

THE EPISTLES  
OF  
THE APOSTLE PAUL  
TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians

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## God's Instructions To the New Testament Church *"Life in the Risen, Ascended Savior"*

### **Studies in the Pauline Epistles**

"If anyone knows clearly and fully the Corinthian Epistles  
and Paul's dealings with the church at Corinth,  
then they have gained an understanding of a large portion of their life and ministry."  
—A. T. Robertson

CONRAD BOWMAN

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**A DISPENSATIONAL COMMENTARY**

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## Bowman's Notes—

4/18/2010

### 1 CORINTHIANS

#### DIVISION 1 Chapters 1-10

*Christ is the Father's total provision for the Church*

Introduction to Division 1:

In this epistle to professing believers in Corinth, Paul addresses many problems that have developed since they began to meet in worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their assembly is made up of people from all levels of society and from a broad spectrum of past experiences. Therefore, it is necessary that he make clear the nature of a *new creation* in Christ, in order for them to take their rightful position as members of a heavenly community and express that in the course of their daily lives. This is a message sorely missing from pulpits today. So, he begins with the fact of Christ as the sole sufficiency, the only source of spiritual supply that the believer, both individually and collectively, requires. Too many Christians still think that God wants our efforts, our physical output, that He *has* to have it in order to complete His work among men. That is simply a gross error on our part. The Son completed His work on the Cross, a work in obedience to His Father's will, and we are incidentally the beneficiaries. There is absolutely nothing that we can add to that work. Through our Lord, every single thing required to reconcile the world to the Father has been supplied in inexhaustible measure. Beyond that, we have the treasures of the heavens laid up in store for our eternal enjoyment before the throne of the Father and available, as God deems appropriate, to us today. We are truly "blessed with every spiritual blessing the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3). What is addressed in this first division of the letter is the unity through *union* that we have with God by *being joined* to His Son. There is no other access, nor should we want one, if we just come to understand the fullness of privilege that is ours as the adopted sons of God.

## **Subdivision 1 Chapters 1-4**

*Empty human knowledge compared to divine completeness*

### **Introduction to Subdivision 1:**

In order to realize everything that flows from our new position before God, we first must be disabused of any natural dependence on our own mental or emotional capacities. At best, our human knowledge is limited to information within the human sphere of life and interaction with living things. Spiritual things must be taken in through an altogether different pathway than is human phenomena. As we grow up physically, our experiences in life instruct our brains and trigger these wonderful memory banks—we grow in human understanding. But when the Holy Spirit opens our spiritual eyes, we then can see how spiritually disabled and bankrupt we really have been. In the course of our study of this letter of the Apostle Paul, we are going to explore the difference between living life on the level of the soul and living life on the level of the spirit. Unfortunately, many believers have chosen to return to their own resources for the means to live as a Christian and have found it impossible out of those stores to meet God's standards of righteousness. It is in the dual discovery that "His ways are not our ways" (Isaiah 55:8, 9) and that "in Him, we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28) that our first steps toward inner maturity are taken.

**Section 1,**  
(1:1-16)  
***The Church under Christ the Lord***

**Introduction to Section 1**

In Section 1 we see the Church, the Body of Christ, in need of recognizing Christ as Lord in fact. If we are to have an effective ministry as a body, then it will have to come from cooperation with the minister of the Gospel, appointed by the Father, none other than the Holy Spirit within us. Paul told the Romans that it is the Holy Spirit who instructs our human spirit about the things of God (Romans 8:16). Everything that we come to know spiritually comes to us by the direct, personal, revelation of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus it follows that everything we say of spiritual truth comes directly from the work of the Holy Spirit in us. When we do that, we will find that He, the Spirit, will never speak of Himself, but will ever point to the Son and all that the Son has secured for us (John 15:26).

**Paul; an Apostle to the Gentiles called by God (1:1-3)**

(1:1) As he did in other letters to Christian assemblies, Paul identifies himself as “**a called apostle**” *klētos apostolos* (lit. *one sent with a message*). His message is *the gospel*, which was given to him specifically by God. It is the “mystery of Christ . . . not made known to the sons of men in other generations, but was revealed to the apostles and prophets by means of the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:4, 5). This letter to believers in Corinth is a continuation of Paul’s specific calling and charge from God; to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:8). The small connective, “**of**” denotes possession—Paul is an apostle who belongs to Jesus Christ. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he calls himself “**the prisoner**” belonging to Christ Jesus.

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

(1:2) The letter is addressed “**unto the church**” the *ekklesia* (assembly) “**of**” (denotes possession) “**God**” located at “**Corinth**.” Note carefully now; this is not an assembly drawn together by their common commitment to God, but an assembly of individuals called out by God from among men and fused into one body owned by Him. We have not gathered into congregations and denominations on the basis of our individual and/or corporate rights to organize. Nor have we come together in local churches because we have made decisions to follow certain pastors/teachers. If we are, in fact, an “**assembly belonging to God**,” then the first requisite condition is that we have been drawn out from among men and into that single body, the Church of God, of which the local company (assembly) is but a fraction, not separate, but one part of the whole. We must then be where we are by divine appointment, not as a result of temporal convenience or any action of the human will. In our age of ‘convenience’ this is a truth that is often bulldozed under by the press of schedules and is too often driven by a desire to ‘make the best available for our kids.’ Choice of local churches should never rest on the social aspects or programs, but primarily on the basis of what they teach.

**Note carefully now; this is not an assembly drawn together by their common commitment to God, but an assembly of individuals called out from among men and fused into one body owned by God.**

Paul starts his letter by acknowledging that they are the property of God. However, that fact has not prevented them from deteriorating into a carnal local assembly. Paul knows that one does not come into this relationship with God on the basis of human decision, the act of one's will, but by appointment and the specific act of the Holy Spirit on the one elected. Further, he knows that with that election, comes the means to serve that local assembly in special ways. This specific empowerment, in the form of spiritual gifts of service, is being abused, misused, or ignored, as their former pagan instincts pull them away from the truth. Throughout the epistle Paul will repeatedly exhort towards further growth and correction of error.

