spiritual Christian. The Corinthians were indwelt (3:16), but they were not spiritual (3:1). The Greek word for *spiritual* ends in an *ikos* suffix, which refers to the character of something. The Holy Spirit characterizes the spiritual believer. In contrast to the unbeliever he is able to come to correct conclusions in the spiritual realm.

In verse 16 we have a syllogism. Major premise: No one can instruct God. Minor premise: We have God's mind. Conclusion: None can instruct us. This is not arrogance; this is spiritual logic. It

is by God's grace that we possess God's word. True wisdom is God's wisdom; God's wisdom is revealed in the word of God; how can those who reject that word instruct those who possess it?

Second, the Fleshly Believer 3:1-4

Who is the fleshly believer? First, he is described in terms of his limitations. He has limited capacity to take in God's wisdom as contained in the word of God. He can only take milk, not solid food. But what is the difference between milk and meat? In one sense, all of God's word is milk (I Peter 2:2). It appears that Paul's figure focuses on effort expended to consume. Twenty minutes with a T-bone steak is reasonable; the same time with a glass of milk is not. The fleshly believer does not expend time and effort to ingest God's word.

Milk and solid food may also be viewed another way. Milk could be fundamental understanding of truth, and solid food could be appreciation of foundational truth in terms of seeing its full implications. All truth has implications; the spiritual believer sees those implications on a higher level than the fleshly believer. Solid food then is not superior truth; it is basic truth seen in its fuller implications.

Second, he is viewed in terms of his manifestations. These are stated in general in verse 3 and in particular in verse 4. Jealousy and strife are specifically called the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). The pronoun *I* in verse 4 is emphatic in each case, showing it was said with great pride and emphasis.

UNITY IS ACHIEVED BY CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE 3:5-4:21

The Worker Is Only a Servant in the Hands of God 3:5-9

"What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building."

The Focal Point of the Question Is the Word "What"

The word is a neuter indefinite pronoun. It means we are to focus on the position held, not the man who holds it. Some older translations obscure this fact by translating *who*.

The Place of Paul and Apollos in Relationship to the Corinthians

EACH IS A SERVANT WHO IS AN INSTRUMENT 3:5A They were God's instruments to bring the Corinthians to faith. The believing

referred to here is not only initial faith in the gospel, but faith that brought about growth in the Christian life. Paul was primarily responsible for the former; Apollos for the latter. What does this fact have to do with the dissension in the church? It is when the instrument is idolized that the church is fragmented. Paul and Apollos did not compete with one another, they complemented one another.

EACH IS A SERVANT WHO IS ASSIGNED A POSITION 3:5B The word *opportunity* is not part of the original text but is supplied by the translators. The last half of verse 5 reads literally, “even as the Lord gave to each one.” What the Lord gave is left to the reader to supply. This means Paul believed there was sufficient context to know what to supply. Verses 6 and 7 tell what God gave to Paul and Apollos. God gave them results in the ministry—He caused the seed sown to grow. God assigned a position to Paul, and He assigned a position to Apollos and gave each one results as it pleased Him.

A Principle Stated 3:6

This verse states a simple fact: Results are entirely God’s work. First, we have the human part of service—Paul had *planted* and Apollos had *watered*. Paul was the first to proclaim the gospel in Corinth making him the planter. The historical account of this is found in Acts 18:1-11. Apollos nurtured what Paul had planted. The historical account of the work of Apollos is found in Acts 18:27-28, 19:1. The work of each man was distinct but at the same time inseparable from the other.

Second, we have the divine part of service—God was giving the increase. There are three verbs in verse 6. The first two, *planted* and *watered*, are aorist tense, pointing to a task completed and no longer in progress. The third verb, *was causing the increase*, is an imperfect tense, which points to continuous results in time past. This means that the planting and watering came to an end, but the giving of increase was continuous. Paul planted the word and went his way, but the results continued to come in after he planted.

Some Conclusions Made 3:7-9

THE WORKER IS NOTHING 3:7A First, this is true in the sense that all of God’s servants eventually die. God’s servants will be buried, but His work will go on. Second, this is true in the sense that God’s servants cannot produce spiritual results.

GOD IS EVERYTHING 3:7B God gave the seed and also produced the results; the worker only put the seed in the ground. The Greek text is dramatic. Literally, we have “but the giver of the increase—God!” Paul and Apollos are one in their nothingness, one in their message, one in their place as servants, and one in the aim. Rivalry is absurd.

EACH WILL BE REWARDED ON THE BASIS OF INDIVIDUAL EFFORT 3:8-9 Paul makes this point to hedge off a possible false conclusion that since all are one and since God gives the increase, quality of service makes no difference. This sets the stage for the teaching of verses 10-17. In approaching these verses, Paul restates the metaphors that he is using. The statement that believers are God's field fits verses 5-9; the statement that believers are God's building fits verses 10-17.

All Service Will Be Rewarded in Accordance with Its Quality 3:10-17

The Foundation of the Church at Corinth 3:10-11

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

THE PERSON WHO LAID THE FOUNDATION The word *master builder* is the Greek word *architecton*, our word *architect*. What makes a good architect in the spiritual realm? The answer was provided I Corinthians 2:1-2.

THE PERSON WHO COMPLETES THE FOUNDATION The word *another* points to Apollos and all other teachers who followed Paul. The word *how* introduces the idea of quality.

THE PERSON WHO COMPRISES THE FOUNDATION The words *other than* are important. They translate a single Greek preposition *para*, which conveys two ideas. First, it carries the idea of substitution. Second, it carries the idea of addition. There is no substitute for the person of Christ, and there is to be no addition to the person of Christ.

The Superstructure of the Church at Corinth 3:12-17

"Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. ¹⁶Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

THE PROCESS OF BUILDING The keynote in this process is quality. The issue Paul is developing is that of *quality* of teaching, not *difference* of teaching. The same truth may be taught well or it may be taught poorly.

THE QUALITY OF MATERIALS 3:12 First, the six materials fall into two categories of three each. What is the basic difference between the two categories? One might answer that value is the difference. While this is true, verse 15 dictates that the distinction is between consumable materials and non-consumable materials. One stands the fire test; the other does not.

Second, the types of materials were consistent with the times in which Paul lived. His imagery could have been taken from the temple at Jerusalem or the buildings of Athens where there was much gold, silver, and precious stone. It is also true that the ordinary houses were made of wood with hay and straw for walls and roofs.

THE TESTING OF MATERIALS 3:13 First, we are told of the time and the event that will reveal the quality of service to the Lord. Quality is not revealed now but at the return of Christ. Paul will apply this idea in Chapter 4 where he warns of judging and evaluation before the return of Christ. Second, this verse teaches us that we should build with the return of Christ constantly in mind. Third, this verse teaches us to take present human evaluation lightly. This is another idea that Paul will develop in 4:3-4.

THE RESULTS OF BUILDING 3:14-15 There is to be reward for what remains. Notice that we are not told what the reward will be. The reward is apparently found in the reality that one's work lasts. Permanent results of one's efforts are certainly adequate reward for those whose desire is the honor of the Lord.

There is to be loss for what remains. Once again, we are not told what the loss is to be. We are, however, told what the loss will not be—it will not be loss of salvation. Perhaps the loss is in the effort that was expended to no eternal purpose.

THE WARNING ABOUT THE BUILDING 3:16-17 First, the temple referred to here is not the individual believer but the whole church. The pronoun *you* occurs three times and is plural each time. They all go together to form a single temple. Paul does not say "You (singular) are temples (plural)"; he says, "You (plural) are a temple (singular)." The temple was the local church at Corinth. How were they destroying that temple? They were destroying it by their dissension (I Corinthians 1:10-12).

Second, since the temple is God's residence, attack on it is attack on God. God takes offense at those who do this and "will destroy him (them)...."

The Worker Must be Assessed by God's Standards, not Man's 3:18-23

The Problem of Self-deception 3:18

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise."

THE REALITY OF SELF-DECEPTION 3:18A Deception is the creation of a belief in one's own mind or the mind of another that is contrary to fact. It is possible to deceive oneself by practicing mental dishonesty and fantasy. Spiritual fantasy is the activity of the sin nature that allows us to practice in the mind that which we fear to practice in reality. All men are deceived to the extent that their mind is devoid of the word of God.

THE EVIDENCE OF SELF-DECEPTION 3:18B The key here lies in the words *among you* and *in this age*. The Corinthians were deceived in that they did not see the absolute difference between the church and the world. In particular, they were so in love with human wisdom that they did not see that it stands in total antithesis to God's wisdom.

THE REMEDY FOR SELF-DECEPTION 3:18C The way up is down. The believer must let loose of human wisdom and embrace God's wisdom. This world does not embrace God's wisdom and views those as fools who do. The believer must be willing to bear this onus if he is to be freed by the truth.

The Problem of Human Wisdom 3:19-20

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness';²⁰ and again, 'The LORD knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.' "

- The wise are already engaged in carrying out their plans when God interferes (3:19).
- God knows the plans of the wise will come to nothing before they start to execute them 3:20

The Application of this Truth 3:21-23

"So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,²³ and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."

The first application is this: We should not glory in man. Man is not the source of true wisdom, and to treat him as such is to detract from the glory of God. The second application is this: We should glory in our spiritual possessions. God gives teachers such as Paul and Apollos and Cephas; all things are ours in Christ, and here is where our delight should be.

The Basic Issue in Service Is Faithfulness 4:1-5

"Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.² In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.³ But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.⁴ I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not

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

The Place of the Servant 4:1

HE IS A "SERVANT OF CHRIST" The word translated *servant* here is different from the same English word in 3:5. It is a word that referred to the one who rowed in the lower level of a trireme. It is used of the most lowly and humble servant.

HE IS A "STEWARD OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD" The word *steward* means *household manager*. It shows the relationship of Paul to those whom he teaches.

The Requirement of a Servant 4:2

FAITHFULNESS CARRIES THE IDEA OF CORRECTNESS One is faithful only if he does something as he is told to do it.

FAITHFULNESS CARRIES THE IDEA OF PERSISTENCE Faithfulness knows no quitting.

FAITHFULNESS CARRIES THE IDEA OF SELFLESSNESS A servant concerns himself with his duty to another; his own interests are secondary.

The Evaluation of a Servant 4:3-4

THREE WHO ARE UNQUALIFIED TO EVALUATE

First, fellow believers are not qualified to evaluate. Whether or not Paul is exonerated or condemned by the Corinthians is inconsequential to him. This does not mean he is arrogant or irresponsible. It means human judgment is just that—human judgment.

Second, unbelievers are not qualified to evaluate. This is expressed in the reference to any human court.

Third, Paul himself is not qualified to evaluate. Paul says his conscience is clear, but this is not sufficient because conscience is not the final judge. Our judgment of ourselves is still human judgment.

ONE WHO IS QUALIFIED TO EVALUATE

Final judgment can take place only before the Lord. The necessary quality for judgment and evaluation is knowledge of all of the facts. Therefore, only the Lord qualifies.

The Obligation to the Servant 4:5

First, there must be a proper time, 4:5a.

Second, there must be a proper judge, 4:5b.

Third, there must be a proper knowledge, 4:5.

Pride Has No Place in Service to the Lord 4:6-8

“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. ⁷For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? ⁸You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.”

The Method of Paul’s Teaching 4:6a

The words *these things* point back to the content of 4:1-5. The essence of these verses lies in the command not to judge before the time.

The words *figuratively applied* mean to give to something the form or shape of something else. The persons who had received another form are Paul and Apollos. The meaning, then, is that Paul had used himself and Apollos for examples, making them representative of others. Verses 1-5 teach how the Corinthians are to treat all believers, not just Paul and Apollos.

The Standard of Paul’s Teaching 4:6b

When told they *are not to exceed what is written*, Paul is saying their attitudes are to be determined and bounded by the word of God. The words *what is written* are found so far in I Corinthians 1:19, 31; 3:19-20.

The Intent of Paul’s Teaching 4:6c

Notice that the key to dealing with arrogance is alignment of the mind with the word of God.

The Argument of Paul’s Teaching 4:7

To the question “Who regards you as superior?” the answer should obviously be, “No one.” What, however, if someone answers that they are superior? If so, the next question will settle the issue. “What do you have that you did not receive?” This notes that even if one has a gift that elevates them above others, that gift is not innate but rather supplied by God’s grace.

The Rebuke of Paul's Teaching 4:8

This verse gives helpful insight into carnality. Carnality is a state wherein one thinks he has arrived spiritually. It is this attitude that Paul ridicules here.

The verb *filled* means *to be satiated, to be gorged*. The perfect tense points to a settled state. If they are gorged, how can they be fed? Further, since they see themselves as already rich, who can give them anything? If they have already become kings, who can challenge them to gain a crown?

A Worker Must Realize that Suffering Will be Involved in His Ministry 4:9-21***The Apostolic Example 4:9-13*****THE APOSTLES WERE DISPLAYED 4:9**

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

With verse 9 the tone of Paul's letter changes. To this point he has argued that discord reveals an incorrect view of Christ, the gospel, true wisdom, and the place of man in God's service. Paul now begins a personal appeal for unity.

That the apostles were *last of all* fits in well with the fact that in Roman processions, criminals who were condemned to death were at the end of the procession. Notice, however, in noting their pitiful condition that Paul has not lost sight of God's sovereignty, for God is the subject of the verb *exhibited*.

The words *condemned to death* translate a single Greek word used only here in the New Testament. In the Septuagint it was used of conspirators who were thrown, two at a time, to the lions. It was also used of criminals who were hurled to their death from the Capitoline Hill in Rome. The word *spectacle* is *theatron*, our word for *theater*. It must be remembered that in the times of the Greeks and the Romans, it was considered a delight to observe the suffering of slaves, criminals, and conquered people. To them it was a delightful sport.

The mention of angels reminds us of two things. First, unless stated otherwise, references to angels are to good ones. Second, angels observe the activities of believers (I Corinthians 11:10; Hebrews 1:14, 13:2).

THE APOSTLES WERE DESPISED 4:10-13

"We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. ¹¹To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹²and we toil

working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.”

Notice that these verses revolve about a “we-you” contrast and describe two sets of attitudes. First, the world sees the apostles as *fools, weak, and without honor*. Second, the Corinthians viewed themselves as *prudent, strong, and distinguished*. Both sets of attitudes or opinions are incorrect.

Paul now enumerates the items of the apostle’s suffering. First, items showing their poverty (4:11a)—food, drink, and clothing are basic needs of life. Second, items showing their physical abuse (4:11b). Third, items showing their personal abuse (4:12-13). These two verses are an excellent example of Christian reaction to abuse. Making a divine viewpoint adjustment to mistreatment is evidence of great maturity.

The Apostolic Authority 4:14-21

THE INTENT OF FATHERLY INSTRUCTION 4:14

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

First, the intent is stated negatively. What Paul has written so far would certainly make the Corinthians hang their heads in shame. How could one read the words of verses 9-13 and not feel shame? What does Paul mean when he says he does not wish to shame them? The answer lies in observing that Paul’s ultimate aim is good.

Second, the intent is stated positively. The word *admonish* is a compound Greek word made up of a verb meaning *to put or place* and a noun meaning *mind*. Literally, it means *to place in the mind*. It always denotes instruction and is repeatedly used in a father-child context. Shame is not Paul’s aim; instruction and soundness of mind is his aim. It is important to remember that it is possible to shame believers without healing believers. Preaching is not intended to create a guilt complex among believers; preaching is intended to edify and build up believers.

THE BASIS OF FATHERLY INSTRUCTION 4:15

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

The reminder that they have only one father is explained by the words *in Christ Jesus*. Paul was their father in the sense that he proclaimed the gospel through which they believed. The spiritual sperm was the gospel, indicating that it is a life creating message.

THE MODEL OF FATHERLY INSTRUCTION 4:16-17

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

First, we have its pattern. The word translated *imitators* is the Greek word *mimatai*, our English word *mimic*. There are four entities of which this word is used in the New Testament. We are to imitate Paul (I Corinthians 4:17); we are to imitate other churches in their faith (I Thessalonians 2:13-14); we are to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1); and finally, we are to imitate stable believers (Hebrews 6:12).

Second, we have its implementation. Here we have another manifestation of carnality. Carnality has a poor memory when it comes to spiritual realities. Timothy is going to remind them of those realities. In the mention of other churches, Paul is reminding them that he is not asking for something unusual but something that should be a normal part of every church.

THE VISIT OF FATHERLY INSTRUCTION 4:18-21

“Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. ²¹What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”

Paul declares that he will give arrogant words no attention because they contain no power. Paul’s teaching now concludes by leaving the Corinthians with a choice to make. He leaves them with the option to go either way—they know his desire; they know his preference; but the choice is theirs, and that is where Paul concludes the issue. This is wise exhortation for there is no real growth until each of us personally, volitionally, and individually responds to the word of God. The mention of the rod introduces the subject of discipline which becomes the theme of I Corinthians 5.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

Since the gospel displays the power of God, our method of proclaiming it should be that of presentation, not argumentation. The gospel has its own inherent power and needs no embellishments or enhancements. Why should we argue that the sword is sharp when its sharpness can be displayed by simple use?

Since the word of God is the revelation of the wisdom of God, which is found nowhere else, the study and assimilation of Scripture should be our number one priority, both personally and in the pulpit.

Unlike any other book, we must sustain a right relationship to the author of Scripture, God the Holy Spirit. The Corinthians were not able to take in the word of God because they were fleshly and thus improperly adjusted to the Spirit of God. Self-examination should always precede Bible study. Bible study should be done in a prayerful and dependent and believing attitude.

NOTES

NOTES

The Problem of Immorality

or “*The Corinthian Indifference*”

I Corinthians 5:1-13

THE CASE INVOLVED 5:1

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife.”

THE CASE WAS FLAGRANT

As Indicated by the Word “actually”

| The Greek word means *most assuredly*, or *incontrovertibly*.

As Indicated by the Word “reported”

| This translates the word *akouo*, which means *to hear*. It is found in the present tense, meaning this is heard all the time—it is common talk and common knowledge; this is not gossip.

THE CASE WAS INTERNAL

| This is indicated by the words *among you*. This case of immorality was going on within the local assembly at Corinth. That immorality was part of life in the city of Corinth was undisputable; for it to exist in the church should be unthinkable.

THE CASE WAS INCESTUOUS

Its Uniqueness

| The uniqueness of this immorality may be seen by noting that it was not even tolerated among unbelievers. Fornication was not disapproved of by Roman society at that time, but to live with one’s step-mother was considered to be outrageous. The woman is not designated as the offender’s mother but rather as his *father’s wife*. For this reason, she should be understood to be his step-mother.

Its Nature

The words *to have* indicate the relationship was not casual but permanent. The relationship was not legal because the practice was forbidden by Roman law. A quote from Cicero referring to a similar situation to that in Corinth says: “O incredible crime for a woman, and such as has never been heard of in the world in any other than her solitary case!” Cicero had never been to church in Corinth!

This type of thing was a capital offense under Greek, Roman, and Hebrew law. Genesis 35:22, 49:4, and I Chronicles 5:1 all show the seriousness of the matter.

THE INDIFFERENCE REBUKED 5:2

“And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst.”

THE ATTITUDE EXHIBITED: ARROGANCE RESULTING IN INACTION 5:2A

The Meaning of Their Arrogance

When Paul says they are arrogant, he does not mean that the Corinthians were proud of the sin; he means they were proud in the presence of the sin.