The word “**sanctified**” *hagiasmenois* comes from *hagios* and means ‘having been set apart,’ while “**in Christ**” identifies the positional ground onto which the believer has been ‘set apart.’ It is used in the same sense in which a sacrificial animal was separated from the flock or herd (sanctified) for a three-day period of examination to ensure its purity and unblemished state. “**Saints**” *hagiois* are those who have been ‘set apart’ not simply from others, but *to* something else. In this case it is into the Body of Christ, His Church.

Here is an interesting perspective. In the Old Testament period of sacrificial offerings, the animal to be offered was ‘set apart’ for examination prior to the ritual death and burning on the altar. In our case, however, we are ‘set apart’ and retroactively joined to the sacrifice (the Lord Jesus)<sup>1</sup> that has already been examined, slain, and is now risen. In this way, God the Father has granted us full participation in the victory of the sacrifice, the humanity of the Man, Jesus, over sin and death. The result is that He now views us entirely in light of our having been made righteous “**in Christ**” the supreme sacrifice, to his glory. We have been totally and thoroughly identified with the acceptable sacrifice.

**“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”**  
**Romans 6:22**

Unto the church of God in Corinth, to those having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all those in every place calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours: 1 Corinthians 1:2

(1:3) I love this acrostic on GRACE—**G**od’s **R**iches **A**t Christ’s **E**xpense. It is an absolutely true idiom and superbly applicable to this passage. God’s infinite riches are ours because of our union with His Son, Jesus Christ. We have become ‘joint-heirs’ with Christ of all that the Father intended for His ‘only begotten Son’ (John 3:16). Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, listed 34 things that God the Father has for every one of us because we are ‘in Christ.’ The first item delivered out of those riches is “**peace**.” We are on the ground of peace with the Father because we are one with the perfect sacrifice, which satisfied every demand He made regarding payment for sin. His attitude toward us is one of perfect and boundless love, exactly like He has for His Son! That love flows to us “**from God our Father**

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<sup>1</sup>Rom. 6:1-ff We were joined to Christ in His death and subsequently share in His resurrection and ultimate glorification.

**and from the Lord Jesus Christ”** who is *now ascended* to the heavenlies and at the Father’s right hand making intercession for us.

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

### **Their testimony to Christ who called them and the contradiction of divisions (1:4-16)**

Paul’s praise is a pattern for the Christian’s prayers on behalf of the Church. Pray **“always”** and on behalf of other believers. Pray with **thanksgiving** for **“the grace of God”** which is already extended to them. Pray with understanding (1) that all of God’s grace comes **“through Jesus Christ”** and (2) because He is the source of every enrichment, every **“word”** *logo* (speech, utterance) and all **“knowledge”** *gnosei* (facts organized into doctrinal information).\*\* Remind others that it was the **“testimony of Christ”** that drew each of us to the Father and His personal ministry to us through the Spirit that **“confirmed”** that new birth relationship to us. The purpose of our having been enlightened is that we should **“not be lacking”** any **“gift”** *charismati* as we are **“waiting for the coming (revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ:”**

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; because in every thing you were enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:4

**\*\*[Note: Our prayer for other believers, following this pattern of Paul, should not center on improving their physical condition but on expanding their spiritual assets. Where have we gone so wrong?]**

### *Paul’s focus is on God the Father*

In order that we might understand our access to God the Father, Paul gives Him supreme prominence at every point in this letter. He was **“called as an apostle by God”** the Father (v.1). He writes to the church belonging to God (v.2). He prays **“grace and peace”** from **“God our Father”** to those believers (v.3). He thanks **“my God”** for His **“grace”** given these believers (v.4). Now, here in verse 9; **“God is faithful”** again turns our full attention to heaven and our Father, for it was through Him that we were **“called into fellowship with His Son.”** Think now—how often are we instructed from the pulpit that *the Father* personally elected us in the Son and that the Holy Spirit worked specifically to accomplish the *will of the Father*? I must tell you that it is an altogether too rare occurrence in most churches. Are we guilty of basking in the gifts of the Spirit, while failing to appreciate the origin of the gifts, our *Heavenly Father*? Do you ever see Paul praying to Jesus, or to the Holy Spirit? No! Paul directs his prayer **to the Father**. To be sure, it is in the name of the Son and in the power of the Spirit—But, it is never directed to any but **the Father**. Fail to develop that habit and I guarantee that you will diminish the Father within your own mind and lose your awareness of His supreme rule. Do that, and you

rob Him of the glory He is due!

God [*the Father*] is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10

Paul calls for them to make their position (in union with Christ and members of His Body), a practical expression of their condition (in fellowship with God in their walk). They do that whenever they are single-minded and are applying between themselves the same judgment as to right and wrong. This is only possible when a single standard is being used to measure every daily circumstance, i.e. the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I am not talking about the life that the Lord Jesus lived during His incarnation, but His risen, ascended, life *now being revealed by means of the Holy Spirit* in our daily activities, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors. All of these present elements of life as we live it rest solidly on the foundation of our beliefs. What we accept as truth is the well-spring from which those things flow that define our life and who we are . . . consider this cascade- -

**Curiosity** leads to

- Æ **Investigation**, which results in our **Beliefs**; what we accept as true. These shape our
- Æ **Assumptions**, which produce our **Expectations**. These yield our
- Æ **Attitudes**, which dictate our
- Æ **Behavior**. Our behavior then leads to

**Curiosity** about new areas of interest as we discover new experiences, new geography, new friends, new relationships with old friends, new biblical concepts, new doctrinal understanding, etc. This is the natural process of learning and growth towards Christian Maturity, the child training of the Spirit of God that produces in us the mind of Christ. We are not granted maturity as Christians by some great anthropomorphical zap by God. It is not an instant formula in ready-mix form. Time and experience in a consistent daily walk are required. That's the way it should happen, but it's not what Paul finds in Corinth.

### **Divisions in the Body—a contradiction of grace (1:11-16)**

(1:11) Now comes the opposite—Quarrels and disputes; “**contentions.**” Why is this so? Because their focus is not on the living Lord Jesus, but on their individual condition—“**I am a follower of Paul**” or, “**I am a follower of Apollos**” or, “**I am a follower of Peter**” or even, “**I am a follower of Christ.**” It does not matter what your declaration of commitment is, but what the source of your life is for it is only the life of the risen, ascended, Lord Jesus that binds us together. It is Christ alone who cannot be divided! As much as we might admire some leader, speaker, teacher, or mentor, there is no room for spiritual heroes who occupy a place in between the believer and the Father. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus Himself on the subject of our relationship and access to the Father . . .