The Absurdity of Their Arrogance

Of all churches who might boast, the Corinthian church has the least grounds. This is highlighted by the emphatic pronoun *you* — “and you, of all people, are proud!” This reveals an interesting characteristic of pride—ability to maintain itself without grounds. Pride defies all logic, making it a unique sin.

THE ATTITUDE EXPECTED: MOURNING RESULTING IN ACTION 5:2B

Had the right attitude existed toward sin, God would probably have removed the offender without a need for action on the part of the church. This is implied by the word *that*, which seems to point to result rather than purpose. Notice also that the verb *might be removed* is passive voice, implying that the action would have been taken by someone other than the church. Paul does not say “that you might remove him from your midst,” though this action is required in the following verses. Had their attitude been right, God would have dealt with the offender. The word *done* is not the ordinary word for doing but is the word *prasso*, which frequently refers to a practice arising from a belief. The man referred to in this chapter had a perverted moral view that manifested itself in his conduct.

THE ACTION NEEDED 5:3-5

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

THE WARRANT FOR THE ACTION 5:3-4

Rising from Paul’s Judgment 5:3

The Contrast of the Corinthian Attitude and the Pauline Attitude

The contrast is seen by noting that verse 2 began with the emphatic pronoun *you*, whereas verse 3 begins with the emphatic pronoun *I*. Paul is saying, “My convictions on this matter are far different than yours.”

The Contrast of the Corinthian Action and the Pauline Action

Paul, who is absent from Corinth, has done something; the Corinthians, who we present, have done nothing. The firmness of Paul’s decision is expressed by the verb *judged*, which is a perfect tense verb. When Paul heard of the problem, he made a decision; and that decision still stands at the time of writing. The word *already* has a cutting force—it underscores the spiritual apathy of the Corinthian church. Paul is saying, “My response was immediate; yours is sinfully delayed.”

Rising from Christ’s Name 5:4

This Is to be Representative Action

Taking this action *in the name of our Lord Jesus* means the church is to act on behalf of Him and for His honor and glory. His honor is involved because He is the head of the church.

This Is to be Corporate Action

The action is to take place *when you are assembled*. This is probably a reference to the regular meeting of the church, not a special meeting called for this particular event, though the latter is possible. This does show us that the church met regularly, and it also shows that the church adopted a common course of action based on apostolic instruction.

This Is to be Effective Action

The action is to be taken *with the power of our Lord Jesus*, which carries two ideas. First, it emphasizes effectiveness and successful accomplishment. Second, the word *with* denotes more than presence; it denotes cooperation in action.

THE NATURE OF THE ACTION 5:5A

The Action to be Taken

There are four statements in Chapter 5 concerning action to be taken. The first is in verse 2 where the offender is to be *removed from your midst*. The second is in verses 3-5, which refer to the delivery to Satan. The third is in verse 11 where they are not to *associate* and *not even to eat with such a one*. The fourth statement is in verse 13 where they are told to *remove the wicked man from among your selves*.

Four Courses of Action or One?

This is the critical question. Is each action separate and distinct, or do they speak of a single action described four different ways? If the latter is intended, then each of the four statements interpret one another. This appears to be Paul's intent.

Paul's statement would then run like this: "You are to discipline this man; that is remove him (5:2), that is deliver him to Satan (5:5), that is do not associate with or eat with him (5:11), that is remove him (5:13)."

THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTION 5:5B

The Immediate Purpose

The *destruction of the flesh* could very well refer to physical death. We will learn later that this was, as a matter of fact, already happening in the Corinthian church (11:30). Ananias and Sapphira serve as examples of this type of discipline (Acts 5).

The Ultimate Purpose

The word *saved* sometimes means physical salvation, sometimes spiritual salvation. Its basic meaning is *well-being or health*. The whole aim of the discipline is the ultimate well-being of the offender. Restoration is always the aim of discipline.

THE DANGER DESCRIBED 5:6-8

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

THE ILLUSTRATION 5:6

Leaven always refers to evil in the Bible. It pictures evil that tends to permeate and eventually dominate. Leaven here seems to refer

to the immorality of the man and also the arrogance of the church. Paul is dealing with the moral sin of the man and the mental sin of the church.

THE IMPLICATION 5:7

Key Idea: The Lamb has already been slain, and there is still leaven in the house!

This can be understood only in the light of Old Testament Passover procedures. On Nisan 10 each household selected a lamb to be offered (Exodus 12:3). On Nisan 14 the Passover lamb was to be slain (Exodus 12:6). The slaying of the lamb initiated the seven day period of the eating of unleavened bread (Exodus 12:18-20). When the lamb was slain, the leaven went out of the household.

Application of the Key Idea to I Corinthians 5:7-8

The reason for the removal of the leaven of sin is two-fold. First, they are already *unleavened*, which would be a reference to their position in Christ. Second, Christ, our lamb, has been slain (emphasis on this being in the past); and the Corinthian church is still full of leaven. This is shocking and calls for immediate action for the action is late at best.

THE CELEBRATION 5:8

The words *Let us therefore celebrate the feast* are present tense, pointing to continuous activity. The Passover was celebrated yearly, but the celebration of its significance is the continual duty of the church. Leaven, therefore, is never appropriate. The command is much like saying, "Let us live our Christian lives."

Paul has expanded the idea of dealing with sin. In verse 1 he spoke of immorality, then added the sin of pride in verse 2; now, in conclusion, he speaks of *malice and wickedness*. The Corinthians are to deal with the sin of the man, and they are also to deal with their own sin. It would have been hypocrisy for them to deal with the man and then fail to deal with themselves.

THE DISCRETION REQUIRED 5:9-13

THE CORRESPONDENCE 5:9

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

Paul and the Corinthians Had Carried on Extensive Correspondence

| They had written a letter to Paul (5:1), and I Corinthians was his response. There had been a communication from the household of Chloe (1:11). There had also been another letter from Paul to the

church referred to in 5:9. Perhaps there had been more we do not know. Out of this body of material, the Holy Spirit selected two to be included in the canon of Scripture, I and II Corinthians.

Association with Immoral People

The word translated *associate* is a triple compound word made up of the following: the preposition *sun*, which means *to associate, fellowship*; the preposition *ana*, which indicates repetition; the verb *meignumi*, which means *to mix*. Summed up, the Corinthians were not to mix intimately and frequently with immoral people.

THE CORRECTION 5:10-11

“I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one.”

The Wrong Application 5:10

Paul’s Prohibition Circumscribed

The words *not at all* serve to circumscribe Paul’s prohibition. Separation with regard to the world is different than separation with regard to professed Christians.

The *swindlers* are those who are not content with honest profit. The word *covetous* views an unbeliever in relationship to himself in terms of his desires; *swindlers* relates him to others in terms of his integrity; and *idolaters* relates him to God in terms of his worship.

The Absurdity of Separation as Viewed by the Corinthians

To maintain separation from all these types of people would require moving off the planet Earth. An important principle should be observed here. Proper application of God’s word never involves an absurdity. Church history is replete with examples of the Corinthian kind of misuse of Scripture.

The Right Application 5:11

Paul does not assert that the profession to be a brother is false; it appears that he assumes it to be genuine. This is true because he requires separation from him, which he does not require from unbelievers. This distinction will be developed in verses 12-13. Separation from a professed brother must be within the bounds of one considered to be a member of God’s family (II Thessalonians 3:14-15).

The professing believer is described by a set of six nouns. They do not merely describe an activity, but a fixed disposition. God does not judge by incidents but by totality of one's character.

THE DISTINCTION 5:12-13

"For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."

The Church's Jurisdiction Described 5:12

The jurisdiction of Christian judgment extends as far as the profession of faith and no further. The judgment spoken of in verse 12 is limited by the instruction of verse 11. Judgment of motives and areas where we do not have complete and accurate information is to be left to the Lord (4:5). It is not within our domain to impose Christian standards upon non-Christians.

The Unbeliever's Judgment Asserted 5:13

This final verse of Chapter 5 performs two tasks. First, although neither Paul nor the church is to judge those without, they do not escape judgment. Second, it is the duty of the church to put the wicked man out of its midst.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

Our major concern should always be the purity of the church, not the purity of society (5:12-13). This is not to say that we should be indifferent to evils in society, but our personal and individual righteousness is to be our primary concern.

We should be aware that the attitudes of the world are easily absorbed into the thinking of the church (5:1). This is true, even when we are not conscious of the fact. Our only protection is day-by-day intake of the word of God.

NOTES

Legality and Liberty

or “Petty Problems and Personal Freedom”

I Corinthians 6:1-20

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN HANDLING LEGAL ISSUES 6:1-11

THE CONTEXT OF I CORINTHIANS 6:1-11

The Jurisdiction of the Church—I Corinthians 5

I Corinthians 5 teaches that the church is not to extend its jurisdiction into the world. Believers are to judge matters within the church, not the world. Paul was concerned with the purity of the church, not the purity of Roman society. His aim was the personal salvation of men, not the corporate salvation of Rome. It is important to note that Paul did not attack any of the social ills of the society in which he lived. This does not mean he approved of them; but it does mean that his ministry had a higher goal—the goal of bringing men into the likeness of Christ. Our major concern is to be the purity of the church as stated in I Corinthians 5:12-13.

The Jurisdiction of the World—I Corinthians 6

I Corinthians 6 teaches that the church is not to call upon the world to extend its jurisdiction into the church. Paul makes this point saying, “How dare you go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?” These thoughts join Chapter 5 and 6 together, and it is here that Chapter 6 begins.

The Lawsuits of I Corinthians 6:1-11 Are Manifestations of Carnality

Paul’s major emphasis in these eleven verses will be upon the carnal deficiencies that find expression in the lawsuits spoken of. These deficiencies are the basis of the outline of the content of the verses.

THE CONTENT OF I CORINTHIANS 6:1-11

The Corinthian Lawsuits Revealed Insolence 6:1

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

The assumption that lies behind these verses is that the problems between believers should be solved; the issue is by whom? In 5:12-13 Paul has said it is no business of ours to judge the unbeliever; why then, should we ask them to judge us?

The word translated *case* has no technical meaning at all—literally it means *thing*. Verse 7 would imply that the cases had something to do with some violation of personal rights. The word *defrauded* would imply that these were property rights. The words *go to law* translate a word that means *to judge*, which we have seen translated that way in 5:3, 12-13, and 6:1. It refers to going to unbelievers for a judgment or opinion.

The two options for settling a dispute are to go before *saints* or *the unrighteous*. These terms describe the standing that each has before God in terms of personal salvation. Paul does not mean that Roman courts were unrighteous in terms of seeking justice. Paul utilized the Roman courts on occasion and holds them in high esteem.

The Corinthian Lawsuits Betrayed Doctrinal Ignorance 6:2-4

“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? ⁴If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?”

The Structure of These Verses

These verses contain a series of five questions. Each one implies that they should know the answer. Keeping in mind that the conditions described in these verses are the fruit of carnality, it is interesting to note that carnality obscures one's ability to see the relationship of doctrine and conduct. Therefore, they wanted someone to solve their problems who had no orientation to the word of God at all, namely a Roman judge. In verse 5, Paul says he speaks these things to their shame, which shows that their ignorance was culpable.

The Doctrines the Corinthians Were Ignoring

THE DOCTRINE THAT SAINTS WILL JUDGE THE WORLD This teaching anticipates the future; it is prophetic in nature. This argues that the study of prophecy is practical for present application. This truth was prophesied in Daniel 7:22 and is fulfilled in Revelation 2:26-27.

The logic that Paul expects the Corinthians to use is this: If we will judge the world in the future, it follows that we should be able to handle our disputes now.

THE DOCTRINE THAT SAINTS WILL JUDGE ANGELS The force of Paul's argument hinges on two facts about angels. First, angels are the highest order of beings under God. Second, angels are supernatural beings. In spite of this, saints have a position, an honor, higher than angels—we will judge them.

A Roman judge presides over a minor court compared to the jurisdiction that saints enjoy. Having this higher position makes it illogical to turn to a judge of a smaller court.

The Corinthian Lawsuits Betrayed Spiritual Immaturity 6:5-6

"I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 'but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?"

Evidence of the Immaturity

The shame of which Paul speaks refers not only to what he has just said but perhaps even more to what he is about to say in verses 5 and 6. Verse 1 spoke of going before saints; but as it appears, there is not even one in the Corinthian church who is able to give a sound judgment. Absence of such people thrusts the church upon the world.

When May a Believer Legitimately Become Involved in Civil Court?

The following points represent my own opinion and, therefore, should have no more force than just that—human opinion. Four conditions seem to make appearance in civil courts legitimate and, at times, even necessary.

WE ALL HAVE CIVIL OBLIGATIONS If required to answer a charge or to testify, a Christian must respond. A Christian lives under the law of the land just as much as others.

WE MAY NEED CLARIFICATION OF AGREEMENTS Insurance claims, contractual stipulations, real estate transactions, and such may require legal interpretation that can only be provided by a court.

WE MAY NEED ACTION IN A CRIMINAL MATTER A believer should have no hesitation to sign a complaint against one who has broken the law. In fact, failure to do so would be to condone lawlessness.

WE MAY NEED TO GO TO COURT AS A LAST RESORT Negotiation is better than litigation but is not always possible. Negotiation assumes cooperation, and many times that is not possible because of the disposition of the other party. Even here, one must consider

the cause of Christ; in its interest, it may be best to be wronged (6:7).

The Corinthian Lawsuits Were Evidence of Spiritual Defeat 6:7-8

“Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?⁸ On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.”

The Fact Stated

The word translated *defeat* was used by the Greeks to express military defeat. Here, however, the defeat is spiritual. It is the same word translated *failure* in Romans 11:12 used to express Israel’s collapse. The word *actually* means *wholly* and modifies the word *defeat*. The Corinthians were experiencing total spiritual defeat on the matter under discussion.

The Questions Posed

In suggesting accepting a wrong, Paul is not negating the concept of justice. The premise is this: It is better to be wronged than to wrong; better to be robbed than to rob. Neither is desirable; but if one is inevitable, a believer should have no trouble making a choice.

The Corinthian Lawsuits Betrayed Ignorance of the Make-up of God’s Kingdom 6:9-10

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

The word *unrighteous* takes us back to verse one where they made up the group before whom the Corinthians were going to settle their disputes. The unrighteous are broken down into categories based on their conduct. Four of the list are sexual in nature. The *fornicator* is one who engages in any sexual activity forbidden by the word of God; the *adulterer* refers to illegitimate sexual activity between married parties; *effeminate* is a word that means *soft* and refers to one who allows himself to be used homosexually. It should be noted that all of these are nouns and are thus pointing to a state or condition. None of these are part of God’s kingdom; how, then, could they judge those within that kingdom?

The Corinthian Lawsuits Betrayed Indifference to Their Spiritual Position 6:11

“And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”

That they were *washed* points to the work of Christ in cleansing them; *sanctified* points to the work of the Holy Spirit in setting them apart; *justified* points to the work of the Father in declaring them righteous. They have been saved by the triune God; their conduct should reflect this truth.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN LIBERTY ISSUES 6:12-20

THE STATEMENT OF LIBERTY 6:12

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

Returning to the Subject of Christian Morality

I Corinthians 6:12-20 returns to the subject of morality, which was discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 was specific in that it dealt with a single case. Chapter 6 is general in that it deals with all cases. The Corinthians were confused on the subject of morality for two reasons. First they lived in a society in which sexual freedom was condoned by the public opinion of both Greece and Rome. Christian morality received no encouragement from the environment in which they lived. Second they had a kind of twisted logic concerning liberty, which is stated for us in verse 13.

The Will of God for the Believer May be Understood by Three Statements

First, it is never the will of God to do what is forbidden by God. The prohibitions of God's word are always to be observed and understood relative to the age in which we live. There are obviously certain prohibitions in the Old Testament that do not apply today.

Second, it is always the will of God to do that which is commanded by God. Again, this calls for sound interpretation of the Scriptures relative to the church age in which we live.

Third, those areas not specified by Scripture comprise areas of liberty where mature choices and wise decisions must be made on the basis of the effect of a course of action on both ourselves and others.

Paul's Statement that “All things are lawful for me” Has Obvious Qualifications

Liberty Is not the Freedom to do as One Pleases

The immediate context makes this abundantly clear. I Corinthians 6:9-10 listed types of activity that are clearly sinful and that believers are not free to practice. Living as one pleases is in reality the worst kind of slavery because it has the worst master—self.

Liberty Is Entirely Consistent with Servanthood

Romans 6:18 unites the idea of freedom and servanthood saying, "...having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Liberty and freedom involve a change of masters—once a slave of sin; now a slave of righteousness.

Liberty Is Entirely Consistent with Authority

I Peter 2:13 and 16 tie the idea of freedom and submission to authority together saying, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake...act as free men...." Believers are to submit as free men.

The Liberty Passages of I Corinthians

The first mention of the concept of liberty is found here in 6:12. Paul turns immediately to its misapplication in the area of sexual activity in 6:13-20. Next, Paul answers the question concerning marriage in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8 he returns to the theme of liberty and continues through Chapter 10.

The underlying principle in areas of liberty is this: The exercise of liberty is to be determined by the circumstances that surround it and the person who practices it. Paul alludes to the effect of the exercise of liberty upon himself in 6:12. In saying, "I will not be mastered by anything," he places the word *not* in the emphatic position. We might think of the word as underlined. This teaches us that it is not sufficient to ask if an action is permitted. We must also ask what its consequences will be. Here in verse 12, the focus is on how it affects our self-discipline. If the exercise of a liberty enslaves us, then we should cease the exercise of it. This principle will be very important in the following liberty passages.

THE ABUSE OF LIBERTY 6:13-20**The Logical Error 6:13**

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

The Corinthians had reasoned themselves into a true analogy and a false analogy. First, the true analogy—the stomach is for food and food is for the stomach. The body cannot be sustained without food. Second, the false analogy—the body is for fornication. This is a false analogy because it does not explain the purpose of the body. With the words *the body is for the Lord*, Paul corrects their thinking. Correct thinking says, "The stomach for food and food for the stomach; the body for the Lord and the Lord for the body."

In the pagan world view, the body had no higher function than sex. To the pagan, the body was a playpen; to the Christian, his body was the temple of the Holy Spirit. The non-Christian argument would be, "If I may satisfy one bodily appetite as I wish, why may I not satisfy another bodily appetite as I wish?"

The Corrective Teaching 6:14-20

Concerning the Future of the Body 6:14

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

Paul will develop this idea fully in Chapter 15. The body of the believer has an eternal destiny. In our eternal state, we will be with the Lord, body, soul, and spirit. Christ died for men, and man is not man without a body. The eternal destiny of the body argues for the present sanctity of the body.

Concerning the Union of the Body 6:15-17

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! ¹⁶Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ ¹⁷But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

We often speak of our union with Christ as believers. Commonly overlooked is the truth stated here that our bodies are members of Christ. The word translated *member* is the normal word for bodily parts such as the arms and legs. The heathen view of the body is expressed by Epictetus saying, “The body is common with the brute.” He believed that only man’s reason and intelligence was in common with the gods. The Christian view links the body, soul, and spirit upward to Christ.

Essential to the teaching of these verses is the assumption that sexual relationship is not merely a physical act; it is an act that forms a union! Fornication is, therefore, the creation of a monstrosity—Christ united to a harlot.

Concerning the Use of the Body 6:18

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

First, Paul gives a command about fornication. Considering the day in which we live, it is important to note that the issue of fornication is not a matter of debate. The imperative mood and present tense of the command says, “Make this your immediate and continual practice.” This is the action to be taken in the light of the teaching just presented.

Second, Paul tells us of the uniqueness of fornication. Other sins may be described this way: To steal is to commit a sin *by* the body; to commit suicide is to commit a sin *upon* the body; but in fornication, one sins *against* the body. Fornication is sin against the body in that it violates the purpose of the body (6:13), and it violates the resident of the body (6:19).

Concerning the Ownership of the Body 6:19-20

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

FORNICATION IS A SIN AGAINST THE RESIDENT OF THE BODY The word *or* that begins verse 19 introduces a further argument for fleeing fornication. Notice that the dignity and holiness of the temple is not derived from itself but from the one who dwells in it. Paul clearly teaches that the believer does not have the option of living as he pleases.

FORNICATION IS A SIN AGAINST THE REDEEMER OF THE BODY The point here is not who paid the price of redemption or was it great or small, though both questions can be answered. The point here is that the believer has no rights of his own. Nowhere does Christianity and culture clash more than at this point.

The conclusion of the whole matter is introduced by the word *therefore*, which translates a unique word in Greek called the urgent inferential particle. We could translate the force of it by saying, “It is therefore a matter of utmost urgency that you glorify God in your body.”

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

The believer should always be aware that we have resources in the word of God that the world does not have (6:5). This should not beget an arrogant “know it all” attitude, but it should give us a sense of adequacy that we cannot have apart from the word of God.

In a day of emphasis on what we call human rights, the believer must remember that by virtue of redemption we have no rights of our own; our only concern is to be obedient to the will of God (6:19).

While sin is sin, sexual immorality is unique (6:18). It is unique in that it affects the body as well as the resident of the body.

C Confusion About Marriage

or “To Marry or Not to Marry”

I Corinthians 7:1-40

GENERAL TEACHING CONCERNING MARRIAGE 7:1-7

STAYING SINGLE AND GETTING MARRIED 7:1-2

“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. ²But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”

Staying Single 7:1

Single life is described as *good*. The meaning of this word is critical to I Corinthians 7, and it is important to note that it does not refer to good versus bad or evil. The word *good* as used here does not point to a moral condition at all, which becomes obvious by reading 7:26, 28, and 36 where Paul says remaining single is good but “if you marry, you have not sinned.” The alternative to good is not sin. Good means *to be commendable*. Single life is a state that is commendable, but not mandatory.

The term *to touch* is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. This is demonstrated by Genesis 20:1-6 where God graciously withheld Sarah from Abimelech, King of Gerar, not allowing him to *touch her*.

This teaching concerning single life is not meant to be taken absolutely—to do so would be to encounter three distinct difficulties. First, it would conflict with Genesis 2:18 which says, “It is not good for the man to be alone...” Second, it would contradict the immediate context which says, “Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Third, requiring celibacy is taught by I Timothy 4:1-4 to be a demonic doctrine.

Getting Married 7:2

Marriage Is Intended to be a Permanent Relationship

Let have is a present tense imperative verb, pointing to continuous action and continuous obligation—"Let each go on having." This is addressed to those who are contemplating marriage, showing that believers should be fully committed to the obligations of marriage before they marry. A Christian should never marry with the thought that if it doesn't work out we will end it.

Marriage Is Intended to be a Monogamous Relationship

The concept of monogamy is found in the words *his own* and *her own*. The imperative mood makes the foregoing teaching a matter of obedience to the will of God.

OBEYING GOD WITHIN MARRIAGE 7:3-7

"Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶But this I say by way of concession, not of command. ⁷Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that."

Those Who Are Married Must Consider Their Mutual Indebtedness 7:3

That the obligations of marriage are mutual is conveyed by the word *likewise*, which links the husband and wife together in their duties. A person who is self-centered will find mutual obligation difficult and may be a poor marriage risk. Headship in marriage belongs to the husband, but duty and obligation is mutual. The word *fulfill* is a Greek word that means *to pay a bill or a debt* (Matthew 22:21). It is in present tense, meaning that the obligation is continuous and thus constantly being fulfilled.

Those Who Are Married Must Consider Their Surrender of Independence 7:4

How can the body be said to be *his own* and *her own* when one cannot do what he or she chooses with it? In marriage ownership of one's own body ceases.

Those Who Are Married Should Avoid Separation 7:5

Sometimes enough stress enters into a marriage that separation may be a needed course of action. When and if this occurs, given conditions must be met.

The Separation Must be by Mutual Consent

This is found in the word translated *agreement*. The Greek word is familiar to all of us for it is the word *sumphonos*, our word *symphony*, which means *one harmonious voice*. Both husband and wife must agree that this is the course of action called for in the present state of things.

The Separation Must be for a Limited Time

The words *for a time* refer to this fact. The following context will show that the time must be short in order to avoid temptations that continued abstinence might present.

The Separation Time Must be Devoted to Spiritual Activity

The time is to be devoted to prayer. The word *prayer* has a definite article with it that serves to particularize the prayer. The prayer is to be relative to the marital relationship. It should be a time of self-examination and reflection, analyzing one's own personal condition.

The Separation Must Eventuate in Reunion

Whether it be divine discipline or human separation, as here, the aim is always restoration. This is the way the Lord deals with us and is also the way we should deal with one another.

The Separation Must be Seen as Having Dangerous Potential

Satan is aware of our weaknesses and stands ready to take advantage of them. The separation would involve sexual abstinence and open up the potential for temptation and resultant sin. This is an obvious reason for the time limitation placed upon the separation.

Single Life Is a Desirable State 7:7***The Desire of Paul 7:7a***

The words *I wish* introduce the desire of Paul that single life be pursued. While this was Paul's desire, he did not force his feelings on others nor did he make his feelings a burden to others. Our own personal feelings and convictions should not be forced on others, even if we were the apostle Paul.

The Reality of Life 7:7b

The word *however* shows us that the desire of Paul for single life will not fit every believer. The word *gift* is *charisma* and refers to a unique ability possessed by one but not by another. The word *of* is *ek* and points to God as the source of this unique ability to remain single. This verse shows us that the best course of action for one may be single life, whereas the best course for another may be married life.

SPECIFIC TEACHING CONCERNING MARRIAGE 7:8-40

DIRECTED TO THE UNMARRIED AND WIDOWS 7:8-9

“But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. ⁹But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.”

About Staying Single 7:8

The advice given here by Paul has two aspects. First, the advice is relative, not absolute. It may apply in one case and not apply in another. Second, how each responds to the advice is a matter of personal choice. Each person must know himself.

About Getting Married 7:9

Sexual impulse may be handled in one of two ways: It may be controlled, as in single life; or it may be gratified legitimately, as in marriage, or illegitimately, as in fornication. The believer is fully responsible for the course of action he takes.

DIRECTED TO THE MARRIED BELIEVERS 7:10-11

“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹(but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away.”

The Obedience of Maintaining a Marriage 7:10

The word *married* is a perfect tense verb, a past completed action with abiding results. Being married or staying single is optional; staying married is not. What does it mean for a wife to leave her husband? In the culture of Paul’s time, a man could dismiss his wife by simple decree. In many cases, the woman would leave before this happened. This is not to be so in a Christian marriage. All of this is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18.

The Disobedience of Leaving a Marriage 7:11

This verse shows that while the word of God holds forth the highest standards, it is also realistic about man. The teaching of the word of God on the subject of marriage is unique. On no other subject does God say, “Don’t do this, but if you do then here are further instructions.” And yet, this is the very thing He does in these two verses.

DIRECTED TO THE MIXED MARRIAGES 7:12-16

The Marriage Described 7:12-14

“But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. ¹³And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

The Prohibition for the Believing Party

There is no indication that the believer has deliberately married an unbeliever. It appears that one party has become a Christian while married, and their partner has not done the same.

When Paul says that he is speaking, *not the Lord*, he is not indicating that his words have less authority than those of the Lord. Paul is very clear about the authority of his words in I Corinthians 14:37, “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.” If one goes to the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, it will be discovered that Jesus did not address the problem of a mixed marriage and, as such, did not speak on the subject; now Paul is going to do so.

The Choice of the Unbelieving Party

The option for the continuation of the marriage is the decision of the unbelieving partner, not the believer. The word translated *consents* is a word that means *to agree in being content*. When one party became a believer, the character of the marriage changed. The question that the unbeliever must ask is, “Am I willing to agree to be contented in this new situation?”

The Influence of the Believing Party

The influence of the believing party is expressed by the single word *sanctified*. The basic meaning of the verb is *to set apart*. The believer sets apart the unbeliever. The question that then rises is: “What does the believer set the unbeliever apart to?” The answer seems to be that he or she sets the other apart to Christian influence—the unbeliever, through the marriage, gets a taste of Christianity through the believing partner. This is obviously good, for it could eventually lead to their salvation. The same may be said of the children. Some of the details of the influence brought by the Christian wife are given in I Peter 3:1-6.

The Marriage Dissolved 7:15-16

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”¹⁶For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”

What if the Unbeliever Chooses to Leave? 7:15

THE ACTION THE BELIEVER IS TO TAKE The believer is under no obligation to insist upon the unbeliever remaining in the marriage. It is important to note that the commands of this passage are directed to the believer, not the unbeliever. The only issue for the unbeliever is salvation; and thus, other commands of Scripture are not addressed to him.

THE FREEDOM THE BELIEVER OBTAINS The bondage from which the believer is released is apparently a reference to the bond of marriage—the marriage is broken by the departure of the unbeliever.

THE PRINCIPLE UPON WHICH THE BELIEVER OPERATES The peace spoken of would refer to marital tranquillity. This envisions the quarrels and disputes that would exist if the marriage were continued. Tranquility within the home is important, not only for the husband and the wife but also for the children.

What if the Unbeliever Loses the Influence of the Believer? 7:16

Having said that if the unbeliever wishes to leave *let him leave*, the question could easily arise, “But what about the Christian influence spoken of in verse 14? If it is removed, something good has been lost.” The answer given by Paul indicates that while the Christian influence is good and beneficial, it is not a guarantee that the unbeliever will become a believer. One can hope and pray for the salvation of one’s marriage partner, but God’s word does not offer promise that they will be saved.

THE DOCTRINE OF STATUS QUO 7:17-24

The General Adjustment Required of the New Believer 7:17

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

Adjustment to Earthly Assignment 7:17a

These verses present what we may call the “stay-as-you-are” principle of the Christian life. We are all inclined to think our problems can be solved by a change in outward circumstances, and the Corinthians were very much affected by this attitude. The single wanted to be married, and the married wanted to be single; the slaves wanted to be free; the Jews wanted to be Gentiles, and the

Gentiles wanted to be Jews—those with straight hair wanted curly hair, and those with curly hair wanted straight hair!

Two key ideas emerge in these eight verses. The first is expressed by the word *remain* in verse 20, and the second is in the words *with God* in verse 24. The teaching is this: Remain in the circumstances in which you find yourself maintaining fellowship with God. Circumstances are irrelevant; walking with the Lord is critical.

It is to be assumed that the circumstances in which they are to remain are not sinful. While maintaining status quo is advisable, this does not mean Paul is prohibiting improvement as verse 21 shows.

The first adjustment to be made is to one's earthly assignment. The verb *has assigned* means *to deal out or to apportion*. This assumes the sovereignty of God over the lot of each believer in life. Some of the Corinthians were slaves; and while slavery was a social injustice practiced in the days of Paul, he never attacks it. This does not mean Paul approved of slavery, but it does mean that he saw it as no threat to living the Christian life. Paul only attacks those things that threaten the believer's walk with the Lord.

Adjustment to Our Heavenly Calling 7:17b

There are a number of specific passages that tell of that to which believers are called. We are called to fellowship (I Corinthians 1:9), to inner peace (Colossians 3:15), to a relationship to the Holy Spirit and truth (II Thessalonians 2:13-14), to eternal life (I Timothy 6:12), to His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9), to the learning of patience when sinned against (I Peter 2:20-21), to confer blessing and to inherit blessing (I Peter 3:9), and to glorification (I Peter 5:10).

The Specific Adjustment Required of the New Believer 7:18-24

The Prohibition 7:18

“Was any called already circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised.”

Circumcision was the sign of Jewishness, and the thought of the new convert was to efface the sign of Jewishness because he was now a Christian. The verb *become uncircumcised* is found in medical literature describing a procedure that camouflaged circumcision. Josephus tells how some Jews had the surgery so they could exercise in the gymnasiums and not be identified as Jewish.

The reasons why a Gentile would want to appear Jewish are not hard to find. The Jew was the custodian of God's word; they were the chosen people and the race of the Messiah. Whether Jew or Gentile, the emphasis was on the change of the external. Paul now moves to show what the real issue is.

The Explanation 7:19

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

The issue to avoid is the temptation to become something that one is not. For the Jew to hide circumcision was to create a false appearance; and for the Gentile to seek circumcision was to do the same thing. There is no place in the Christian life for spiritual cosmetic surgery. Personal response to the word of God in terms of obedience is the whole issue.

The Exhortation 7:20

“Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called.”

An early response to this verse demonstrates that every truth is capable of misuse. History tells us that some manufacturers of idols who became Christians used it to justify the continuation of their business! When challenged, their answer was to say that idol making was their livelihood and their only means of putting food on the table. Tertullian had a question for them—He said, “Can’t you starve?”

The Exception 7:21-22

“Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. ²²For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave.”

The circumstances of life that surrounded us when we became Christians are to be no object of concern whatsoever. On the other hand, if an opportunity for change presents itself and one wishes to take advantage of it, do so. Whatever our condition on earth may be does not handicap us in our relationship to the Lord—freedmen can relate to the Lord, and slaves can relate to the Lord.

The Clarification 7:23

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

This verse points to the priority of Christ’s authority over the believer. In all earthly service, he is to recognize that his service is to God, not men. Even as he serves others, it is to be done as unto the Lord.

The Reiteration 7:24

“Brethren, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called.”

This verse reiterates verse 20 but with the additional words with God inserted. All secular conditions, whether of family life or social caste, may be the vehicles of the expression of Christian character. Earthly condition is irrelevant; Christian character is everything.

CONSIDERATIONS IN CONTEMPLATION OF MARRIAGE 7:25-40

A Word About the Nature of the Material Paul Is About to Present 7:25

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

What the Advice Is Not

The advice he is about to give is not derived from any teaching or command of Christ, nor is it framed as a command of an apostle.

What the Advice Is

The advice given here is to be viewed as apostolic opinion. In verse 12 Paul builds his teaching on what the Lord had already taught. In verse 17 he gives an apostolic decision in the form of a command. An important principle is found here: Paul gave his opinion only when asked (the advice here is in response to the inquiry found in 7:1).

First Consideration: In Contemplating Marriage Consider the External and Internal Circumstances 7:26-28

“I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸But if you should marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.”

The External Circumstances

Paul urges single life in the light of the *present distress*. The word *distress* is always used of something external to oneself (Luke 21:23, II Corinthians 6:4). What, in particular, were these distresses? We really do not know the answer to this question. From Acts 18 we do know that there was some persecution going on in Corinth. It is sufficient to simply realize that circumstances, whatever they may be, are a consideration in deciding whether to marry.

In the light of I Corinthians 7:10-11, the first half of verse 27 is a command to be obeyed. However, in the light of I Corinthians 7:28, the last half of verse 27 is advice to be considered.

The Internal Circumstances

These are alluded to by the words *trouble in this life* (literally, *flesh*). These words are probably another way of referring to the *present distress*. In marriage, the suffering of one party affects the other member also. Times of severe persecution were times when marriage would be inadvisable because of the pain that would be experienced through the loss of one's husband, wife, or children.

Second Consideration: In Contemplating Marriage One Should Consider the Shortness of Time 7:29-31

“But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on both those who have wives should be as though they had none;³⁰ and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;³¹ and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.”

Paul’s warning at this point means that we should make maximum use of every moment that we have. In order to do this, we should avoid excessive involvement in the details of life. When, for example, he says those who rejoice should be as though they did not rejoice, it must be understood as forbidding excess. This interpretation is the only one that would harmonize this verse with one such as Philippians 4:4 which says, “Rejoice in the Lord always....” That Paul has excess in mind is also seen in the word *use* and *make full use* in verse 31. The word *use* is *kraomai*, which means *to use*; the words *make full use* translate the word *katakraomai*, which is a compound of the verb *use* and the preposition *kata*, which means *down*. We have an English expression—“Don’t drive it into the ground.” This means don’t overdo it; don’t do it to excess.

The Lord can be crowded out of one’s life by a thousand legitimate and wholesome activities. We should never let this happen. Jesus spoke of how *the cares of this world* can choke out the word of God. Paul is urging those considering marriage to recognize that time is involved in married life which single life might avoid.

Third Consideration: In Contemplating Marriage One Should Consider the Added Responsibilities 7:32-35

“But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;³³ but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,³⁴ and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.³⁵ And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.”

The ideas contained in these verses are easy to visualize using the following chart.

THE SINGLE	THE MARRIED
Belongs to the Lord (6:19)	Belongs to the Lord (6:19)
Responsible only to the Lord (7:32)	Responsible to the Lord and one’s marriage partner (7:33)
Result: Simple concerns	Result: Complex concerns

Simple concern in life to please the Lord only may be aided by single life. Since we are born single not married, single life can be maintained if one chooses. A single person has more time to devote solely to the Lord. It is also true, however, that one may be single and not fit the description of verse 32. The verse assumes that one's priority in life is to please the Lord. It should also be noted that Paul does not teach us to neglect the responsibilities of marriage in order to serve the Lord. Once one marries, the responsibilities entailed should be fulfilled joyfully.

Fourth Consideration: In Contemplating Marriage One's Family Should be Considered 7:36-40

"But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she should be of full age, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. ³⁷But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well. ³⁸So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better. ³⁹A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God."

In the times of Paul, the father arranged the marriage of his daughter; this is what is in view in these three verses. There are three conditions to be met if the father says yes to the marriage. First, he must be convinced that her continued single life is inappropriate for him to insist upon (the unbecoming action spoken of in verse 36). Second, he must determine if she is old enough. Third, she must desire marriage.

Two conditions must be met if he chooses to say no to marriage. First, he must be free from any pressure on her part to marry. Second, he must assume the responsibility of her keep (the meaning of the word *keep* in verse 37). The final advice of Paul reiterates his preference for single life. Verse 39 does make clear that when a widow chooses to remarry, she must confine her choice of a husband to a believer.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

Those who are single must remember that from divine viewpoint standpoint, single life is commendable, and there should thus be no shame or embarrassment connected with it (7:1).

Our status in life is controlled by the sovereignty of God and should be accepted gladly (7:17). This does not mean we should not seek improvement of our status in life, but it does remind us that the priority should be walking with the Lord, not changing the circumstances of life.

NOTES

Liberty: Its Use and Abuse

or “Shall We Eat Idol Meat?”

I Corinthians 8:1-13

THE SUBJECT INTRODUCED 8:1A

“Now concerning things sacrificed to idols....”