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify **your Father**

who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

“Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you in order that you might be sons of **your Father** who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:45

“Therefore, you be perfect, as **your Father in heaven** is perfect.” Matthew 5:48

“But, when you pray, go into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to **your Father** who is in secret” Matthew 6:6a

“And when you pray, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for **your Father** knows what you need, before you ask **Him.**” Matthew 6:7, 8

“Pray then in this manner: Our **Father** who art in heaven.” Matthew 6:9

“When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by **your Father** who is in secret;” Matthew 6:17, 18

“If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall **your Father** who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” Matthew 7:11

“Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of **My Father** who is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21

“For whoever shall do the will of **My Father** who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.” Matthew 12:50

“And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but **My Father** who is in heaven.” Matthew 16:16, 17

Can there be any doubt that the Son persisted in this specific instruction to His disciples; *that their minds and hearts should be centered on their Heavenly Father's provision and glory?* Matthew faithfully recorded His words for our benefit.

Now, pay particular attention to the last statement that Paul makes in verse 12. The assembly is choosing up sides and separating into small factions. It doesn't surprise us that Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, have their fans. But, doesn't it grab your attention that in the list are those who, with their noses solidly out of joint and pointed heavenward, declare their own superiority by insisting that the basis of their contention is that they are “**of Christ?**” There is not an ounce of humility in their claim, but an air of advantage that belies their assertion. At this early stage of the Church forming, the idea of union and the single Body of Christ, to which we all have been joined, has been *abandoned*. To this day, Christian groups view other evangelical organizations as competitors rather than brothers and sisters. The entire impetus for para-church organizations

today grows out of this lack of cooperation between different bodies. Especially among teens and young adults, the need to aggregate is acute. They have been hammered throughout their educational process with the dogma of inclusion and tolerance. The idealism of youth has met the technology of open communication and shrunk the world. Africa is no further away than your keyboard. The Iron and Bamboo Curtains have been rendered permeable by the internet and it's no longer containable. That means joint efforts across the globe, millions of Believers linked in prayer and expectations, open to leadership, a generation unlike any that this world has seen since Babel. They don't need, nor will they follow, people saying, "I am of Christ," but respond to "We are of Christ." They only accept the language of inclusion, not separation. That fact alone has both its up-side and its negative.

For it has been reported to me about you, my brethren, by those who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:11, 12

(1:13-16) Paul uses baptism to make his point, that it is the preaching of the gospel in its purest form, the reality of the Cross and the power of God, which is his mission. He is not to be distracted by keeping score of his converts, nor of the ministry of others, nor of his reputation among believers. Contrast that attitude with modern preachers and/or evangelists, especially those who utilize mass media for exposure.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 1 Corinthians 1:13-16

### **The truth of the Cross against the wisdom of men Chapter 1:17-2:5**

(1:17,18) It was never the intention of Christ to send His apostles out with the goal of baptizing as many as possible, but to "preach," *proclaim*, "**the Gospel**" in order that the truth of the Cross would become the fertile seed from which rebirth would spring. The ceremony of baptism simply marked the event with an experience common to all Christians and one that signified to those who watched, the dedication to new life being made by the new convert. We use baptisms today as a kind of scorecard on which we can keep tract of the supposed success of ministries and virtually ignore the quiet, persuasive, power of the Holy Spirit moving through the elect who are being called to obedience.

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made ineffective. For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish; but to us who are saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:17-18

(1:19-21) Man's "**wisdom**" has never been a factor in defining God or His Kingdom. The words of Isaiah are included here so that these early believers can know that God is consistent from age to age, that He does not change. In addition, prudent and/or pious actions do not define God, nor do they bring one into a position of blessing. **God does not reward the acts of men, but the acts performed in men by the indwelling, empowering, Holy Spirit.** Against the wisdom of

the world God has placed simple pronouncement, “**preaching**,” of the Gospel.

For it is written,<sup>2</sup> I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Since it was in the wisdom of God that the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 1 Corinthians 1:19-21

(1:22) Are the charismatics of our day following after Israel of old in requiring of God a “**sign**” of both His blessing and His presence? Paul raises an interesting point in these characteristics associated with Jews and Greeks. I think that it a fair observation of Christendom today that the charismatic faction seeks and claims an association with God the Spirit exceeding that of most other Christian groups. They, like Israel, claim to be in the closest possible relationship to God through the Holy Spirit. And, like Israel, they offer the strongest possible case for their claims-- (1) reverence for the Word, (2) dedication and obedience to the principles they are taught, (3) passion for following after the Christ that they know, and (4) faith that their faithfulness will be rewarded in their lifetime as well as in eternity. Like Israel, however, their vision is often quite shortsighted and temporal. Their expectation is too often limited to improving their lot in this life and not focused on their heavenly citizenship. Perhaps that is because so much of their teaching is based on the Old Testament admonitions and promises to Israel and not on the freedom of grace that is the sole province of the Pauline Epistles.

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

What was true in Paul’s day is more so in ours. Following after the practices of Israel is not limited to Pentecostal, charismatic Christians and their churches. Believers of any denomination who would toy with Jewish practices, feasts, pageantry, Holy Day observances, dietary laws, etc., are moving onto the very same dangerous ground that Paul warned against in his letter to the Hebrews.<sup>3</sup> **You cannot build the Body of Christ on a foundation of Jewish walk and worship!** Israel has an Earthly destiny; the Church, the Bride of Christ, has a heavenly destiny. Israel celebrates their position as God’s elect among other men; the Church celebrates their position in the Last Adam at the right hand of God in heaven. Israel has the promise of a land, right here on Earth, forever; the Church has the reality of union with God in Christ, wherever He is, forever.

Why is it that so many Christians want to adopt the pageantry of Israel? Shouldn’t we be reveling instead in our *union* with Christ? We should find our hearts’ rest in reality and substance not shadow!