It is important to understand the cultural setting of these words. Corinth was a city totally involved in idolatry. Every building was connected in some way with idols, and there were no public buildings as we think of them. There was no possible way to live in Corinth and not come in contact with pagan idolatry.

Since everything was dedicated in some way to an idol, problems arose for Christians. The meat offered on idol altars was portioned out in three ways. First, a portion of it was burned up in honor of the idol. Second, another portion was given to the priest. The priests obviously had more meat than they could possibly use, and thus, sent it to the public market place to be sold. Third, a portion of the meat was given to the offerer. It was the meat found in the market place that created difficulties among Christians. In pagan worship, the sacrifice was at the very center of all worship. Sooner or later, a believer would find himself in a social setting where he was faced with eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol.

Paul will do far more than answer their specific question about eating meat offered to idols. He will put it in the larger context of the Christian's use of his liberty, and we will discover principles applicable in many situations in which we will find ourselves.

THE PRESENCE OF KNOWLEDGE 8:1B-3

“Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. ²If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; ³but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.”

THE FIRST PROBLEM: KNOWLEDGE ALONE IS NOT ALWAYS SUFFICIENT

The problems that Paul deals with in this chapter are the type that knowledge is not sufficient to solve. True knowledge in Scripture includes both attitude and action. I Corinthians 8:1 shows that true knowledge always maintains an attitude of love, and 8:13 shows true knowledge always exercises consideration for others exhibited by restraint.

THE SECOND PROBLEM: KNOWLEDGE ALONE BEGETS PRIDE

Pride was a major problem in the Corinthian church. It is expressed as being *arrogant* (I Corinthians 4:6, 18, 19, 5:2, 8:1, and 13:4). When Paul says that love edifies, it is necessary to ask who the object of the love is. The answer is best supplied by verse 3 that speaks of one who loves God. The test of love is found in asking the question, What is its object? Here the object of the love is the most worthy person in the universe. If God is loved, man will certainly be properly loved.

The expression *known by Him* refers to special intimacy and favor. We will find that only the man who loves God is able to handle liberty.

THE CONCLUSION OF KNOWLEDGE 8:4-6

“Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, ⁶yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”

THE THEME OF THESE VERSES: THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF MONOTHEISM**First, the Bible States There Is Only One True God**

This is clearly stated by the words of verse 4 saying, “there is no God but one.” The Scriptures further teach that the one true God exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We express this truth by the word *Trinity*.

Second, the Bible States All Others Claiming Deity Are False

They are false in that they have no real existence. When Paul says, “There is no such thing as an idol in the world,” he does not mean that there are not things that men call idols. He means they have no true existence; they are pieces of wood or stone and nothing more. Verse 5 asserts they are *so-called gods*—gods in name only, nothing more.

THE CONCLUSION OF THESE VERSES: GOD IS THE SOURCE, THE OBJECT, AND THE MEANS OF OUR LIVES

The words *from whom are all things* use the Greek preposition *ek*, which indicates source. The words *for Him* use the preposition *eis*, which points to something as an object. Finally, the words *through whom* use *dia*, which points to the means.

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE 8:7-12

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

THE PROBLEM STEMMING FROM ONE’S PAST 8:7A

Because of association with idols in the past, every new contact with them triggers the memory of that former connection. This is called a weakness, and Paul is going to teach that the weakness of another should be considered in our relationships. Hopefully, the weak will become strong; but in the meantime, their sensitivities should be treated with loving consideration. Knowledge that idols are nothing does not solve their problem.

THE PROBLEM STEMMING FROM ONE’S CONSCIENCE 8:7B

Conscience is a mechanism that can be easily conditioned by various things. Conscience is not always governed by truth or by facts. This is not a happy condition but is still something that should be considered in determining our conduct in a given situation.

THINGS WE ALL MUST REMEMBER 8:8-12

What the Weak Must Remember 8:8

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

Food has nothing whatsoever to do with our standing before God. Whether we eat is neither here nor there from that standpoint. This truth should help a weak believer become strong. It will not immediately cure a weak conscience, however.

What the Strong Must Remember 8:9-12

The “What” of Exercising Liberty 8:9-10

“But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak. ¹⁰For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?”

First, we are told what it can become (8:9). The believer is not forbidden the use of his liberty, for this would be wrong. He is rather exhorted to be careful in the exercise of his liberty. The word *liberty* means *to have the right to act*. Paul leaves the matter to individual judgment—a judgment that considers the problems of others in a loving manner.

Second, we are told what it can do (8:10). Exercise of one's liberty can cause another to act in an area where he should not because of his unique situation.

The “Who” of Exercising Liberty 8:11-12

“For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. ¹²And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”

First, we are told who it can ruin—a brother. Second, we are told who it can offend—Christ. In considering the exercise of liberty, one is not to focus on himself; we are to focus on others, and we are to focus on Christ.

THE CONSIDERATION OF KNOWLEDGE 8:13

“Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.”

The conscience of another believer may be a major consideration in the determination of our conduct (8:9). This does not mean we should live our lives merely as unto men. It does mean that we desire to do all we can to insure their spiritual growth and prosperity.

Liberty to engage in a certain kind of conduct does not mean that we should do so (8:13). Proper use of liberty demands mature thinking and quality choices.

Surrendered Liberty

or “Clearing the Way for the Gospel”

I Corinthians 9:1-27

THE SINGLE ISSUE OF SURRENDERED LIBERTY 9:1-18

In verses 1-18 Paul deals with the single issue of his personal surrender of his right to compensation for his efforts. In verses 19-27 he expands the principle showing its multiple applications in the lives of all believers. I Corinthians 9:12 speaks of the right that he has surrendered—namely, the right to compensation. I Corinthians 9:23 expands beyond this particular issue to the doing of all things in the best interest of the gospel.

I Corinthians 9 shows Paul to be the living example of the principles that he taught in Chapter 8. The two chapters, therefore, fit neatly together. Paul was a living example of everything he taught.

PAUL’S POSITION 9:1-2

“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”

Expressed by His Office 9:1

Each of the four questions expect a “yes” answer. Paul begins stating that he has the same freedom that any believer has. Next, by calling himself an apostle, he shows that he has exceptional rights not common to all believers. This will make his willingness to set aside the exercise of these rights all the more noteworthy.

Expressed by His Credentials 9:1

Having personally seen Jesus was a basic requirement for an apostle (Acts 1:21-22, 2:32, 3:15). The verb *seen* is a perfect tense, indicating that this was not an ongoing experience but a historic experience. Paul saw Jesus once on the Damascus road and that was it. Reference is made to this event in I Corinthians 15:8.

Expressed by His Product 9:2

A mark of an apostle was found in the results of his preaching. This is why Paul speaks of the Corinthians as the *seal* of his apostleship. The power of the Lord resting on Paul's preaching is emphasized by the words *in the Lord* repeated twice.

PAUL'S DEFENSE 9:3-11

The Support of Logic 9:3-7

Paul's Argumentation 9:3-6

"My defense to those who examine me is this: ⁴Do we not have a right to eat and drink? ⁵Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? ⁶Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?"

The word *defense* means *defense against a charge*. What charge was Paul defending himself against? Examination of his defense shows us the answer. He is defending the way he exercises liberty and uses his rights.

Eating and drinking had three different connections in Paul's day. First, there was eating and drinking as in legalism (Colossians 2:16). Second, there was eating and drinking as in paganism (I Corinthians 8:4). Third, there was eating and drinking as compensation for services rendered (I Corinthians 9:4). It is this third connection that is in view in this chapter.

The word *right* is *exousia*, which means *authority to act*. Paul had the right of compensation for the spiritual service that he rendered to the Corinthians. We will see why he chose to surrender this right in this particular case.

Paul's Illustration 9:7

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

The soldier was supported by public funds or the royal treasury. Likewise, the vineyard keeper and the shepherd had every right to partake of that which their personal efforts produced. The principle involved is that everyone lives off of the proceeds of his business, and the preaching of the gospel is no exception.

The Support of Scripture 9:8-11

Paul's Question 9:8

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

Does God's word agree or disagree with the logic of verse 7? Human logic is sometimes contrary to God's truth; is this the case here? This verse supplies the transition into the scriptural teaching concerning material support of those whose full attention is given to the ministry of the gospel.

Moses' Answer 9:9

"For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He?"

The quotation is taken from Deuteronomy 25:4. Oxen were used to thresh grain in two ways. First, they were led across the piles of grain so they trampled it with their feet. Second, they were often attached to a sledge which they dragged over the grain. In either case, the oxen were not to be muzzled to prevent their eating of the grain. Does this verse apply only to oxen, or is there a higher significance involved?

The Application 9:10-11

"Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. ¹¹If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?"

God's care of His creation has doctrinal significance for man. It argues for His care of man. Deuteronomy 25:4 teaches the concept of compensation for services rendered, even among animals and much more so among men. Jesus uses the same truth to show the foolishness of worry, pointing to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and God's care of them (Matthew 6:26-31).

Verse 11 teaches us that spiritual labor is to be compensated in the same way that physical labor is. Paul has every right to compensation for the spiritual labor he bestowed on the Corinthians. Having established this beyond question, he now begins to show that there may be good reasons for refusing to partake of this right.

PAUL'S EXCEPTION 9:12-15

Refusal to Exercise a Right Should not be Forced Upon Others 9:12a

"If others share the right over you, do we not more?"

The verb translated *share* is present tense, plural number. The tense indicates continual practice, and the number points to a whole group. Paul's refusal of compensation was not the practice of the majority. This is why we have called verses 12-15 Paul's exception. The *others* referred to would take in teachers such as Apollos. Notice that there is no implication that their practice was wrong or even unwise. Paul does not even imply that they should do as he does. This is a proper application of refusal to exercise a right; it does not force itself upon others.

Refusal to Exercise a Right Must be Supported by an Overriding Priority 9:12b

"...Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."

The words *no hindrance* should be interpreted by the words *without charge* found in verse 18. Paul did not want anyone to say that he was commercializing the gospel. We do not know precisely how receiving compensation might have hindered the gospel in Corinth. This fact leads us to the next principle.

Refusal to Exercise a Right Is Relative to a Given Situation

Philippians 4:15-16 shows this since Paul accepted material support from the Philippian church *more than once for my needs*. In some way, the conditions at Corinth were not the same as at Philippi. The exercise or forbearance of a right is a matter of judgment and relative circumstances.

Refusal to Exercise a Right Does not Diminish the Right nor Establish a Pattern 9:13-14***The Right to Compensation for Spiritual Service Is an Old Testament Principle 9:13***

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

It was the right of the Old Testament priests to eat part of the sacrifices that they offered at the altar. Granted, it was capable of abuse and in later times was, as a matter of fact, abused. Abuse, however, does not negate a truth. Paul is putting his right side by side with his refusal.

The Right to Compensation for Spiritual Service Is a New Testament Principle 9:14

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

The word *also* shows that the Old Testament principle of compensation of the priests applies to ministers of the New Testament as well. Jesus also taught this in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7. The word *directed* is a strong word for giving a command.

Refusal to Exercise a Right Is not to be Used as a Tool of Manipulation 9:15a

"But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case..."

Paul is not trying to make the Corinthians feel guilty about not supporting him. Paul is not saying “no” in order to make them say “yes.” Manipulation has no place in Christian service. What a servant does is important; the way he does it is equally important.

Refusal to Exercise a Right Must be Rooted in the Deepest Conviction 9:15b

“...for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.”

PAUL’S PLEASURE 9:16-18

“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. ¹⁸What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.”

When Paul says he has nothing to boast about because he is under compulsion, he means he cannot boast in what he is forced to do. Paul must preach the gospel, so he cannot glory in this. If on the other hand, he preaches the gospel against his choice, he still has a stewardship, a responsibility. What is Paul’s reward then? Answer: the pleasure of choosing not to receive compensation for what he is compelled to do. “What is my pay?” says Paul, and then answers, “My pay is the pleasure of refusing pay!”

THE MULTIPLE ISSUES OF SURRENDERED LIBERTY 9:19-27

The refusal of compensation is only one instance of a voluntarily surrendered right; many other areas must also be considered. This is the essence of these closing verses of Chapter 9. The issues of restricted liberty are many. These are now considered in the light of the service of the believer.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SERVICE 9:19-22

The Principle in General 9:19

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.”

Paul refused compensation, and this gave him a special kind of freedom—he owed no one anything. The word *from* is the Greek preposition *ek*, which means *out of*—“I am free from out of all men.” Paul was free, then, to choose what he would be in relationship to men. He chooses to be a slave to men with a view to winning them. In a sense, the slave controls the master.

The Principle in Particular 9:20-22

“And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”

These verses give specific example of how Paul adapted himself to those he wished to win. They teach us that adjustment and adaptation can be made without compromise of truth. How did Paul accommodate the Jews? Acts 16:1-3 provides an example. In order to get Timothy into the synagogue, Paul had him circumcised. Acts 17:23 shows Paul utilizing a pagan inscription in order to gain the attention of the pagan. Firmness in truth does not deny flexibility of method. On the other hand, methods are important, a theme of II Corinthians.

THE GOAL OF SERVICE 9:23

“And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow-partaker of it.”

This verse shows that Paul had a single priority in life, and everything else was made to serve that single end. This points to the full and proper use of volition. Paul had the capacity to choose, and his choices were of the highest order in terms of quality.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE 9:24-27

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

Every few years the Isthmian games were held near Corinth. They were attended by thousands of people, and many who lived in Corinth had participated or attended. These verses contain at least five athletic metaphors.

Verse 24 uses the word *race*, which is the Greek word *stadion*. It refers to a distance of 607 feet, roughly a 200 yard event. The word referred not only to the event but also to the place in which it took place. We use the word when we speak of a stadium. The same verse also speaks of the *prize*, which was a crown made of olive, pine, or parsley leaves. Obviously, its value was not intrinsic but was rather the great honor of winning. Paul uses the same word in Philippians 3:14 saying, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 25 speaks of those who *compete*, using the word *agonizomai* (our word *agony*). The athletic contest was called the *agon*. This points to the enormous effort that was put forth to win. If this effort was put forth to win an earthly crown, how much more should we agonize for a heavenly crown.

Verse 26 shifts from track and field metaphors to boxing terms. When Paul speaks of *not beating the air*, he is pointing to efficiency in service. Paul does not throw wild punches; all that he does is meant to accomplish a worthy end.

Verse 27 uses the word *buffet*, which means *to hit under the eye*. The word *disqualified* is important in that it points in four directions. First, it points to Paul personally. Second, it points to what happened to Israel and is described in the next chapter. It also points to what could happen to the Corinthians. Finally, it reveals what can happen to any of us. This verse also shows the relationship of our will to our bodies. Volition is to be in charge.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

There is no sacrifice that we should not gladly make in the interest of the gospel (9:12). The cause of Christ is everything, and the honor and glory of the Lord is to be supreme in all that we do.

Christian conduct cannot be determined by rules alone; good judgment guided by sound doctrine and genuine love is essential.

NOTES

Avoiding Spiritual Disaster

or “Taking Heed Lest We Fall”

I Corinthians 10:1-11:1

ISRAEL: THE ILLUSTRATION 10:1-13

Paul closed chapter 9 by showing the possibility of spiritual disaster. He made the application to himself personally at that point; now he is going to expand the theme by narrating the spiritual disaster of Israel. He will then show how the same thing can happen to the Corinthians. In I Corinthians 9:27 Paul uses the pronoun *I*; in I Corinthians 10:1 he refers to the *fathers*; in I Corinthians 10:6 he refers to *us*.

ISRAEL’S BLESSINGS 10:1-4

Israel Experienced Dramatic Deliverance 10:1-2

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;”

The opening words of verse 1 are used by Paul to introduce matters of grave importance. They also show that the will of God for every believer is to take the experience of Israel to heart.

There is an emphasis here that every single Israelite had the same equal opportunity. Notice that the word *all* occurs five times in the first four verses—“*all* under the cloud...*all* passed through...*all* were baptized...*all* ate...*all* drank....” Out of this *all*, only two saw the land!

The basic meaning of the word *baptize* is illustrated here. When Moses stepped into the Red Sea, the people stepped in with him and were *baptized into Moses*. It means that they identified themselves with Moses. The unbaptized Egyptians drowned; the baptized Israelites came across on dry land. To *baptize* is to *put or place into* with the element being supplied by the context. The baptism into Moses is obviously a dry baptism.

Israel Experienced Daily Provision 10:3-4

“...and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.”

The food that God supplied was manna, and the drink was water. Why, then, is it called *spiritual*? First, the food and drink was spiritual because of where it came from—God. Second, the food and drink was spiritual because of what it typified—Christ. It is this abundant divine provision that made Israel’s fall so inexcusable. These verses also provide evidence that Paul believed in the preexistence of Christ. His birth marked His incarnation, not His beginning, for He is eternal.

ISRAEL’S FALL 10:5

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

This verse is marked off by the word used in Greek to indicate strong contrast and is often translated *but* (*nevertheless* here).

Why was God not pleased with Israel? First, God was displeased because of Israel’s attitude of unbelief. This is shown by the historical account of Numbers 13:1-3 and 14:11. This is also shown by the New Testament account of Hebrews 3:16-19. Second, God was displeased with Israel because of her actions, which flowed from her disbelieving attitude. They are detailed for us in I Corinthians 10:6-10.

ISRAEL’S EXAMPLE 10:6-13

The Value of Israel’s Example 10:6a

“Now these things happened as examples for us...”

This shows the identity that we in the church age have with Israel in the Old Testament. Israel and the church are two distinct entities in many respects; at the same time, there are many parallels. Paul is going to deal with some of them in the following verses.

The Nature of Israel’s Example 10:6b-10

“...that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. ⁷ And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.’ ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed the destroyer.”

The things Israel craved are said to be *evil*. What were they? Numbers 11:4-9 lists some of these things, such as *fish* and *cucumbers*. It is obvious that these things were not innately evil; why,

then, were they evil? They were evil because they were desired in place of God's provisions.

It is interesting to see *grumbling* in this list of sins, showing what the essence of grumbling really is. It is rebellion against the sovereignty of God in operation. Grumbling is making complaint about the people or environment with which we are surrounded. The seriousness of this becomes evident when we realize that God is the sovereign planner of these events.

The Application of Israel's Example 10:11-13

The Responsibility of the Church 10:11

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

We are more responsible than Israel was. Israel had no past to look back upon as we do. They did not have a full revelation of Scripture—we do. The church is at the *ends of the ages*; Israel was not. Added light always brings added responsibility.

The Danger for the Church 10:12

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

The word *thinks* means *to hold an opinion*. There is reason to believe that the opinion is true because the one addressed in this verse has not yet fallen but is rather facing the potential of a fall. This verse, then, is a warning to the believer who is doing well. We must remember that potential for a fall is always present.

The Promise for the Church 10:13

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

The word *temptation* can also mean *trial*. From the context here, temptation refers to solicitation to evil. These temptations are all viewed as past. The term *has overtaken* is in the perfect tense, which points to past completed action. All of these temptations have the same characteristic—they are common to man.

Since God is faithful, a fall can never be excused; it is always our fault, never God's. Since God is in control, a fall can never be excused. And finally, since God provides a way of escape, a fall can never be excused. Thus, Paul brings us around the full circle. The fall of Israel was inexcusable in the light of divine provision, and the fall of any in the church is inexcusable because of the divine provision that is directed our way.