(1:23-25) Truth among men resides in the Cross, “**Christ crucified**,” God’s answer to sin for all mankind. For the Jew steeped in tradition associated with the Law, the simplicity of the Cross is

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 29:14

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 6:4-6

“**a stone of stumbling**,” for it requires *no act* of contrition on man’s part beyond acceptance. For the Greek, so in love with learning, with the intellectual and social development of man, the simplicity of the Cross is “**foolishness**.” It lacks the complexity of multiple deities and of control over the destiny of man that their pantheistic views allowed. However, for New Testament believers (“**those who are called**” to Christ by God) the crucified Christ is the “**power of God**,” which defeats sin and death and is the source of all “**wisdom**” *sophia*. What is lost today is the fact that whenever an individual takes on (1) the attitudes and/or practices of Jewish worship or (2) criticism of the Bible’s veracity; then the Cross becomes again that stumbling stone and foolishness. Both wrong worship and criticism of your source of instruction, the Bible, lead to confusion and spiritual death.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them, which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 1 Corinthians 1:23-25

(1:26-29) When you look at the history of the Church, it is easy to see that God does not choose preferentially from among the ranks of the most renown, the most attractive, the most accomplished, the *movers and shakers* of our social order. His call goes out to those whose hearts and minds are open to Him, to those in whom the Spirit has begun a process of transformation; one that will culminate in glory only to God. He makes strength out of human weakness, and out of that which man would discard He builds His Church. This is no big thing for the God who spoke the entire universe into being by His simply breathing the word.<sup>4</sup> It is not a stretch for the creator of this world to bring into your life, order, purpose, and an eternal destiny. That being so, how is it possible that you or I should ever attempt to take one iota of credit and make any claim to reward based on merit on our part? Never! It is solely of grace.

For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: in order that no flesh should glory in his presence. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

(1:30) It is “**of Him**” (the Father) that we have been placed “*in Christ Jesus*” who is our only source of “**wisdom**.” Just as the Son came only to do the will of His Father, so we should be solely focused on the Father’s will. We must be careful not to become so enamored of the Son in His first advent that we lose sight of our relationship to the **Father**. We are to be submissive to **His will**, dependent on **His leadership**, attentive to **His voice** spoken by the Holy Spirit within us. We should hear the Spirit speak **the Father’s instruction** and **respond to the Father**. We should see the life of the Lord Jesus poured out for us and listen to His Gospel delivered through the apostle Paul, and respond in love and adoration **of the Father**.

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<sup>4</sup> I love this picture of creation, taken from a message by Louie Giglio, speaking at the First Baptist Church one Sunday evening in the summer of 1997.

But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:30-2:1

## Chapter 2--*Why Should You Then Live?*

Francis Schaeffer, that wonderfully submitted, beautifully dedicated, marvelously prepared, reformed theologian, wrote a book called *How Should We Then Live?* It is a clear treatment of the Christian life lived openly before men, but definitely from the reformed perspective. While I disagree with his theology in some aspects, I so admired his open life style and commitment to follow where God led him. Paul, here in just a few verses, has given us a key to living life as a Christian—a passage I have labeled; *Why Should You Then Live*, for in these verses he unfolds for us the central purpose of our being called into the Body of Christ. We are to call all men's attention to the Son! And, together with Him, turn our hearts and minds solely on the Father, in adoration, awe, and worship.

(2:1-2) First, recognize that which is *not* a factor in ministering the Gospel of Christ and the “**witness of God**.” “**Excellency of speech**” is not a requirement. You do not have to be clever, entertaining, and erudite, a polished public speaker, a practiced presenter, knowledgeable of radio and/or television production methods, or fluent in Greek and Hebrew. None of these will add one whit to the Gospel, nor will they enhance the work of the Holy Spirit in His use of the Gospel to call out the people of God! Your desire for those things should be for your own benefit and edification. They are grand tools for growth and a broader understanding of God's Word. But, are not prerequisites for ‘ministry’ of the Gospel. Paul says that he came to these believers simply “**declaring**” (lit. announcing), the Father's “**testimony**” (witness)<sup>5</sup> regarding the work of His Son. People of God, that's all it takes to do the work of an evangelist! You don't have to go—*just declare*—right where you are. You don't have to be licensed, certified, or even supported—*just declare* that the Father sent the Son on our behalf. Our primary purpose in fellowship and obedience to God's command is *not* to study another book, learn another outline for Christian living, become intimate with yet another teacher, or even memorize the principles by which Israel lived and died. We simply should gather, worship, and serve around one truth; “**Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**”

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:1,2

Second, do not come in your own strength, but in absolute awe of God, searching the mind of

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<sup>5</sup>Recall the words of the Father spoken out of heaven when Jesus was baptized; “Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.” Mark 1:11

Christ for His words, *knowing that they come only by means of the Holy Spirit* and in His “power.” “That” declares purpose—the result is that their “faith” is established “in the power of God” through the indwelling Holy Spirit and not in their education, the “**wisdom of men.**”

And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:3-5

(2:6-8) Pay particular attention to this next statement. Paul has already said that he did not come to them with any wisdom derived from man, but with the Father’s testimony to the Son’s perfection and that his message was simply a demonstration of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. That is the content of divine wisdom. He now says that he speaks “**wisdom among those who are perfect**” (Lit. complete, mature) referring to their redeemed state. Believers do not need “**the wisdom of this world, nor of the rulers of this world who are passing away.**” Paul speaks what believers need to hear; “**the wisdom of God**” that is contained “**in a mystery**” and “**hidden**” from those who have gone before. And, it has been “**hidden, though predestined by God, since before the ages began, to our glory.**”

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8

(2:9) The next two verses stand in contrast to each other. “**As it is written**” takes us back to the Old Testament Scriptures (Isaiah 64:4) “**Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.**” Man cannot learn of God simply through what he sees, hears, or perceives through his own mental effort. He cannot conceive what God has “**prepared**” for His own because His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are so infinitely higher than ours. It is going to take more than we are able to figure out on our own. That’s the message of verse 9

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

(2:10-12) “**But**” introduces a contrast—in contrast to our inability to understand God acting as God through our own faculties, “**God has revealed**” all that He has prepared for us “**by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.**” Pay careful attention to what is being said here—What was impossible for man in the past to comprehend, God, by infusing us with His Holy Spirit has enabled us to see and understand. That was never the case with His Old Testament people. They never had the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, which we do in this age of grace as a matter of common enablement of all believers. It is not possible for any man to know and understand the human condition but by means of the human spirit within him. By the same order, man cannot know the spiritual things of God but by means of the Spirit of God within him. This is the Spirit, which we have received, the indwelling Holy

Spirit, in order that we might have within us the mind of Christ.