IDOLATRY: THE DANGER 10:14-22

The purpose of I Corinthians 10:14-22 is to make application of the command of 10:7 that said, “Do not be idolaters, as some of them were....” The message of I Corinthians 10:14-22 is to teach that all idolatry is a manifestation of demonism.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FELLOWSHIP 10:14-18

Using the Way of Escape 10:14-15

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.”

Through Understanding Its Nature

The word *therefore* ties verse 14 into verse 13. It explains what we should do in the light of that verse. Verse 13 told us that God provides a way out of temptation, but it did not tell us what that way was. The way out of temptation is to flee from it. The New Testament is specific about fleeing certain things. First, we should flee anything that competes with the Lordship of Christ (I Corinthians 10:14). Second, we should flee desires whose intent is merely sensual satisfaction (I Corinthians 6:18, I Timothy 6:11, II Timothy 2:22). The verb *flee* teaches us that we should not deliberately go into temptation and then expect deliverance. As one has put it, “We are not to see how far we can go, but how fast we can flee.”

Through Appreciating Its Wisdom

The degree to which we agree with Paul on the issue of fleeing is a measure of our wisdom.

Understanding the Meaning of Fellowship 10:16-18

“Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?”

The New Testament word for *fellowship* is *koinonia*, translated *sharing* in verse 16, and provides the key idea in these verses. What is fellowship, what is *koinonia*? First, it is the sharing of something one possesses with another (Romans 15:26-27; II Corinthians 8:4, 9:13; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:15). It is interesting to note that the thing shared in each of these verses was something material. The most common use of the word *koinonia* is to designate the giving of money to the Lord’s work. Second, it is the joint participation with another that implies approval and for which one is held responsible

(II John 11, I Corinthians 10:20). Third, it refers to working with another in a joint effort, spiritual or otherwise (Luke 5:10, Galatians 2:6-9).

THE CONCLUSION ABOUT FELLOWSHIP 10:19-22

The Incorrect Conclusion 10:19

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

False worship involved three things, one of which the Corinthians were unaware. First, there was the idol, which was nothing in itself. Second, there were the things offered to idols, which were nothing in themselves. Third, there were the unseen and unrecognized demons that lie behind all idolatry and do represent something significant. It is this point that Paul is about to make.

The Correct Conclusion 10:20-22

“No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons. ²²Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?”

A Comparison of the Lord’s Table and Idol Worship

The idol and what is offered to it are nothing in themselves; likewise, the bread and the cup of communion are nothing in themselves. However, when we take the bread and cup, we are testifying to a real fellowship with Christ. When the Corinthians ate at a pagan feast, the food was nothing in itself; but it involved them in a real fellowship with demons.

The Dangers of False Worship

Verse 20 makes it clear that participation in false worship is Satanic involvement whether we know it or not. Verse 21 makes it equally clear that involvement in false worship excludes true worship. The table of demons is the only alternative to the table of Christ. Verse 22 shows us that the Lord is not indifferent to such involvement. We should take note that it is possible for a believer to become involved in false worship.

FREEDOM: THE GUIDELINES 10:23-11:1

THE PRINCIPLE OF LIBERTY 10:23

“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

Life Cannot be Lived by the Slogan “All Things are Lawful” Alone

Possession of liberty is one issue; the wisdom of exercising it is another issue altogether. The exercise of liberty requires the exercise of good judgment and the knowledge of certain principles.

Exercise of Liberty Must be Profitable and Must Edify

The word *edify* in the writings of Paul means *to advance spiritually*. It is not enough to determine what we are at liberty to do; we must also consider its effect on someone else. See also Romans 14:19 and 15:2 for the same concept.

THE CRITERIA FOR LIBERTY 10:24

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

In looking at the New American Standard Bible, one sees the word *good* is in italics. This shows that it has been supplied by the translators and does not have a direct counterpart in the Greek text. Literally, the verse reads, “Let no one seek his own, but that of his neighbor.” Obviously one would ask, “His own what?” It seems best to supply the word *profit* rather than the word *good* because that is the word used in 10:33 in dealing with the same concept. The verb *seek* indicates that the profit of another is to be an active pursuit, not a passive one.

THE APPLICATION OF LIBERTY 10:25-30

Eating Without Asking 10:25-27

“Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake; ²⁶for the earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains ²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience’ sake.”

In Relationship to One’s Personal Life 10:25-26

Verses 20-21 had forbidden the eating of things offered to idols; verse 25 permits it. How may these verses be reconciled? Verses 20-21 deal with the Christian’s presence in the heathen temple where the meat was sacrificed. Verse 25, however, deals with the meat that had left the temple and arrived at the market place. This would show that upon arrival in the market place the meat loses its pagan religious significance.

While the believer should not ignore his conscience, it is also true that he should avoid any inquiries that would create a conscience problem. It is wise not to seek difficulty.

As indicated by the word *for*, verse 26 offers justification for the advice of verse 25. The distinction made is that the source of the meat is pure even though its use is perverted. Paul is telling them to discount the perversion and consider the source. That the meat was offered to an idol makes it no less God’s.

In Relationship to One's Social Life 10:27

It is interesting to note that Paul does not forbid social intercourse with unbelievers. Christians were not ordered to break social relationship with pagans. The believer is to exercise his volition, which is indicated by the words *if you wish to go*. Once again, the believer is told not to ask questions that might create a conscience problem.

Eating When Informed 10:28

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

The Identity of the Informer

The informer could be the unbelieving host. If so, one would wonder why the host would do this. He could be doing it out of kindness and respect for the scruples of his Christian guest. If this were the case, however, then why would he serve this food in the first place? Some have said that the host informed the believer because he wished to embarrass him. It seems very unlikely that one would invite a person to a meal with the intention of embarrassing him.

On the other hand, the informer could be a fellow believer present at the meal. If this be true, he clearly did what Paul has said he is not to do in 10:25, 27—namely, raise questions that would cause problems.

The Action Required

One should stop eating immediately in deference to the conscience of the informer. Even if that person's conscience is weak, as it is, it should be respected and considered.

Not Eating to Avoid Condemnation 10:29-30

"I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?"

Paul would rather forego eating in the middle of the meal than to allow his freedom to be condemned by another, even if he is condemned unjustly and unfairly as is the case here. This carries a message to the weaker brother that he is slandering a fellow Christian by his actions. Paul nevertheless discounts this and acts in a Christian manner.

THE SUMMARY OF LIBERTY 10:31-11:1

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; ³³just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. ^{11:1}Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

The Ultimate Aim of All Conduct 10:31

Having given emphasis to the need to consider another brother in the exercise of liberty, Paul now broadens the issue. The ultimate aim of all conduct is the glory of God. The glory of God is to be the believer’s objective in everything he does.

The Intermediate Aim of All Conduct 10:32-33

Considering All Men 10:32

It is interesting to note Paul’s division of men in his day into three classes, one of which is uniquely the church. Consideration of believer and unbeliever alike should lead to the glory of God.

Considering Individual Men 10:33

When Paul speaks of pleasing men, he does not mean that he is a *man pleaser*. It means that their interests are considered before his own, and the overriding interest of others is their salvation.

The Concrete Example for All Conduct 11:1

As Paul sets forth himself as a model for conduct, he reveals the nature of his ministry. Paul practiced what he preached. However, with the words *just as I also am of Christ*, a restriction is introduced. Paul’s conduct is to be imitated to the extent that it mirrors the conduct of Christ.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

The experiences of Israel need to be carefully considered because they are so repeatable in the life of the believer today (10:6, 11). This is especially true in the area of failing to believe the promises of the word of God.

There are many times when the way out of temptation is to flee as fast as we can (10:13). This is based on the connection of verses 13 and 14. The word *therefore* of verse 14 makes this connection.

rder of Worship

or “Men and Women in the Church”

I Corinthians 11:2-34

THE BEHAVIOR OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH 11:2-16

THE PROPER INTERPRETATION OF THIS PASSAGE

The Question: What Is the Nature of the Head Covering of Verses 5 and 6?

Some insist that the covering is a veil or shawl of some type. On the other hand, some take the covering to refer to her hair. Whatever position one takes, it is important to note that the same basic principles emerge relating to the place of women in the church.

Three Considerations in Studying the New Testament

The Existing Conditions the Passage Addresses

In many cases, the condition addressed by Paul is a problem or deficiency of some sort. Paul responds to the condition with the instruction, correction, or guidance that is appropriate.

The Historical Manifestation the Passage Expresses

While the problems of the church are universal, the historical manifestations are not. This is easily illustrated by the instruction concerning eating meat offered to idols in chapter 10. The problem was the use of liberty; the historical manifestation was the idol temples of Corinth. We do not live in an age where we have to deal with meats offered to idols, but we do have to deal with the problem of the exercise of liberty in the cultural setting in which we find ourselves.

The Eternal Principles the Passage Enunciates

These are the principles to be used no matter what the cultural setting may be. These cultural conditions vary from nation to nation, decade to decade, and even church to church. It is my

conviction that we cannot fill in all the historical details and cultural implications of the head covering of I Corinthians 11. This belief, however, is matched by the conviction that the text provides all we need to know to arrive at the eternal principles needed to function to the glory of God in the local church.

THE COMMENDATION OF THE CHURCH 11:2

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

Praise Before Condemnation

It is the practice of the New Testament to offer praise before condemnation. This can be demonstrated by the letters of Revelation written to the seven churches. Christ always mentions the good before the bad. This is also evident in all of Paul’s epistles and is evident here. Verse 2 says, “I praise you”; and verse 17 says, “I do not praise you.” The praise was based on facts so it was not flattery; it was based on truth so it was not slander.

Holding the Traditions

Tradition in the Bible may be good or bad depending on its content and source. The Lord’s supper is an example of the good tradition (I Corinthians 11:23). The teaching of the apostles formed a body of tradition (II Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6). The New Testament also refers to some tradition that is bad. The uninspired mass of Jewish tradition often ran counter to truth (Matthew 15:6) and was elevated above the word of God (Mark 7:8).

THE REMINDER TO THE CHURCH 11:3

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

The Importance of Headship

Every institution must have order, and order requires authority. The order presented here is that of God, Christ, man, and woman. It is important to remember that authority in function does not imply superiority in nature. God the Father and God the Son are equal in nature but not the same in function. The Son always does that which pleases the Father, but both are equal in terms of Deity. Authority is expressed in this chapter by the noun *head*. In the Greek, the word occurs nine times in the first ten verses (three in verse 3, two in verse 4, two in verse 5, one in verse 7, and one in verse 10). The metaphor of the head conveys the idea of ruling organ.

The Realms of Headship

Man is head in two realms. First, he is head in marriage (I Peter 3:1); second, he is head in the church (I Timothy 2:11-14). Does this headship extend beyond these two relationships, i.e., in the business world? If it extends beyond the above realms, the fact is arguable, but not provable. It seems best to keep the headship within the realms designated by Scripture rather than extend it to other areas.

THE APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH 11:4-10

Activity in the Church 11:4-6

The Activity of the Man 11:4

“Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.”

Both the man and the woman are described as praying and prophesying. There are three oral communications gifts. First, the gift of apostle is linked to obtaining truth. Second, the gift of prophet is linked to proclaiming truth. Third, the gift of teaching is linked to explaining truth. The assumption is that the covered head is symbolic of submission. What *head* is referred to? Does the head mean physical head, or does it mean spiritual head, as described in verse 3. It seems best to assume the meaning of head as stated in verse 3. The head of the man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man.

The Activity of the Woman 11:5-6

“But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.”

The head she dishonors is her husband. One whose head was shaved was often an adulteress. An adulteress was brazen; she recognized submission to no man. The issue is not the nature of the symbol but the presence of submission, however it is manifested.

Propriety in the Church 11:7-10

Propriety as Demanded by Creation 11:7-9

“For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.”

If Paul had said man was in the image of God, the woman could respond that she also was made in the image of God. However,

Paul adds that man was made in the image *and glory of God*. Why is the man God's glory in a special way? First, because he was created prior to woman chronologically. Second, because he was created to reflect God's authority in a special way. Why is woman the glory of man? First, she is *from* him (11:8); and second, she is *for* him (11:9).

Propriety as Demanded by Angels 11:10

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

Angels minister to believers (Hebrews 1:14); and, as seen here, angels observe the activity of the church.

THE CLARIFICATION FOR THE CHURCH 11:11-16

Both Men and Women in the Church Should Glory in their Assigned Positions 11:11-12

"However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹²For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God."

They Should Glory in Their Mutual Dependence 11:11

Separate functions make men and women dependent upon one another. The function of each is absolutely essential to the function of the other.

They Should Glory in Their Mutual Uniqueness 11:12a

Though the first woman was taken from the man, every man is born of a woman. Were there no women, there would be no more men. It is only when they recognize their unique and necessary roles that there is the balance that God intended.

They Should Glory in Their Mutual Origin 11:12b

The role of each comes from God and is not defined by man or created by man. We are talking about God's order, which is always for His glory and man's benefit.

Both Men and Women Should Understand the Logic Involved in God's Assignment 11:13-16

"Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."

The Judgment of the Believer Argues for Submission 11:13***The Judgment of Nature Argues for Submission 11:14-16***

Verse 15 is a strong argument that the nature of the covering was her hair, not a veil. The normal word for hair is not used in these verses. The word which is used implies *hair-do*. The word translated *practice* means *custom*.

OBSERVATIONS ON I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

- Believers in a local church should worship together in the light of the unity of the trinity (11:3).
- Men and women in the church should glory in their uniqueness and in their mutual contribution to one another (11:12)
- Men and women in the church should remain aware of their mutual dependence (11:11).
- Believers should recognize that there is no relationship of any kind or on any level that does not revolve about divinely designated authority.

THE BEHAVIOR OF ALL AT THE LORD'S SUPPER 11:17-34**THE PROBLEM OF MOCKERY OF THE LORD'S TABLE 11:17-22****The Problem in General 11:17-19**

"But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. ¹⁹For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you."

The Effect of the Problem 11:17

The conduct at the Lord's table was damaging to the church in that it was harmful (11:17) and degrading (11:22). This verse shows that every time the church meets, two potentials exist. It also shows that any condition that hinders the purpose for which the church meets, namely edification, should be corrected, not overlooked.

The Nature of the Problem 11:18

The word *for* introduces the justification for what Paul has just said. The words *in the first place* would lead us to look for a problem in addition to the one being discussed. However, we look in vain for the words *in the second place*, or even *next*. The problem is solved by noting that in verse 34 Paul says, "And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come."

The Benefit of the Problem 11:19

It sounds a bit contradictory to expect benefits to arise out of problems. God's sovereignty, however, is able to bring us blessing from all things. Gnosticism brought us Colossians; legalism brought us Galatians; and factions and divisions brought us I Corinthians. The good benefit of factions is to cause those who are approved to stand out by way of contrast.

The Problem in Particular 11:20-22

"Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, ²¹for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."

The Negation of the Problem 11:20

Verse 20 is capable of two translations. It may be translated, "It is not the Lord's supper you eat." This would be understood as a cutting remark like saying, "This is not the Lord's supper; this is a debacle!" On the other hand, it could be translated, "It is not possible to eat the Lord's supper." This would be saying they were invalidating the spiritual significance of the Lord's supper. Either way, their conduct was negating the significance of the supper.

The Manifestation of the Problem 11:21

What we call the Lord's supper was often preceded by what they called the *agapa* or the *love feast*. It was a meal intended to establish an equality between the poor and the rich in the church. The essence of the Corinthian behavior was self-centeredness, shown in this verse by the position of the words *each* and *his own*. They are the first words of the verse, giving them great emphasis. It was not even a common supper, much less the Lord's supper.

The Rebuke of the Problem 11:22

This verse is divided into two portions by the word *and*. In the first half of the verse, Paul charges that their conduct is a sin against the church as a whole. Then as the word *and* introduces the second half of the verse, he charges that they sin against the poor as individuals.

A REVIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S TABLE 11:23-26

The Lord's supper was directly instituted by Jesus as is found in Mark 14:22-25 and Luke 22:17-20. It was celebrated in connection with Passover, and the significance of each is the same. Passover *anticipates* the cross, whereas the Lord's Supper *commemorates* the cross.

The Authority for the Lord's Supper 11:23a

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you..."

The chain from the Lord to Paul to the church demonstrates the doctrine of revelation. Revelation is the "top-side-down" doctrine of Scripture. It means that the Bible is not the product of human thought and research—it is not man's reach upward but God's communication downward.

Revelation from God carries with it an obligation, i.e., the responsibility to pass it on unaltered and unmodified. This is Paul's claim in this verse.

The Time of the Lord's Supper 11:23b

"...that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread..."

The institution of the Lord's Supper is fixed chronologically by the betrayal of Judas. The verse does not say "on Passover evening He took bread" or "on the eve of His death He took bread." It does say He took bread "in the night in which He was betrayed." The word *betrayed* is a continuous action verb. The betrayal was in progress as the Lord's Supper was instituted.

This fact tells us three things about Christ's death. First, it tells us the kind of men for whom He died. He died, not merely for weak men, but also for those who were His enemies (Romans 5:10). Second, it shows the kind of salvation He brings. It is a salvation by grace, not a salvation of human merit. Third, it shows the kind of love that His death demonstrates. He gave Himself for men in the face of one who betrayed Him.

The Initiation of the Lord's Supper 11:24a

"...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you...' "

Since this is part of a Passover meal, we can be reasonably certain that the bread was unleavened. Since leaven consistently represents sin, its absence from the bread is significant. It is the sinless Son of God who is to die. All accounts note that He broke the bread, which would symbolically point to the bruised and battered body of the Lord in His death.

The words *for you* are important. The preposition *for* means *on behalf of* and points to the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death. In a very real sense, He was there in our place bearing the guilt and penalty of sin that was rightly ours.

The Obligation of the Lord's Supper 11:24b-25

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

The obligation to observe the Lord's Supper is found in the twice repeated verb *do this*. It is present tense, involving repeated and continuous action, and imperative mood, showing command, and thus, obligation.

The Significance of the Lord's Supper 11:24b-25

Once again, we have a twice repeated phrase, *in remembrance of Me*. The word *remembrance* means *to call to mind*. It is a vigorous word that denotes intense mental activity and reflection. The Lord's table is unique in that it is a call to look away from ourselves and to fix our eyes on the person and work of Christ.

The Proclamation of the Lord's Supper 11:26

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

To proclaim the Lord's death does not merely mean to proclaim the fact of His death. To proclaim His death is to proclaim the significance of His death in the sense that it was a substitutionary death for sinners. The Lord's Supper not only commemorates but is also a proclamation of the gospel.

This proclamation is the age-long privilege of the church and is to be done *until He comes*. At the return of Christ, the symbols terminate. No further symbol of the body is needed when the body itself returns. What will happen to this table when Christ returns?

Matthew 26:29 gives us our answer saying, " 'But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' " Instead of drinking in memory of Him, we will drink with Him as He reigns in His kingdom.

A WARNING ABOUT PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S TABLE 11:27-34

THE POTENTIAL SIN 11:27

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

The Nature of the Sin 11:27a

What does it mean to partake of the Lord's table *in an unworthy manner*? The adverb describes how they partake—the manner in which they partake. It has nothing to do with the personal worthiness of the one who takes. They were treating the Lord's table as a common meal, almost a grand party (11:20-21)! The Lord's Supper demands dignity, sobriety, and reverence.