But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit, which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1 Corinthians 2:10-12

(2:13) It is those things revealed to us by the Spirit that are now spoken *ha kai laloumen* (from *la-la* ‘to utter sounds’) to others. This is our purpose in living; to communicate to others what the Spirit of God has revealed to us of the Son of God. Our duty is not to reprove the world of sin for that is the province of the Spirit. Ours is not a mission of improving social justice; that also is the province of the Spirit. We are not here to relieve suffering, make great scientific advances, or engage in grand philanthropies. We are to speak the things of God—to minister the Gospel of reconciliation to a lost world. If, while engaged in relieving suffering, we communicate the Gospel, then we have fulfilled our commission. If, while working to achieve some breakthrough in human knowledge, we hold the Gospel forth as our banner, then we have fulfilled our commission. Regardless of our endeavor, whether grand or humble, our mission is to communicate Christ to others. But don’t miss this—we are to teach others what the Spirit speaks to us just as we teach our children to sing; la-la-la, la-la-la, jingle all the way.

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

(2:14) “**Natural**” *psuchikos* (‘soulish’) refers to the facet of mankind that receives and responds to human phenomena. Every living person, whether redeemed or not, has a soul. The soul *psuche* expresses itself through the emotions and physical responses of the body. Passion, rest, self-esteem, safety, social awareness, achievement, self-fulfillment, internalization of goals, ego, relative morality, philanthropy; all are products of the soul of man. None of these functions of man will reveal any aspect of the character of God to man’s soul. But, man may have regenerated<sup>6</sup> in him a human spirit, by means of which he may take in and gain an understanding of things as they are associated with the character and person of God. For that to happen, it takes the infusion of God Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, directly into the inner life of the individual. That man then (1) is spiritually reborn, (2) has a human spirit come alive in him, (3) has the Holy Spirit resident in him to comfort and instruct, and (4) **“has the mind of Christ”** transforming his very being. He is, in fact, a new creature, a new order of being on earth. Revisit Paul’s letter to the Ephesians for more on this transformation.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

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<sup>6</sup> When we speak of one being “regenerated” it is specifically the human spirit, which has been made alive. It is that capacity within man by which he may receive and process spiritual information. This is precisely what was referenced in Romans 8:16 when Paul wrote; “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”

But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.  
1 Corinthians 2:13-15

### **Chapter 3--Carnality hinders growth and fellowship with Christ**

(3:1-4) Paul illustrates their spiritual condition of carnality *sarkinois* ('flesh, sold under sin'- Romans 7:14) by referring to them as babies, rather than as full-grown adults. They are spiritual infants. Therefore, they are going to have to be fed baby food, "**milk**" instead of solid doctrinal instruction that will allow them to grow and mature as believers. This is what he has given them in the past and now finds that he must continue to address them in the simplest of terms. He describes the signs of their carnality as "**envying, strife and divisions.**" These are things that should not be found among believers. Note carefully that we all live "*in flesh*" *en sarki* (Galatians 2:20), but we are not to live "*according to the flesh*" *kata sarka* (Romans 8:12). But look at this group—they are not dividing over obvious sins in their midst, but over whom they have chosen as their own personal spiritual heroes. They have failed to learn that we are not measured before God on the strength of our leaders, nor on their walk, but on the walk of the Lord Jesus in our daily life. Anything that is not Christ walking in our life is carnality.

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

(3:5-7) It is absolutely essential that leaders know in the depths of their being that the source of their life is the Lord Jesus and not their own strength or abilities. Leaders are but channels through which the provision of the Lord for His own is caused to flow. "**Ministers**" says Paul, are but the means used by God "**by whom you**" were evangelized and "**believed.**" Regardless of the role one might play in the evangelizing of another, it is "**God**" who "**gives the increase.**" It is comforting to know that I cannot cause another not to believe in Christ, to be lost forever due to some failing on my part. Neither can I cause someone to accept the Gospel. God holds these precious privileges in His hands. We are blessed with the glorious privilege of being on site when this occurs, because we have been obedient to Him, pursue righteousness, seek His face, and are faithful witnesses.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

(3:8-10) There is beautiful symmetry in these next few verses. Paul has just made a distinction between one who "**plants**" and one who "**waters**" as each performing his own function in the process of bringing another to Christ. There are different gifts of service as well as different

administrations of the same gift to be found within the Church. All planters do not plant alike, nor do all who ‘water’ do so in the same manner. Each one who serves is gifted by God to perform his/her particular task in obedience to the Spirit’s direction. In this way, the marvelous provision of the Spirit cannot be turned by comparison to another into a basis for judgment of relative merit or even spiritual correctness. Now he turns the same metaphor to union—“**He that plants and he that waters are one**” *hen eisin*, which makes the planter and waterer interdependent. If you take that as a personal reference to him, he is both the planter and the one who waters to these Corinthian believers. If you take it as Paul, the planter, and Apollos, the waterer, then he is saying that they are joined together as one, in Christ. It is all the same as if one or the other had planted and/or watered, because it is ultimately God who gives the increase. What a beautiful picture of losing one’s self in the life of the Lord Jesus. It is what John meant when he said, “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30). We also see that even in unity there is individual reward. But, who should get the reward? Does the planter get a reward? Does the waterer get a reward? I think it is obvious, that it is Christ Himself who is to get the reward, because it is His work to produce the increase. The identification, “**laborers together with God**” *theou sunergoi* (God’s fellow-workers) refers to Paul and Apollos as those appointed to service, while those who are being reached are elements of that which is being built up, “**God’s building**” *theou oikodomē* (*oikos*, house; *demō*, to build). The point is not that we are to be rewarded for service (for isn’t that what is expected of us as bond-slaves of the Lord?), but that the end product of our service is that God will collect His due rewards, glory!