The Consequence of the Sin 11:27b

The words *guilty of* mean *to be guilty of violating the body and blood of the Lord; to be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord*. To dishonor the symbols is to dishonor what they represent. Their actions were an insult to the person of Christ.

THE PROVIDED PROTECTION 11:28-32**The Need for Self-examination 11:28-29**

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.”

The word *examine* means *to put something to a test*. One should ask, “Am I in the proper state of mind for commemorating and proclaiming the death of Christ?” The assumption of these verses is that the believer will find that he is in right condition to partake, or he will take the necessary means to become so.

The word *himself* assumes that the believer needs no assistance in this examination and also shows that others are not his concern at this point. Chrysostom said, “He does not order one man to test another, but each man himself; thus making the court a private one and the verdict without witnesses.” The word *man* is singular, meaning each individual is to conduct his own personal examination.

The Need for Divine Discipline 11:30-32

“For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. ³¹But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.”

The discipline spoken of is not potential but real. Verse 30 shows that some illnesses, and even deaths, in the Corinthian church were due to divine discipline. This can be avoided only by self-examination. Verse 32 makes it clear that discipline is only temporal, not eternal.

THE REFORMED AGAPA 11:33-34

“So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.”

All of this argues for preparation and respect when the church assembles together. The Lord is not passive toward wrong conduct in the church.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

In a day when so many are struggling to find their place in life, it is refreshing to know that God has an order of things, and this order should be appreciated (11:11-12).

The significance of the Lord’s supper should be kept in mind, noting that it is the only thing that the Lord has asked us to do for Him personally (11:24). If we take this lightly, the Lord will respond with discipline.

Problems of Worship

or “Understanding Spiritual Gifts”

I Corinthians 12:1-31

REVIEW OF THEIR PAGAN PAST 12:1-3

THE SUBJECT INTRODUCED 12:1

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.”

The “Pneumatikon”

The words *spiritual gifts* translate one Greek word, *pneumatikon*. It is plural and thus Paul is saying, “Now concerning spirituals....” The context tells what these *spirituals* are. Verses 9-10 show them to be special abilities for serving the body of Christ. The noun *pneuma* means *spirit* and emphasizes the Holy Spirit as the source of the gift. The word *spiritual* is used two ways in the New Testament. First, it is used of anything that pertains to the person of the Holy Spirit. Second, it is used to designate the work that He does in the life of the believer.

The “Charisma”

This designation is found in verse 4 where it is translated *gifts*. The word **charisma** is a derivative of *charis*, which means *grace*; the emphasis is on the basis of the gift as a matter of grace.

THE CONTRAST MADE 12:2-3

What They Once Were 12:2a

“You know that when you were pagans...”

There are not many religions; there are only two—paganism and Christianity. The Corinthian church consisted of those whose viewpoint (12:2) and life-style (6:9-11) was once pagan.

How They Were Once Influenced

“...you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.”

First, they were led by many means. This fact is indicated by the word *however*. The reference would be to the multitude of pagan teachers that had influenced them in their former life. Second, they were led to one end. Every time they were led to an idol of some sort. The word translated *dumb* means *no voice, incapable of speech*. Paganism followed idols that could not express their will or answer questions.

How They Have Now Been Changed 12:3

“Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

The recognition of Jesus as the Lord indicates that the Holy Spirit has now worked in the former pagan Corinthians enabling them to enter the family of God. The Holy Spirit functions to exalt the person of Christ.

STATEMENT OF THEIR EXISTING GIFTS 12:4-11

THEIR DIVINE ORIGIN 12:4-6

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

In God the Holy Spirit 12:4

The key word in these verses is *varieties*, which occurs three times. The primary meaning of the word is *apportionment or distribution*, and the secondary meaning is *variety*. It is translated *distributing* in verse 11. Note the emphasis on the source being the Holy Spirit.

In God the Son 12:5

The word *ministries* is the broadest word in the New Testament for service of any type. The second person of the Trinity is now introduced as the source of gifts.

In God the Father 12:6

The word *effects* is *energama* (our English word *energy*), which refers to effective energy which is always a divine product.

THEIR SINGLE AIM 12:7

<i>“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”</i>		
The words <i>each one</i> call attention to the fact that no believer is without at least one spiritual gift. The teaching of verses 4-7 may be set forth graphically this way—		
	GIFTS	
One Source	Great Variety	One Goal
The Spirit	“gifts”	
The Son	“ministries”	“common good”
The Father	“effects”	

THEIR DIVERSE NATURE 12:8-11

“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”

Gifts Relating to the Needs of the Mind 12:8

The Ability of Communication
First the communication of insight is the function of the *word of wisdom*. The expression *word* refers to doctrine or the power to communicate it. Second, the communication of facts is the function of the *word of knowledge*.

The Ability of Appropriation
This is found in the gift of faith. Is not every believer to live by faith? The answer is obviously yes. In what sense, then, do only some have this gift of faith. The answer lies in our understanding of what a gift is. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability of extraordinary proportions. Certain gifts are extensions of abilities possessed and exercised by all believers.

Gifts Relating to the Needs of the Body 12:9

| These are the gifts of healing and the gifts of miracles.

Gifts Relating to the Needs of the Spirit 12:10

| The need for revelation is gained by the gift of prophecy; the need for protection by the gift of distinguishing of spirits; the need for edification by the gifts of tongues and interpretation.

PRESENTATION OF THEIR BODY FUNCTION 12:12-31

THE BASIC ANALOGY ESTABLISHED 12:12

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

“as the body...so also Christ”

The words *as* and *so* introduce the comparison basic to the rest of Chapter 12. The human body is both a unity and a diversity of parts. This unity and diversity in the same body are fully compatible, and so it is in the body of Christ.

THE BASIC UNITY ACCOMPLISHED 12:13

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

The Work of the Holy Spirit Creates Unity

In I Corinthians 12:1-11 we are shown how the Holy Spirit creates diversity in the church; in 12:13 we are shown how He creates the basic unity of the church. The words *we all* are found in the middle of the verse and may be thought of as a pinnacle. The words *for by one Spirit* are on the left of *we all*, and the words *baptized into one body* are on the right.

The words *we all* apply universally and emphatically to every believer with the words *one body* showing the results of the operation of the Holy Spirit. The word *baptized* means *to put into* and points to the invisible work of the Holy Spirit in placing us into the body of Christ the moment we believe.

The Presence of the Holy Spirit Creates Unity

The word *all* in the last of the verse is emphatic, with the universal presence the Holy Spirit in view

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE DEVELOPED 12:14-26

Diversity Does Not Destroy Unity 12:14-16

“For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.”

Diversity Is Necessary for Unity 12:17

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

Diversity Is God’s Arrangement 12:18-19

| “But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”

| To this point Paul has argued his point using logic. Now he points to an argument higher than logic: Diversity is part of God’s arrangement of things

Diversity Dictates Dependence 12:20-26

| “But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ ²²On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, ²⁴whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, ²⁵that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

| As the organs of the physical body need one another, so the members of the church need one another (12:20-21). As the least attractive parts of the body are important and should be treated with respect, so are the less conspicuous members of the church important. As the humbler parts of the body are given special attention by covering them with clothing and giving them appropriate food, so the poor and humble in the church are to be cherished (12:22-23). The word *but* in the middle of verse 24 reminds us once again of the sovereign purposes of God. It should be kept in mind that verses 20-26 present one of Paul’s most extensive illustrations and analogies, and the parallels between the physical body and the body of Christ are many; at the same time, care should be taken not to overextend the details.

THE BASIC APPLICATION MADE 12:27-31**The Context of Gifts 12:27**

| “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”

The Three Elements of the Church

The church is called Christ's body and has three aspects. First, there is the universal church, which crosses all racial, social, and denominational lines and is made up of every genuine believer in the world. Since we do not know who all of these believers are, it is often called the church invisible. Second, there is the local church, which refers to the body of believers as they exist in a given locality such as Corinth, Rome, or Philippi. It is the divinely ordained vehicle of the believer's edification and function. Finally, we have the individual members of the body of Christ.

The Church Is Called the "Body of Christ"

The church is called the body of Christ because He called it forth; it is His body because He manifests Himself in it through the Holy Spirit; and it is His body because He maintains it by His word.

The Order of Gifts 12:28

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

The order found here is intentional and significant. This is shown by the listing of gifts as *first, second, third, and then* order. It is also confirmed by the listing of Ephesians 4:11-13, which observes the same order. Tongues, healing, and miracles are not mentioned in the Ephesians passage, which is dealing with the gifts needed for the edification of the church. It should also be noted that the gifts listed here follow a descending order in terms of scope. The apostle is first because he had an all encompassing gift—he could prophesy, he could teach, he could perform miracles, and he could heal. The prophet, however, could not exercise apostolic authority. The teacher, listed third, had neither apostolic authority or prophetic gift. This same order is also observed in verses 29 and 30.

The Distribution of Gifts 12:29-30

"All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? ³⁰All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"

Each of the questions expects a "no" answer and anticipates the teaching on tongues to be found in Chapter 14. Tongues refers to a language because they require translation. The word *interpret* means *to translate*. Acts 9:36 is an example in saying "...there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which *translated* in Greek is called Dorcas)...."

The Implementation of Gifts 12:31

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

These words form the introduction to Chapter 13, which expounds “the more excellent way.” The command to *earnestly desire the greater gifts* must be understood in a way that harmonizes with the fact that gifts are sovereignly bestowed (12:11). The exhortation encourages the Corinthian believers to get their priorities in order. Their emphasis was on the lesser gifts such as tongues rather than on the more important ones, and this needs correction.

NOTES

NOTES

Love: the Priority Attitude

or “*The More Excellent Way*”

I Corinthians 13:1-13

THE NECESSITY OF LOVE 13:1-3

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

Each of the first three verses of this chapter goes through three cycles; and thus, each may be outlined the same way. Each begins by stating a certain existing condition, then points to an absence, and concludes with the result.

THE FIRST CYCLE 13:1

The Assumed Condition

The expression *tongues of men* refers to human language, but what does *tongues of angels* mean? Some take it to mean that angels have a special language that they use in heaven. The difficulty with this interpretation can be seen by noting that whenever angels speak in the Bible, they always use human language (Luke 1:13ff). It seems best to see this expression as a hyperbole, an exaggeration to make a point. A hyperbole is contrary to reality but does make a strong point. Paul is saying, “If you speak with the tongues of men or even more!”

The Assumed Absence

This is found in the terse words *but do not have love*, which recur in each of the first three verses. The word *love* is the well-known Greek word *agapa*. First, it is used of the deep affection existing between God the Father and God the Son (John 15:10, 17:26). Second, it is used of God’s affection for us that is manifested in the

| gift of His Son for our sakes (I John 4:10). Third, it is used of Christians' affection for one another (John 13:34-35).

The Certain Result

| Where does Paul derive the imagery of the noisy gong and clanging cymbal? If the imagery is derived from the Old Testament, then the use of the cymbal in temple worship may be in view (II Samuel 6:5, I Chronicles 13:8, Psalm 150:5). The message would be, "If you do not have love, you only have the noise part of worship!"

| If the imagery is taken from pagan worship, we should note that cymbals were used in the worship of Dionysius. The message would therefore be, "If love is absent, the noise of your worship is not unlike that of the pagans." The words *have become* are perfect tense, referring to a settled and complete state.

THE SECOND CYCLE 13:2

The Assumed Condition

| The three items listed here probably refer to the three classes of instructors referred to in 12:28. The *gift of prophecy* refers to the prophet; the knowledge of *all mysteries* would refer to the apostle; the possession of *all knowledge* would point to the teacher; and *faith* would refer to wonder working faith, not to saving faith.

The Assumed Absence

| Once more, the words *but do not have love* are repeated.

The Certain Result

| The words *I am nothing* bring us to an abrupt but sober conclusion.

THE THIRD CYCLE 13:3

The Assumed Condition

| It is possible to surrender everything one owns, including one's own life, and still not have love. Love is not measured by sacrifice alone because sacrifice could be made only for the glory one receives. True love is the mental attitude that demands that we do what is best for another no matter what the cost to us. A sacrifice made without love may profit another, but it is of no profit to the man himself.

The Assumed Absence

| Now, we have the final repetition of the words *but do not have love*.

The Certain Result

The sacrifice *profits me nothing*. Looking back at these three verses, we should note that Paul uses the first person pronoun *I*. Chapter 12 was spoken to the church; chapter 13 is spoken by Paul about himself. It is an autobiographical testimonial by Paul.

THE CHARACTER OF LOVE 13:4-7

LOVE'S UNSELFISHNESS 13:4

“Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant....”

Love “Is Patient”

This word has many facets of meaning. First, it carries the idea of restraint when one has the right to act. Matthew 18:21-35 speaks of a king whose servant owed him ten thousand talents. When the time came to settle the account, the servant could not pay and requested, “Have *patience* with me and I will repay you everything.” This is the same word used in I Corinthians 13:4. The king then “released him and forgave him the debt,” responding with patience and demonstrating the meaning of the word. Second, the word refers to the ability to delay a response and is translated *delay* in Luke 18:7. Third, the Lord Himself is the supreme example as seen in I Peter 3:20 and II Peter 3:8-9. Fourth, patience is listed among the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

Love “Is Kind”

The word translated *kind* means *to have a desire to bestow good on another*. Patience is a passive quality; kindness is an active quality. The key idea in patience is restraining; the key idea in kindness is bestowing.

Love “Is not Jealous”

The word *jealous* in its literal sense means *to boil*. From this idea, it goes in two directions. First, it is used in a good sense for zeal and is translated *earnestly desire* in I Corinthians 12:31. Second, it is used in a bad sense for *envy* as here in saying *love is not jealous*. Acts 5:17, 7:9, and 13:45 give us living examples of jealousy.

Love “Does not Brag”

The fact that love *does not brag* refers to being ostentatious, anxious to display oneself, loving to enumerate one's qualities, mainly those that are intellectual in nature.

Love “Is not Arrogant”

In saying that love is *not arrogant*, Paul uses a word whose noun form means *bellows*. The verb means *to swell up like bellows*. Unfortunately, this was a characteristic of the Corinthian church where it manifested itself in contention (4:6), in their attitude toward Paul (4:18), in the resultant speech (4:19), in their casual attitude toward blatant sin (5:2), and finally, in intellectual pride (8:1).

LOVE’S CONDUCT 13:5-6

“...does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;”

Love “Does not Act Unbecomingly”

The original uses only two words here—the alpha privative meaning *not* and a verb that refers to behavior that embarrasses another. In English, we would use the word *rude* or *unmannerly*.

Love “Does not Seek Its Own”

The obvious question raised by this statement is, its own what? I Corinthians 10:24 and 33 supply an answer by speaking of another’s benefit or advantage. Seeking one’s own benefit is a natural human characteristic that is eliminated by genuine love.

Love “Is not Provoked”

The word *provoked* describes a reaction that cannot occur unless triggered by something else. It refers to the attitude that results from a real or imagined injustice. Its absence means we do not let wrongs embitter us. It is found in the English word *paroxysm*, which refers to a sudden outburst of angry emotion.

Love “Does not Take into Account a Wrong Suffered”

First, note that there is no question about one being wronged; this is assumed to have happened. Second, the term *take into account* is used for noting something in a ledger. Love does not keep a mental notebook of wrongs for which retaliation is planned. The word *wrong* has the article *the* with it in Greek, meaning a specific and definable event is in mind.

Love “Does not Rejoice in Unrighteousness”

The word *in* is literally *over*. Love does not rejoice over the victory of unrighteousness. These words should be compared to the next positive quality of love.

Love “Rejoices with the Truth”

First, the comparison of the terms *does not rejoice* and *rejoices* indicates that love is never neutral; love takes sides. Second, we are shown the relationship of love to truth. Love does not avoid truth, and love does not compromise truth. Third, truth is not merely an intellectual issue; truth is a moral issue. Paul’s antithesis is not between unrighteousness and righteousness but between unrighteousness and truth. In the Bible one cannot be wise unless he is also good. No matter what one knows, he is a fool if he has no moral character.

Love and truth are intimate companions. Paul does not say love rejoices *over* truth but rather love rejoices *in* truth. The second verb translated *rejoices* is a word with the preposition *sun* as a prefix. *Sun* refers to fellowship, co-operation, and intimacy. We could translate “love co-rejoices with truth.”

LOVE’S OPTIMISM 13:7

“...*bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*”

Love “Bears All Things”

The meaning of the verb *bears* is very broad and rich. The word *bears* in the noun form means *that which covers; a roof*. The meaning of the verb is *to pass over something in silence; to keep confidential*. This is the quality of love that does not wish to broadcast what is bad, even if it is true. I Peter 4:8 confirms that love does this. The word *bears* also means *to endure*, as in I Corinthians 9:12.

Love “Believes All Things”

This is not saying that we should be gullible in the sense of being easily duped. Calvin comments that Paul is not saying we should allow ourselves to be fooled by every rogue or to pretend that white is black. Paul is teaching that love always puts the best construction on things. In doubtful cases, one would rather be generous in his conclusion than to suspect unjustly. When love has no evidence, it believes the best.

Love “Hopes All Things”

Love is not pessimistic; love is optimistic. We often tend to think that some people are simply optimists or pessimists by birth and personality. These words, however, link the presence of optimism to the presence of love.

Love “Endures All Things”

When love has no evidence it *believes all things*; when the evidence is adverse, *love hopes all things*; and when hope is disappointed, *love endures all things*.

THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE 13:8-12

THE ENDURANCE OF LOVE STATED 13:8a

“Love never fails...”

This statement is a logical conclusion arising from verse 7. If love endures all things, then no assault will ever vanquish it; if it cannot be vanquished, it obviously will never fail. Love is a survivor.

THE TRANSIENCE OF GIFTS STATED 13:8b-12

“...but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. ⁹For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. ¹¹When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

The Temporary Nature of Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledge

Of prophecies, *they will be done away*; of tongues, *they will cease*; and of knowledge, *it will be done away*. The verb used with *prophecies* and *knowledge* is identical. In both cases it is future tense, passive voice. In the future, they will be acted upon in such a way that they will be made inoperative. The verb used with *tongues* is different. It is future tense, middle voice. Middle voice means the action of the verb is directed toward itself. We could say, “Tongues shall cease in and of themselves.” A. T. Robertson says, “‘They shall cease,’ future middle of *pauso*, to make cease. They shall make themselves cease or automatically cease of themselves.” All will end but in a different manner.

The Cessation of Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledge

When will prophecy, tongues, and knowledge come to an end? Concerning prophecy and knowledge, verses 9 and 10 provide our answer. Since each of them bears the characteristic of being partial, they will come to an end when the complete, or *perfect*, comes. Why do verses 9 and 10 say nothing about tongues? Because there is nothing that brings tongues to an end; they cease in and of themselves (middle voice). The verb *done away* in verse 10 is the fulfillment of the same future tense verb found in verse 8.

To understand when prophecy and knowledge end requires that we identify what the perfect is. What then is the *perfect*? Some take it to be the return of Christ. This is not, however, the subject of this chapter, nor is there any allusion to it. The word *perfect* is *teleios*, and its basic meaning is *to be complete*. The completion of prophecy and knowledge is the New Testament canon. It must be remem-

bered that the church age has a pre-canon era and a post-canon era. Pentecost was at least fifty years before the last New Testament book was written. The Corinthian church existed in the pre-canon era.

This division is supported by Paul's illustration in verse 11. In verse 11 the verb *spoke* matches *tongues*, *think* and *reason* fit with *prophecies* and *knowledge*. Each of these is linked to childhood. They were gifts that functioned in the childhood of the church. As Paul was once a child who as a man put away childhood things, so the church was once in its childhood days and must put away things of its childhood.

The word *now* in verse 12 would point to pre-canon days, and the word *then* to the days when the canon will be complete and the fullness of God's revelation in the Scriptures would come about.

THE SUPERIORITY OF LOVE 13:13

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

THE MISUSE OF THIS VERSE

This verse is often used in an attempt to show that love is superior to everything, including truth. Note, however, that love is compared to faith and hope, not truth. Love and truth are always compatible and inseparable in the word of God.

THE CORRECT USE OF THIS VERSE

Love is the highest Christian virtue, the fundamental and basic quality of the believer's character. Love is not a doctrine; love is a quality.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

Love should never be evaluated in terms of sentiment or feeling; love is to be judged by actions; it is not what love says, it is what love does.

I Corinthians 13 shows that Christianity has standards and norms of conduct unmatched by any of the religions of the world. It stands in contrast to religious performance or rites and flows from truth and the believer's relationship to God.

NOTES

The Priority of Edification

or “Acting Properly and in Order”

I Corinthians 14:1-40

I Corinthians 14 revolves about two themes, edification and order. The priority of edification in worship is the theme of 14:1-25; the necessity of order in worship is the theme of 14:26-40. The idea of edification is found over and over, as in 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, and 26. Verse 26 gives the comprehensive command, “Let all things be done for edification.” In Paul’s writing, edification always refers to spiritual advancement.

Tongues are mentioned repeatedly in this chapter, but why? Tongues are mentioned for two reasons. First, they had been over emphasized (14:1-2). Second, they had gotten in the way of edification of the church (14:14). Chapter 14 picks up the thread of chapters 12 and 13. In 14:1 the term *pursue love* picks up the theme of chapter 13; and the words *desire earnestly spiritual gifts* pick up the theme of chapter 12.

THE PRIORITY OF EDIFICATION IN WORSHIP 14:1-25

THE INFERIORITY OF TONGUES 14:1-5

The Priorities Needed 14:1

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

The word *pursue* is much stronger than the word *desire* and refers to intensive and persistent action. It is often translated *persecute*, as in 15:9. We might say, “Hound love like I once hounded the church.” *Love* and *spiritual gifts* both have a definite article in front of them. Therefore, *the love* refers to the love spoken of in chapter 13; and *the spiritual gifts* refers to the gifts of chapter 12. This verse is telling the Corinthians to pursue love over the gifts and desire prophecy among the gifts.

The Adjustment Argued 14:2-5

The Priority of Prophecy in Terms of the One Addressed 14:2-3

“For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. ³But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

What is the nature of tongues? Acts 2:4-11 is the first historical occasion of this manifestation. Acts 2:4 mentions *tongues*, and Acts 2:6 gives its synonym as *language*. The word for language is *dialektos* and means *the language of a region or an entire nation*. Its specific identification with human language is found in Acts 2:8-11 where the “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia...” are listed.

Acts 10:44-46 is the next occurrence. Here tongues are mentioned, but not defined. Good interpretation would understand them to be the same activity as in Acts 2 where there is no question as to their nature. The final occurrence is in Acts 19:6 where tongues are mentioned, but not explained. Outside of I Corinthians 1, this is all the information we have on tongues.

Why does Paul say tongues are spoken to God? Because no one but God would know what was being said. Tongues without translation were intelligible to God but unintelligible to man. As Paul is going to show, the unintelligible cannot edify—therefore, the superiority of prophecy over tongues. In prophecy, man was addressed (14:3). Prophecy was the power to comprehend and make known the will of God. When this is done, there is widespread spiritual benefit.

The Priority of Prophecy in Terms of the Ones Benefited 14:4-5

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

Tongues benefit one; prophecy benefits all. When Paul begins to give some of the rules for proper operation in the church, he will forbid the continuation of this practice (14:28). Conditions that prevent or hinder the edification of the whole assembly should not be tolerated.

THE DEFICIENCY OF TONGUES 14:6-19

The Question 14:6

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

This verse anticipates a visit by Paul to Corinth, recalling 4:19-21. That visit would be profitable only under the condition that truth from God (*revelation*) is the focal point.

The Illustration 14:7-8

“Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? ⁸For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”

The premise of this illustration is that sound is not sufficient unless it communicates meaning. The bugle referred to is the military trumpet that called the people into battle. Sound alone is certainly not adequate for edification.

The Conclusion 14:9-12

The Preliminary Conclusion 14:9-11

“So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. ¹¹If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”

Once again, Paul notes that even an understandable language can communicate nothing to one who does not know that language. The word *barbarian* is an onomatopoeic word used by the Greeks of someone who did not speak the Greek language. Meaning and understanding is everything; sound is nothing.

The Final Conclusion 14:12

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

The illustration is now brought to its final application by the phrase *so also you*. The Corinthians are to redirect their zeal in the direction of edification, and that of the entire assembly, not just a few.

The Reiteration 14:13-19

Understanding Is so Important that Tongues May not Stand Alone 14:13

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

As has been previously noted, the word *interpret* means *to translate*. This obviously argues that the nature of tongues is not ecstatic but human language with grammar and syntax. Later on, Paul will forbid speaking in tongues without translation.

The Principle of Understanding Includes Singing and Praying Also 14:14-17

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. ¹⁶Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.”

Prayer must flow from thought, and praise is to be both musical and mental. The word *Amen* is a word used to affirm truth. If one does not understand what is being said, there is no way he can determine if it is true or not. Speaking in tongues is inconsiderate because it does not consider the needs of others for understanding. There should be nothing in corporate worship that is not understandable and orderly.

Paul Serves as an Example 14:18-19

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

The primary issue in the church is teaching, learning, and edification. The word *instruct* is the word *katacheo*, brought into English as the word *catechism*. It refers to instruction presented in an orderly and categorical manner.

THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES 14:20-25

The Call to Mature Thinking 14:20

“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.”

The Corinthians betrayed childishness in two ways. First, they were childish in their preoccupation with the dramatic. Children prefer that which glitters or tastes good to that which is real and of permanent value. Second, they were childish in their neglect of the mind. The context of Paul’s teaching is not the use of tongues, but rather the abuse of tongues.

The Basis for Mature Thinking 14:21-22

“In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord. ²²So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.”

These two verses contain a clear explanation of the purpose of tongues. The passage quoted is taken from Isaiah 28:11 and was

announcement of judgment. Because the nation would not listen to God's word in their native language of Hebrew, God announced that he would send a message in a language they would not understand. The *strange tongues* refers to language other than Hebrew. The tongues judgment was directed against unbelieving Jews.

Tongues were intended to call the Jews' attention to Isaiah 28:11. Why is this appropriate? First, tongues were associated with the beginning of the church age. Second, it would remind the nation that God's word spoken by Isaiah was being fulfilled. Third, it would remind the nation that God is now speaking once again, and they need to set aside their rebellion and join in the church age.

The Application of Mature Thinking 14:23-25

Relative to Tongues 14:23

"If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?"

It is not a compliment for the unbeliever to conclude that the assembly of believers is crazy, and this is the very thing that will happen if the Corinthians continue to operate as they are currently doing.

Relative to Prophecy 14:24-25

"But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you."

The power of the word of God intelligently and clearly spoken is the focal point of these two verses. Instead of the unbeliever forming an opinion, his opinion is shaped by the prophesying that explains and expounds the will of God. When this is done, they have a hope that he will respond in faith and become part of the Corinthian assembly.

THE NECESSITY OF ORDER IN WORSHIP 14:26-40

GIFTS MUST BE CAREFULLY REGULATED 14:26-33

Outline of a Public Worship Service 14:26a

"What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation...."

First, the psalm refers to a hymn since the psalms were set to music. Hymn books were nonexistent; therefore, the psalm and the

music would reside in the memory of a few. Second, there was the teaching and expounding of doctrine. Third, there was a revelation—keep in mind that this is the church in pre-canon days when revelation was still coming. Finally, there were tongues and interpretation. Because of abuse, these two gifts call for revelation which follows later in this chapter.

The Aim of the Service 14:26b

| *“Let all things be done for edification.”*

The Regulation of the Service 14:27-33

Pertaining to Tongues 14:27-28

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; ²⁸but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.”

First, there is regulation intended to secure order. There are to be no more than three altogether, and they are to speak one at a time. It is very important to note that the gift of tongues as seen in the early church was under control. The existence of this regulation shows that it was not a blind overpowering urge. The speaker had complete control over the situation; there were to be no outbursts. Second, there is regulation to secure understanding. There is to be only one interpreter so that the message comes from only one person. Paul is not encouraging tongues but limiting and controlling tongues without forbidding tongues. At that point in the history of the church, it was a valid gift.

Pertaining to Prophecy 14:29-33

AN ORDER TO BE OBSERVED 14:29

“And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.”

There is an important principle found here. The congregation controls the gifts; the gifts do not control the congregation. This is rarely, if ever, the principle found in charismatic churches. There is a continual waiting to fall under the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit. Paul forbids a congregation to be controlled by charismatic functions.

It is also true that the presence of a prophecy was not sufficient to prove its truthfulness. Others are to pass judgment on its validity.

AN INTERRUPTION TO BE AVOIDED 14:30

“But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.”

Once again, there is to be complete control exercised in the use of gifts.

A CONTROL TO BE DISPLAYED 14:31-32

“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.”

The aim of the service is to encourage the intellect (*all may learn*) and to encourage the volition (*all may be exhorted*). There is to be no activity that is not under complete control based on the principle that the *spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*.

A PRINCIPLE TO BE MAINTAINED 14:33A

“for God is not a God of confusion but of peace.....”

The order of the service is to reflect the character of God in that He is orderly. If two should speak at once, at least one of them was not moved by God because disorder is contrary to His nature; and God’s works are always an accurate reflection of His character.

THE REGULATION OF WOMEN IN WORSHIP 14:33B-36

“...as in all the churches of the saints. ³⁴Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. ³⁵And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?”

Where Does Verse 34 Begin?

Verse 33 should end with the word *peace*. The words *as in all the churches* start a new sentence. This is the punctuation of the Greek New Testament and makes the best sense. A comma should fall after the word *saints*.

Is the Prohibition on Women Speaking in the Assembly Absolute?

Some would interpret the *speaking* as speaking in tongues or prophecy. This is doubtless covered by the prohibition of this verse, but does the prohibition go further than this?

Verse 35 leads us to believe that the prohibition is absolute. The *speaking* even extends to the asking of questions. Obviously some “what if” questions can rise at this point. What if her husband is unwilling or unable to answer her questions? Is she then to be left in the dark? What if she is single and has no husband to ask? These questions are left to mature judgment and application of general principles of the word of God.

THE AUTHORITY OF PAUL'S INSTRUCTION 14:37-40

The "If" Condition 14:37-38

"If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. ³⁸But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."

The divine authority of Paul's instruction is beyond question. What does it mean to be *not recognized*? Certainly they will not be recognized by Paul and not by the other churches, and possibly Paul means they will not be recognized by God either.

The "Therefore" Conclusion 14:39-40

"Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. ⁴⁰But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner."

Paul concludes with a balancing statement. Prophecy is the priority; tongues are to be regulated, but not forbidden. Charismatic activity is not to disturb the order of the church.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

Our major emphasis in the local church should center on edification and spiritual growth (14:26). Every activity should contribute to spiritual growth, and all activities that do not contribute should be eliminated.

This chapter should teach us how easily charismatic activity can get out of hand. Had this not been the case, the chapter would never have been written. That which is emotional and dramatic is appealing to all of us, but the dramatic is not always what is most important.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection

or “Death Is Swallowed Up in Victory”

I Corinthians 15:1-58

THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION 15:1-5

THE SUBJECT OF THE GOSPEL INTRODUCED 15:1A

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you...”

Paul is not proclaiming the gospel to the Corinthians for the first time. They had already heard and believed the gospel, but they needed to rethink and review what the gospel was. Why would believers need to do this? Because fundamental truth is always easily forgotten.

There is a co-relation of words in this verse. The word *gospel* and the word *preached* are forms of the word *euangelion*. Literally, Paul is saying, “The gospel which I gospeled to you.” First, the word means *good news* in a general sense. Second, in the New Testament it is used to refer to God’s promised and provided salvation in Christ. The article *the* with gospel means this is the only one there is; there is no other.

THE VALUE OF THE GOSPEL STATED 15:1B-2A

“...which (gospel) also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved...”

Its Value in Their Past

The word *received* is an aorist tense, referring to a definite and definable act, and carries two ideas with it. First, it means *to take to oneself* or *to take over, to appropriate*. Second, it means *to agree and thus approve of something*. Paul is now going to review the content of that gospel for them.

Its Value in Their Present

The tense of the word *stand* is perfect, referring to a past completed action with abiding results. They are viewed standing on the gospel as their foundation.

Its Value in Their Future

The verb *are saved* is a present tense and thus means *you are being saved*, anticipating the full salvation brought at Christ's return and our glorification. Notice that each of the three statements has the word *also* in it. It is used to indicate climactic progression. It moves from their initial reception to their final destiny.

THE CONDITION OF THE GOSPEL PRESENTED 15:2B

"...if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

The "If" Element

So far, Paul has made a general statement addressed to the whole church. What guarantee is there, however, that everyone who reads these words is part of the group that Paul has called saved? He now shows what is required to be part of that group. The saved ones are those who have taken hold of the gospel that Paul preached.

The "Unless" Element

This does not mean that someone could believe the gospel and then not be saved. If so, these words would stand in conflict with passage after passage in the New Testament. The words *in vain* mean *at random* or *without basis*. The total value of faith lies in its object; and Paul is going to show that part of that gospel is the resurrection, without which our faith has no basis.

THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL EXPLAINED 15:3-5

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

The Importance of the Gospel Emphasized 15:3a

If all of God's revelation is true, in what sense is the gospel of first importance? The gospel is most important because it is foundational and preliminary to everything else. The gospel is primary and cardinal, central and indispensable.

The Source of the Gospel Indicated 15:3b

When Paul says that the gospel is “what I also received,” he is telling us that he is not the source of the message. He is pointing to the doctrine of revelation—the “topside down” doctrine—the God to man doctrine.

The Elements of the Gospel Enumerated 15:3c-5

The word *that* in the middle of verse 3 is like a quotation mark, or like the adverb *namely*. An enumeration is about to begin. There are four verbs involved in the gospel: *died*, *buried*, *raised*, and *appeared*. Three of them are in the aorist tense, pointing to a definite, definable, and historic event. The verb *raised*, however, is in the perfect tense. The emphasis is on a past completed action with abiding results. Why would Paul put this word in perfect tense? The answer lies in the theme of chapter 15. Paul is showing the abiding results of the resurrection of Christ.

The four verbs fit together as couplets, with the first member stating a fact and the second offering proof that the fact is true. Christ *died*; how do we know this was a real death? We know it was a real death because He was *buried*. Christ was *raised*; how do we know this? We know it because he *appeared* and was seen.

Of the four verbs, it is important to note that only one of them has an attached prepositional phrase. Attached to the verb *Christ died* is the phrase *for our sins*. This phrase interprets the significance of Christ's death. The word *for* carries the idea of substitution. Christ died in our place in such a way as to take the guilt that was rightly ours and the penalty that was justly ours, and He bore each in such a way as to make sin no barrier in the salvation of the sinner. This is truly good news!

It is noteworthy that the term *according to the Scriptures* is repeated in a passage so short. It teaches us that this whole thing was no accident but was the outworking of a divine plan.

THE PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION 15:5-11

“...and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”

THE WITNESS OF THE CHIEF APOSTLE: CEPHAS 15:5A

The verb *appeared* occurs four times and is translated as though it were active voice (subject producing the action of the verb). The word in the original is passive voice (subject acted upon by some outside agency). The normal meaning of the word is *to see*. Thus, we should have He *was seen* by Cephas, the twelve, etc. The translation *appeared* emphasizes what He did; the translation *was seen* emphasizes what happened to Him. The correct emphasis is the latter—the human testimony to the resurrected Christ. It should also be added that this verb is always used of the physical act of seeing. The witnesses did not see Him in their mind's eye; they saw Him with their physical eyes.

Why is Cephas (Peter) mentioned before the other apostles? It is because Christ's appearance to Peter prepared the disciples for Christ's appearance to them (Luke 24:34).

THE WITNESS OF THE CHIEF BODY: THE TWELVE 15:5B

The twelve is the official name of the apostolic body. At this point, there were only ten present since Judas and Thomas were not there. With the mention of *the twelve*, the sentence ends; but the list of those who saw Jesus continues. This could well be intended to show that the resurrection gave authorization to the apostolic ministry of the twelve but did not do so for others. The appearance of Jesus to the five hundred did not make them apostles.

THE WITNESS OF THE LARGEST BODY: FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN 15:6

The reason for mentioning this group is two-fold. First, they are mentioned because of the sheer force of the large number. Second, they all saw Him at the same time. This was not a group of isolated incidents; it was one incident involving many people. The time between the resurrection and the writing of I Corinthians is about twenty-five years; some of the witnesses would have died in that period.

THE WITNESS OF THE CLOSEST RELATIVE: JAMES 15:7

James was the half-brother of the Lord and later the head of the Jerusalem church. His high position in the church would make him an important witness. The Lord's earthly brothers refused to believe on Him during His earthly ministry (John 7:5) but are found among believers after the ascension. The resurrection must have been the event that convinced them that Jesus was the Messiah.

THE WITNESS OF THE CHIEF DOUBTER: THOMAS 15:7

Thomas had been absent when the Lord first appeared to the twelve but is now present. While he is not specifically named, he is included because the appearance was to all the apostles. His doubt was expressed in the need to touch the Lord and feel the wounds.

THE WITNESS OF THE CHIEF HATER: PAUL 15:8-11

Paul's Past as a Persecutor 15:8-9

In describing himself as *untimely born*, he is using a word that means *miscarriage* and was used as a term of contempt. The word points to a sudden and violent transition while still in a state of immaturity. This is an apt description of Paul's call to the apostleship. His claim to be the *least of the apostles* is based on his past conduct toward the church. In stating that he is *not fit*, he focuses on a theme throughout all of his writings: His weakness is the occasion for the Lord to be all his strength. This appears frequently in II Corinthians.

Paul's Present as an Apostle 15:10-11

| Grace transformed Paul, motivated Paul, and enabled Paul.

THE OBJECTORS TO THE RESURRECTION 15:12-19

THE TRUTH STATED 15:12A

“Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead...”

Paul begins with an assumption that is true to the facts. There is no question that the apostles believed and preached the resurrection. The word *preached* is a present tense verb showing that the action was repeated and continual. The word *raised* is a perfect tense, pointing to a past completed event with abiding results. The apostles preached Christ as raised and now living as the risen Savior.