Would any of us dare claim credit for laboring, knowing that it is, after all, *God’s* work? That doesn’t mean that it is work owned by God, but that it is work *performed by* God. The Lord Jesus Christ did it all. The “**foundation**” is the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been laid “**according to the Grace of God**” given to Paul as a “**wise building supervisor**.” God Himself formulated the plan and selected the materials. Paul is the construction supervisor who reads the blueprints and directs the materials to their proper place in the building. He was appointed to that job and specifically prepared for it from the moment he was brought face-to-face with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. We should “**take heed**” how we labor on God’s building, not in order to secure reward, but to demonstrate our faithfulness.

Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God’s husbandry, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another built on it. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. 1 Corinthians 3:8-10

(3:11) There is no other foundation for rebirth as a child of God than Jesus Christ. No amount of good works will secure you a position of favor with the Father. No degree of philanthropy, however, it may be honored by men, will gain you even the smallest piece of ground in God’s Kingdom. No depth of sincerity in living life honestly, gently, and for the benefit of others, will purchase a scrap of that ground of peace with God that is the inheritance of the least of His Children. Christ is the “chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20) of God’s building, the Church. That stone provides the point from which all others are measured, plumbed, secured, and stabilized. We are, in turn, the bricks used by God to complete the house. The Corner Stone establishes our height, breadth, length, strength, line, elevation, and beauty. It marks the point

from which the house is going to be built.

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

(3:12-15) All my life I have been taught that there are two categories of work represented here; gold, silver, and precious stones, which are representative of ‘good works’ because they are durable and may be refined by fire.<sup>7</sup> Then, there are; wood, hay, stubble, which are representative of ‘human works’ because they are consumed by fire and are not durable. I do not believe that is consistent with the character of the illustration Paul has laid out for these believers. These are six types of works, as valued by men, performed in the energy of the flesh in order to substitute our own efforts for the work of Christ. It is “**any man**” who builds, not God. Though the work is as valuable as gold, or as common as hay, or as sacrificial as stubble<sup>8</sup> (the straw used to make bricks) it is all still man working to gain God’s approval. It does not matter what the relative value of the material is, it is still going to be tested by the fire of divine, perfect righteousness. It is going to be tried for its content, character, and quality. It is not a matter of salvation, but of reward for production that meets the test of righteousness. (Lest we get too focused on the value and worth of Gold, remember that it is common paving material in Heaven). It is my opinion that nothing will stand the test of that fuller’s fire, but all will be consumed, even though we view some as valuable as gold, silver, or precious stones. Man will not be rewarded for man’s work at any level, but for the work that the Lord Jesus has performed in our lives as we yield to Him.

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

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

(3:16-17) To support that position, look at the way that Paul turns immediately to the declaration that believers “**are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells**” within it. This speaks of the Body of Christ, the Church as a single congregation, not the members individually. Because the Church is the temple of God and He is present in it, the Church of the Living God is ‘set apart’ to His purposes. It is holy. The work of the Church is accomplished by the Spirit of God, who dwells therein. The place is holy, thus the work must meet the same standard of absolute righteousness. The only Person who could meet that standard is God Himself.

Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

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<sup>7</sup> Harry Ironside considers them as (1) increasing in flammability and (2) decreasing in value, *1 Corinthians*, Louizeaux Publishing.

<sup>8</sup> *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* by Waalvord and Zuck, Victor Books 1983, points out that “hay” *chartos*, is translated in Timothy 3:10 as ‘wild flower’ and “stubble” *kalamē*, is the stalk after the grain is cut.

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

(3:18-23) It is man in his own wisdom who thinks that things of earthly value are a suitable offering or sacrifice to God. That was precisely the sin of Cain, who brought of the fruits of his labors, the grain offering, to satisfy God. When God rejected it, he took the knife used for animal sacrifices and cut his brother Abel's throat. Human wisdom, like earthly valuables, "**is foolishness with God.**" Where we might consider ourselves, or others, to be clever, shrewd, or tactical geniuses, He knows our thoughts, "**that they are empty.**" We should, therefore, find nothing in which to glory that originates from man's human wisdom. Rather, we should look to God's provision for us in time, not just in eternity, for He has provided "**all things**" that we will require in order to fulfill our mission of evangelizing the lost.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are empty. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

## Chapter 4—

(4:1,2) "So" says Paul, "consider us **ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.**" As stewards, there are no thoughts of reward for service, but simply to be "**found faithful.**" It is the principle restated; that there are no grounds for expecting rewards for doing that which you should be doing in the first place.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.  
1 Corinthians 4:1, 2

(4:3, 4) How important is your standing among men? Paul tells us that it is "**a very small thing**" as far as he is concerned. In fact, he does not even "**judge**" himself, because that would be on the basis of what he knows and that is not the issue. His standing is determined by the Lord's own will and work, not on the basis of anything that he, Paul, knows or has done. What a marvelous freedom from peer pressure. It is the comfort of living in the mind of Christ, with God's renown as the object, not our own reputation relative to other men or women.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I do not judge myself. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judges me is the Lord. 1 Corinthians 4:3, 4

(4:5) When Paul says to "**judge nothing before the time,**" he is speaking first of self-evaluation. Don't be patting yourself on the back for things you have done 'for the Lord' so to

speak. This kind of self-promotion leads to an attitude of superiority towards others, pride, which simply sets you up for a fall engineered by the enemy of God. Don't think for even a moment that "the Devil made me do it" is an adequate defense in God's court of judgment. Christ died to free you from slavery to sin. Any failure in that matter is clearly placed on man's choices; not to learn of God's instructions, not to follow God's instructions, not to rest in His provision, but to pursue your own solutions to life's dilemmas. Wait, is the answer, for praise from the Lord. Wait, also, as in the time of separation of the wheat from the tares.