THE DENIAL EXPRESSED 15:12B

“...how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

Some at Corinth denied the resurrection of the body. This did not mean that they denied the resurrection of Christ, however. The verse does not say that some among them were saying, “Christ is not raised.” It was not *His* resurrection they doubted; it was *their* resurrection which they doubted. Their assumption was that death was the last thing that happens to the body.

THE REFUTATION MADE 15:13-19

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who

| *have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*"

The First "If" and Its Conclusion 15:13

| The word *if* introduces a first class conditional sentence. This type of sentence assumes the *if* statement to be true, either as to fact or for the sake of the argument. It is the latter that is true here. Assuming that there is no resurrection of the dead at all, one cannot logically believe that Christ was raised. The logic revolves about a major premise, minor premise, and conclusion. Major premise: There is no resurrection of the dead. Minor premise: Christ died. Conclusion: Christ did not rise from the dead.

The Second "If" and Its Conclusion 15:14-15

| If Christ did not rise from the dead, two conclusions must follow. First, the apostolic preaching is a myth. The word *vain* means *unreal, myth, empty, hollow, devoid of reality, without content*. Second, the apostolic preachers are liars.

The Third "If" and Its Conclusion 15:16-19

| Again, for the sake of the argument, it is assumed that Christ did not rise, leading to two more conclusions. First, our faith is vain. The word *worthless* means *to be without effect, without results*. Second, dead believers are in their final state. Denial of the resurrection throws everything into complete confusion. If they remain in the grave, they remain in the hold of death, apart from Christ, and thus perish!

THE AFFIRMATION OF THE RESURRECTION 15:20-28

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S RESURRECTION PROGRAM 15:20-22

| *"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. ²¹For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."*

Its Statement 15:20

| I Corinthians 15:12-19 and 15:20-28 are structured the same way. Each begins with a premise and then shows its implications. The premise of 15:12-19 is in verse 12, "there is no resurrection of the dead." The premise of 15:20-28 is in verse 20, "now Christ has been raised from the dead." The resurrection reverses all the conclusions of 15:12-19, i. e., the apostolic preaching is not void, our faith is not futile, we are not yet in our sins, those who sleep have not perished, our hope is not limited to this life, and Christians are not the most pitiable of all men.

It is important to understand why Christ is designated as *first fruits*. The reference is to the Old Testament custom of bringing the first sheaf of grain to the temple the day after Passover. First fruits indicated four things. First, it *represented* the whole crop. Second, first fruits *consecrated* the whole crop. Third, first fruits *anticipated* the whole crop. Fourth, first fruits *guaranteed* the whole crop (Leviticus 23:10-11). Christ's resurrection is the first sheaf of first fruits. The resurrection of dead believers is the crop that is guaranteed to follow.

Its Explanation 15:21-22

The key idea here is how death came in the past and how life will come in the future. Both Adam and Christ were instruments of change. Adam brought disaster; Christ brought deliverance.

The presence of life and death is expressed abstractly, then concretely. First, it is stated abstractly in verse 21, showing that each came *through a man*. Second, it is stated concretely in verse 22 in identifying the respective men as Adam and Christ. The word *in* points to relationship and union. In union with Adam, we die; in union with Christ, we live.

THE EXECUTION OF GOD'S RESURRECTION 15:23-28

It Has an Order 15:23-25

"But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, ²⁴then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."

The Order of Resurrection

The word *order* was a military term referring to a company or a division. It shows that there is a marching order for the resurrection of the dead, each coming forth with its own group and at its own time.

The Time of Resurrection

The sequential and chronological order is indicated by the words *Christ...after that...then*. Christ is the commencement; after that is the continuation; and then is the culmination. The culmination restores perfect order to the universe.

It Has a Culmination 15:26-28

"The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son

Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all."

Believers are subject to Christ; Christ is subject to the Father—perfect order in the universe.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION 15:29-34

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THOSE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD 15:29

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

This verse is very difficult and has been interpreted more ways than any other in Scripture. In interpreting a difficult passage, there are two important rules to follow. First, one should always attempt to give words their normal and most basic meaning. Second, one should always interpret harmonistically. This means the interpretation of a given verse must harmonize with the immediate context and the whole of Scripture.

Applying these rules, I suggest the following simple interpretation of this verse. First, the word *for* is a preposition indicating substitution—taking the place of another. Living believers are seen as taking the place of the dead ones. As believers die, new ones come along and fill up the ranks—they are “baptized in the place of dead believers.” Second, since baptism symbolizes union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, if there is no resurrection, then baptism symbolizes only death.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THOSE WHO SUFFER 15:30-32

"Why are we also in danger every hour? ³¹I protest, brethren, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. ³²If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

If death ends all, what is gained by suffering for truth? Paul found that living in the light of eternity was powerful for two reasons. First, it formed a motive for good conduct now. Second, it formed a motive for avoiding temptation. Belief in the resurrection was more than a truth; it was a moral safeguard. If this life is all there is, then it is logical to cram all the pleasure into it that we can.

Why would the resurrection of the body be such a powerful motivation for Paul? To answer this, we must remember that we tend to think of the soul and spirit as separable from the body. The soul and spirit are separate from the body, but they are not separable from the body. Man is not man who is not body, soul, and spirit.

The physical body has an eternal spiritual destiny just as much as the soul and spirit.

There are three levels of fellowship with the Lord. First, the fellowship that we have with Him now is in our body, soul, and spirit. The body that we have now cannot enter heaven. For this reason, this first state of fellowship cannot last forever. Second, there is the fellowship that we have with Him at death. Soul and spirit go to be with the Lord, but the body goes to the grave. Third, there is the fellowship that we will have with Him at the resurrection. Body, soul, and spirit will then be united to be with the Lord forever. This is our hope, and we anticipate nothing less. Being man does not end with this life; and where there is no body, soul, and spirit, there is no man.

OBLIGATIONS IMPOSED BY THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION 15:33-34

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ ³⁴ Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”

Paul turns to Greek literature and quotes from Menander’s comedy *Thais* saying, “Bad company corrupts good morals.” It should be remembered that the doctrine of inspiration does not preclude the use of sources. What, however, is the *bad company* from which the Corinthians should separate themselves? The answer is found in the word *some* in verse 34, which links to the same word in verse 12. The *some* who were corrupting them were those who questioned the resurrection. The corrupting influence was doctrinal, not social. The verb *become sober-minded* is an aorist tense. The Corinthians are here and now to get serious over this matter. The present tense of *stop sinning* matches the present tense of *do not be deceived*. They are to stop the sinful practice of allowing themselves to be deceived.

THE ANSWERS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION 15:35-49

THE FIRST QUESTION: “HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED?” 15:35-41

The First Step Toward the Resurrection Is Physical Death 15:35-36

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’ ³⁶ You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;”

Verse 35 contains the two questions that are answered in this paragraph. The question of 35a is addressed in 36-41; and the question of 35b is addressed in 42-49. The words *You fool!* point to the fact that one may overlook the obvious—nobody can be raised until they have died. This gives the Christian a unique view of death:

Death is a first step, not a final step! Death is the doorway and prelude to glorification.

The metaphor for burial is that of a seed being sowed in the ground. Properly speaking, believers are not buried, they are sown. The implications of this metaphor will be picked up in the rest of the chapter. The metaphor is appropriate because it is only by the dissolution of the material particles of the seed that life comes forth; so also the believer's physical body.

The Glorified Body Will be Distinctly Different from Our Present Earthly Body 15:37

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

A kernel of grain is sown and kernels of grain are reaped, but there is a pronounced difference.

Neither the Seed Itself nor the Sower Provide the New Body 15:38

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

God gives the seed a body that accords with His sovereign will. The body that accords with His will is exactly the right body. Our resurrection bodies will be perfectly suited for the environment in which they are to function.

The Resurrection Body Will be Perfectly Adapted to Its Surroundings 15:39-41

"All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. ⁴⁰There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory."

The Analogy from the Animal World 15:39

One should note that Paul clearly distinguishes man from animals. This distinction is marked off by the words *one flesh of men, and another* of animals (beasts, birds, and fish). Variety and adaptation to intended environment is the point being made.

The Analogy from the Celestial World 15:40-41

Once again the emphasis is on infinite variety and perfect adaptation to intended environment.

THE SECOND QUESTION: “WITH WHAT KIND OF BODY DO THEY COME?” 15:42-49

The Resurrection Body 15:42-44

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; ⁴³it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

The Nature of the Resurrection Body 15:42

The words *so also* introduce the application of the point made in verses 39-43. The emphasis is on the properties that our resurrection bodies will have. Paul gives first the pre-resurrection condition followed by the post-resurrection condition. The transition between the two is brought about by the resurrection or the return of Christ. The nature of our present bodies is expressed by the word *perishable*. The Greek word is *phthora*, which refers to all things whose tendency and final end is deterioration. Science refers to what is called the second law of thermodynamics, which states that any system left to its own devices tends to move from order to disorder, and energy levels become lower and lower until they no longer exist. Everything about these present bodies of ours wears out; there is no exception to the rule.

This perishing or deteriorating condition is described in Romans 8:21 as slavery; it is a condition that precludes us from the kingdom of God as long as it exists (I Corinthians 15:50). The post-resurrection body is imperishable. There is nothing in this material world that is not deteriorating, so examples do not exist. The imperishable body will have incomparable glory.

The Glory of the Resurrection Body 15:43a

Dishonor is compared with glory. This fits the analogy of the sown seed perfectly. The seed is put in the ground and covered with dirt where it cannot be seen—dishonor. When the ear sprouts from the earth—glory.

The Power of the Resurrection Body 15:43b

No better illustration of powerlessness could be found than that of a dead body. The power of a body freed from the ravages of sin will be incomparable.

The Adaptation of the Resurrection Body 15:44

The words *natural body* refer to the body that Adam was given when he was created and with which we are all identified. What, however, is a spiritual body?

First, the spiritual body does not preclude many of the properties of our natural bodies. We know this because of the appearances of Christ in His resurrected body. We also know that our bodies will be like His (Philippians 3:20-21). He had the power of language (Luke 24:44), and He had the power of reason (Luke 24:27). The parts of His resurrection body were the same as in His earthly body (John 20:20), and He was physically recognizable in His resurrection body. Second, the spiritual body is adapted to the environment of heaven.

The Precursor of the Resurrection Body 15:45-49

“So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

The words *so also* introduce the Scriptural support showing that the physical body is the precursor of the spiritual body. It should be noted that Christ is not called the *second* Adam but rather the *last* Adam. To call Him the second Adam would leave a possibility for a third, fourth, etc. To call Him the last Adam is to affirm that He is man’s only hope—there is none to follow Him should He fail. It is as certain that we will bear the image of the heavenly as it is certain that we now bear the image of the earthy. Death, then, is a reminder that life is coming.

THE MYSTERY CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION 15:50-53

THE PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES THE CHANGE 15:50

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

The term *flesh and blood* refers to the bodies of living believers; the word *perishable* refers to the bodies of dead believers. These bodies, due to sin, are neither fit nor qualified to enter the kingdom of God. This condition cannot exist forever; something must be done; there must be change.

THE EVENT THAT PRODUCES THE CHANGE 15:51-53

“Behold I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

The word *mystery* means something that was once unknown due to the absence of revelation on the subject. New Testament mysteries are never mysterious but are always set in the context of presently revealed truth. The question assumed by these verses is, What about those believers who are alive when Christ returns? The detailed answer to this is found in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 where Paul says living believers will be “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air.” Living or dead, change must occur in these present bodies.

The event that changes these bodies is viewed from the standpoint of its suddenness as found in the words *in a moment* that translate the Greek word *atomos* (our *atom*), which signifies anything that is too small to split. I Thessalonians 4:16 ties it to *a shout, the voice, and a trumpet*. Verse 53 once again affirms the absolute necessity for the change. The first word of the verse is *dei*, which underscores it as emphatic. It is a word conveying the idea of absolute necessity. It was used in telling Nicodemus that he must be born again (John 3:5). Heaven can have no part in death or dying—either its presence or its product.

THE VICTORY OF THE RESURRECTION 15:54-58

THE VICTORY WILL BE THREE-FOLD 15:54-56

“But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ⁵⁵O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;”

There Will be Victory Over Death 15:54-55

The word *swallowed* is very forceful. It is a compound made up of the verb meaning *to drink* and a preposition meaning *down*. Our word *gulped* expresses the idea well. The metaphor is appropriate because there is nothing as all consuming as death. These two verses are a comfort only to men and women of faith and patience to wait for its fulfillment.

There Will be Victory Over Sin 15:56a

There Will be Victory Over the Law 15:56b

These two tie together in the sense that there is no sin where there is no law to violate. The law, in this sense, fosters sin.

THE VICTORY WILL BE OURS 15:57-58

“...but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always

| *abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*"

It Is Our Present Possession 15:57

| The word *gives* is present tense. It is looking at something that has not occurred and yet is absolutely certain of fulfillment—so much so that it may be regarded as presently ours. The present tense also indicates that the program is already in progress now.

It Is Our Present Motivation 15:58

| The victory that is being given to us now is a powerful motivation for living the present.

It Has Value in Terms of Stability

| The word *be* is *ginomai*, which means *to become* and points to growth in the areas about to be mentioned. The continuous growth aspect is emphasized by its present tense. Note that the goal is not to be *unmoved* but rather *unmovable*. There is no room for debate concerning the truthfulness of I Corinthians 15.

It Has Value in Terms of Activity

| The words *always abounding* are separated in the Greek text. The order is "always in the work of the Lord abounding...." Being placed at the beginning and the end of the clause creates great emphasis.

It Has Value in Terms of Assurance

| Our labor is not in vain because of the certainty of the resurrection.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

We should regard I Corinthians 15:1-5 as the key New Testament passage concerning the nature of the gospel.

Due to the reality of the resurrection, we should live in the constant anticipation of glorification (15:49).

The key to stability is constant realization of our hope (15:58).

C Concluding Corinthians

or “Remaining Matters of Importance”

I Corinthians 16:1-24

THE COLLECTION TO BE MADE 16:1-4

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. ²On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. ³And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; ⁴and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.”

THE COLLECTION: ITS BACKGROUND

At the Jerusalem conference Paul had been asked to remember the poor, and he promised to do so (Galatians 2:10). Acts 8:1 tells of a persecution that broke out driving Christians from Jerusalem. This accounts for their poverty and the need for other parts of the church to help supply their need.

THE COLLECTION: ITS USE 16:1A

The money is to be used *for the saints*, which points to a church cause, not a social cause. It is not the business of the church to become involved in social causes. There are plenty of needs within the body of Christ, and meeting these should have priority.

THE COLLECTION: ITS OBLIGATION 16:1B

The command to make a collection is not unique to the church at Corinth; Paul has sent the same instructions to the churches of Galatia. When Paul refers to churches other than the one to whom the letter is addressed, he does so to stress universal obligation.

THE COLLECTION: ITS PLAN 16:2-4

As to Time

The words *first day of the week* could be rendered “Sunday-by-Sunday.” This indicates that giving in a local assembly is to be both regular and continual. It was apparently the custom of the church to meet on the first day of the week, probably because that was when the resurrection took place.

As to Participants

This is expressed by the words *each one of you*. All are to give, though all cannot give the same amounts. The responsibility to give was equal; the amount given differed. In Paul’s teaching, the amount of the gift was never the issue; the attitude with which one gave was.

As to Preparation

When Paul exhorts to *put aside and save*, he indicates that giving is to be planned and systematic.

As to Amount

The amount is to be *as God has prospered*. The believer is to view money earned as from God and is to include giving in his financial planning.

As to Execution

They were not to wait until the last moment (Paul’s arrival) to decide how much to give and where to get it. Paul did not want pressure put on believers when he arrived.

As to Honesty

The money was handled by a person they selected, and he was to be authenticated with letters. Perhaps the letters detailed how much money was being sent and who was bringing it. The church is to keep honest financial records.

THE CONDUCT TO BE EXPECTED 16:5-14

PAUL’S PERSONAL PLANS 16:5-9

“But I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; ⁶and perhaps I shall stay with you, or even spend the winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. ⁷For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I shall remain in Ephesus until

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

Plans for Corinth 16:5-7

| Paul’s plans are a mixture of the certain and the tentative as indicated by *I shall come* and *perhaps*. The word translated *perhaps* means *if things turn out that way* or *if things turn out the way we have planned*. Paul left room for unknowns in a very relaxed manner. He never agonized over the will of God in such areas as where he should go. Romans 1:9-10 is a good example of plans made and plans attempted. God gave more church age revelation to Paul than any other man, but he rarely told Paul where he would be the next week. Paul made plans, submitted them to the will of God, and then relaxed and accepted circumstances as they came along.

Plans for Ephesus 16:8-9

| The departure at Pentecost would be based on weather conditions that normally would be acceptable for sailing at that time of year. Paul also bases his plans on an existing opportunity for preaching the gospel, which he calls a *wide door*.

PAUL’S PERSONAL FRIENDS 16:10-12

| “Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord’s work, as I also am. ¹¹Let no one therefore despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren. ¹²But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.”

Timothy 16:10-11

| Here is a good example of courteous consideration for the personality characteristics of another. Timothy was young (I Timothy 4:12), frequently ill (I Timothy 5:21-23), and timid (II Timothy 1:6-8. 2:1). While Timothy is to watch these things, the church is also to help him by being sensitive to these problems.

Apollos 16:12

| Here is interesting insight into Paul’s personality. First, he was not jealous of another teacher of God’s word; he instead encouraged him. Second, he respected Apollos’ inclinations about visiting Corinth without any disparaging or critical comment.

PAUL’S PARTING COMMANDS 16:13-14

| “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love.”

First is a warning about a life that is not conscious. We need warning to be alert because as Christians we are surrounded by many dangers. Some of the dangers are listed in I Thessalonians 5:2-6 and I Peter 5:8. Second, the word *faith* has a definite article *the* with it, which would point to the faith as a body of doctrine. Third, to *act like men* lays emphasis on being courageous. It is found only here in the New Testament, but is found in the LXX translation of the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 31:6-7, 23, and Joshua 1:6-7, 9, 18; it is translated *be strong and courageous*. Finally, with the words *be strong*, Paul is saying, “Not only be manly, but also be mighty.”

THE SALUTATIONS TO BE EXTENDED 16:15-24

REGARDING THE HOUSE OF STEPHANAS 16:15-18

“Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), ¹⁶that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. ¹⁷And I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. ¹⁸For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.”

The exhortation has to do with the recognition of the gift and ministry of other believers. That they had refreshed Paul’s spirit recognizes that God often mediates His care through a human instrument of some sort.

REGARDING OTHER FELLOW BELIEVERS 16:19-24

“The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. ²⁰All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. ²¹The greeting is in my own hand — Paul. ²²If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha. ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

Verse 22 requires some comment. First, the word for *love* is *phileo* and means *affection*. It is the same root as the word *kiss* in verse 20. Second, the words *let him be accursed* can bear two levels of meaning. It may mean devoted to damnation or it may mean devoted to displeasure.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIVING

The teaching on giving demands that we give serious and systematic consideration to creating a plan for giving. Our giving should not be hit-or-miss, nor should it be based merely on an emotional response to an appeal.

It is important for us to pursue the will of God, but many of the details of God's plan for us are unrevealed (16:5-6). Even one as great as Paul faced each day awaiting the revelation of God's will in the details of life.

NOTES