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

(4:6-13) Paul says that he has "**figuratively**" set himself and Apollos before them as examples of patient waiting on God and being open in your relationships. In fact, he says, he believes that God has intentionally set those appointed messengers as "**spectacles**," living examples of His work-in-progress among men. In principle, this is exactly the position that every individual Believer holds, for we do not differ from any other Christian, including the Apostles—One Body, One Spirit, and One Lord. Paul reminds them that they are "**rich**," that they are "**kings**" and that their position has nothing to do with either Paul or Apollos. This is great, says Paul, because if they do reign, then he and Apollos will reign with them, because they are all one! To seal that attitude, he "**thanks God**" that He "has set forth the apostles" for this particular purpose, to demonstrate that rank has no place in the Church of Jesus Christ. In the Church of Jesus Christ, leaders become "**fools**" and followers are "**wise**;" leaders are "**weak**" and followers are "**strong**;" leaders take the public abuse and ridicule, and followers are "**honorable**." God's men and women who are on the point, so to speak, suffer "**hunger, thirst, and nakedness**," and are abused—where is that message among mass-media preachers today? Where does this message square with "deliverance" preachers? What does this say to those who would have Believers ever healthier, wealthier, wiser, stronger, arrogant in the face of Satan's fiery darts, and personally aggressive in their command over the conditions common to mankind? Where is their humility?

And these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that you might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it? Now you are full, now you are rich, you have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God you did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as ones appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and we labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the off scouring of all things unto this day. 1 Corinthians 4:6-13

(4:14-16) How many of us would dare say to our spiritual children, those we have led to the Lord, or to a deeper understanding of our position in Him, “**you**” continue to “**be followers of me?**” How often do we, instead, qualify ourselves as examples of what Christ would have His children do or say? Evangelism is not a hit-and-run operation. It’s more of a plant, water, and tend, kind of a lifestyle. There is always the element of time, so necessary to growth through testing what you are learning.

I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, you be followers of me. 1 Corinthians 4:14-16

(4:17) Look at this example from the life of Paul. Not only is he involved with their continued growth, he is sending Timothy to further their understanding of all the things that he is now teaching. You see, it doesn’t stop at simply getting them onto the ground of grace, it continues through to their maturity in the Lord.

For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them, which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will you? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness? 1 Corinthians 4:17-21

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#### POSITIONAL GOLD

Now, most believers like the gospel, but as J. B. Stoney reminds us, no one really appreciates the Gospel who is not across the Red Sea, in terms of realizing their true position before God. And, no one can really enjoy union with Christ who is not “over Jordan” in their walk in the Lord.

This is a really HUGE issue to grasp and take to heart. Stoney illustrates it clearly by pointing out that crossing Jordan for Israel meant separation from all that they were outside the place where God intends them to be, while crossing Jordan for the believer today means separation from our old self and living in Christ. They were drawn across Jordan by a place; while we are drawn across Jordan by a Person. One is the shadow form and the other is the reality for the Person is our place of peace with God.

Listen to Stoney’s exact words: “**Many a one can delight in God’s grace to him who is not sufficiently attached to Christ to leave everything here to join Him outside of everything here. There is a large field of blessing belonging to the gospel while we are here on the earth; but in the Church we are united to the glorified Man in heaven, and as you apprehend it an entirely new world is opened out to you, in which you cannot be but in Christ’s life.**”

We cannot build a life here out of earthly assets. Our life must, absolutely must, flow from our position in Christ were He now is! The Rock from which the water flows is no longer in the wilderness, but ascended; and the water of life is a torrent sufficient for every one who comes. CB

## Subdivision 2 (Chapters 5-7) *Dealing with lusts of the flesh*

### ***Introduction to Subdivision 2***

As F. W. Grant points out in The Numerical Bible, the number “2” is associated with growth, increase, and progress in a positive context; but in the negative application, it represents division, separation, and weakening. Here, we see man, the creature of God, subverted in his life by the lusts of the flesh flowing from his Adamic nature. In unity with the Lord Jesus there is deliverance, but in following after the flesh there is destruction. The issue is ‘to whom are you joined?’ Are you led by the Spirit of God or by the spirit of disobedience?

### **Section 1; Chapter 5** **Unity of the Body of Christ in righteousness**

#### ***Introduction to Section 1***

God has His ways for man to deal with sin in both his personal life and the corporate life of the Church. There is to be an abhorrence of evil whenever it is encountered. The believer who meets evil in his/her life that is oppressive and cannot be put away in your own strength is to mourn. Sin should grieve our spirits as it does the Holy Spirit resident in us. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he advises them<sup>9</sup> regarding a brother “overtaken” by sin—We are to draw alongside that one and relieve him of that oppressive load, take responsibility for holding it before the Lord. If the brother does not allow that, it should immediately put us in a state of grieving, mourning, over the loss to our brother and to the corporate fellowship, because sin has entered and broken our closeness in the Lord.

### ***Chapter 5--Sin in the Body exceeds sin among the lost; 5:1, 2***

“Fornication” is *porneia*, from which we get *pornographic* in modern English. The meaning then was about the same as today; something that is in and of itself unnatural, or as regards moral law, unlawful. One thing that fit into that category was sexual relations, in or outside of marriage, ***between too close kin***. That was forbidden by natural or common law, as well as God’s intentions for man expressed in the Mosaic Law. There was one individual among the assembly at Corinth that was openly engaging in relations with his father’s wife, his stepmother. Now, this assembly had elders, deacons, and teachers, who were spiritual leaders. What was their response to this situation? They became righteously indignant, “**puffed up**.” This reminds us of Lot, who “vexed his self-righteous soul daily” (2 Peter 2:8) at the sexual perversion of the Sodomites. He, like these believers in Corinth, did not mourn the sinfulness, but focused on his relative ‘goodness’ and the fact that he did not commit the sin that was in evidence. God is not impressed with our relative goodness. He is pleased only with the righteousness of His Son, who acted on our behalf. It is through our mourning that God is moved to act or to cause us to act in such a manner that the offender is “**taken away**” from the midst of the assembly and is no longer a hindrance to other’s growth and worship. The apostle says that they could expect to have that one removed in response to their right attitude before God.

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<sup>9</sup>Galatians chapter 6

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2

Delivered to Satan for destruction of the flesh:

(5:3-5) There is an altogether destructive line of reasoning espoused both in and out of the Church—That no one should judge another, but only one's self. This is not a new, or recent, perversion of scriptural commandment. The believer is to be discerning in every moment as to righteousness and evil. We are to: “resist the Devil” (James 2:4), “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18), “flee idolatry, (1 Cor. 10:14), “flee youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22), “discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14), and “distinguish between things that differ” (Phil. 1:9). In short, we are to discriminate against those things that are evil and in favor of those things that are righteous. This should be done with the expectation that God will either (1) remove us from the situation where evil is being practiced, or (2) remove the source of the evil. In this case, Paul says that he expects this man to be delivered to Satan by removal of the hedge of fellowship and that Satan will complete his work of destruction in the flesh. If the individual is a true believer, this will result in his physical death and move him immediately to the “day of the Lord Jesus” where Christ Himself will judge his deeds.

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:3-5

### **Fellowship in Christ to be holy (5:6-13)**

#### ***Sincerity and truth v.6-8***

Their self-absorbed spiritual arrogance is not a good thing. They have lost sight of the fact that sin breeds sin. We learn from their experience; that if you look the other way, regardless of the particular sin that is being openly embraced, you tacitly give approval for all varieties of evil behavior in the Church. Sin cannot be simply ignored! It must be dealt with, corporately and internally. Otherwise, it is like “**a little leaven**” which has the potential to leaven “**the whole lump of dough.**” We are to “**purge out**” sin wherever we find it, in order that we might be “**a new lump.**” How is that actually accomplished? When we are joined to Christ in His death on the Cross, the question of sin (leaven) is dealt with forever. We are to live in light of our having died to sin, because all of its demands have been met, its price paid. Just as the death angel passed over the land and claimed his due on the first Passover, “**Christ, our Paschal lamb is sacrificed for us.**” Since we have been reborn in Him, we are a new lump, collectively, a new assembly.

Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened.

For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

### ***Separate from evil v. 9-13***

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortionists, or with idolaters; for then must you needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortionist; with such a one do not eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not you judge them that are within? But them that are without God judges. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

### **Section 2 (Chapter 6:1-7)**

#### **Fellowship without assertion of “rights”**

(6:1-7) This passage is not about whether or not a Believer should engage in lawsuits against anyone else. It's about attitudes. It's about the Believer attempting to hold on to goods and services here, in this world, rather than staying focused on our life “hid with God, in Christ.” If we consider that Christ Himself owned no property, held no deeds, operated with no earthly bank account, accumulated no wealth, and made no demands on His earthly family; then how far from His example are we?

If we stop to think of it, virtually every legal battle we engage in, in our lifetime, is in defense of something that we own, are paying on, or have inherited. It is to make our nest here more comfortable, safer, more pretentious, and more representative of our perceived station in life! How offensive to God that must be! How unlike the Lord Jesus are our thoughts? How unlike the Apostles is this mindset of relative equality and justice?

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Don't you know that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments of things pertaining to this life, appoint those who are the least esteemed in the assembly to judge. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather accept being wrong? Why do you not rather allow yourselves to be defrauded? 1 Corinthians 6:1-7

### Section 3 (Chapter 6:8-20)

Set apart unto God, temples of the Holy Spirit

(6:8) Not only are they unwilling to be wronged, in order to demonstrate their disconnection from things and strategies that the world considers all-important, power, control, and wealth; but, they are also willing to use the same kinds of actions against their fellow Christians. This is not the manner in which the Lord Jesus related to His brethren, nor is it the manner in which the Spirit leads today. We live and move in the world according to knowledge of both the world and of the expectations of the Lord regarding our lifestyle. So, with an eye towards all that we know of Him, and a heart turned in prayer to the Father above, and a mind fixed on going where He directs, we lay our daily decisions on the table with His good in mind, not ours. We do not need to count the cost to ourselves (for wasn't the entire price paid at Calvary?), but only the "right" decision in terms of what will bring glory to the God we serve.

Nay, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. 1 Corinthians 6:8

(6:9, 10) **"Know oīdate** (to see, to have perceived) **you not that the unrighteous adikoi** (from *adikos*, 'not right.' Lit. 'the being unrighteous one') **shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"** In these verses "unrighteousness" is defined; "**fornicators**" (*pornoi* that which is intrinsically unnatural) are those who are unmarried and sexually promiscuous; "**idolaters**" are those who allow anything other than God to become the object of their desire and focus. "**Adulterers**" (*moikoi*) are those who pursue sex outside their marriage. "**Effeminate**" (*malakoi* 'soft, soft to the touch,' from which we get the word *emollient*) means more than just behavior peculiar to a woman by a man (voluptuousness); it also implies the idea of a man abandoning his position of leadership and responsibility for family and for the women in his life in pursuit of sensual pleasure. "**Abusers of themselves with mankind**" is any private behavior that dishonors the person you are. We are God's own, bought with a price; so, anything that is allowed to degrade that concept is here condemned and excluded from the Kingdom of God. The list continues—Those whose lives are characterized by thievery, covetousness, drunkenness, people who attack others, people who use others for their own gain by taking advantage of their weaknesses—none of these kinds of people will inherit the Kingdom of God because they have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb; they have been "**set apart**" and rendered just in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

#### *The spiritual laws governing a believer's behavior*

- 1     **"All things are lawful unto me"**—Since there is "**therefore no condemnation**" to those who have been joined to Christ in His death, God has no judicial action pending against us.

The Law has been satisfied by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and we are now free from its claims on us. Further, since we have “**died to the Law**” it no longer has jurisdiction. Law cannot exact any payment from a dead man. So, we learn from this statement of Paul to the believers in Corinth that the Law is no longer a standard against which we measure the right or wrong of any behavior.

2. **The rule of expediency**—“**But**” introduces a contrast. In contrast to the first rule (all things are lawful) there are some things that I might lawfully do before the court of divine justice, but which are not expedient to the ministry of the Gospel where I am presently serving. Therefore, I will refrain from doing that particular thing in deference to my testimony before others, their level of understanding being the guide.
3. **The rule of self-discipline**—There are things that I may lawfully do, but which have such a compelling presence in my life that they come between God and me. They might disrupt my prayer life, my service, and/or my focus on the Father, or my adoration of and appreciation for the Son. When these things become evident to me, or to others to whom I am accountable, then it is imperative that I remove those things from my life immediately and refrain from indulging in them as a matter of personal discipline. Fail to do that, and growth stops and deterioration begins: “**I will not be brought under the power**<sup>10</sup> **of any.**”

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

(6:13, 14) Here is a principle to live by—Keep earthly things in their proper perspective! The body requires food, and the food that is provided is there to sustain you; but you should never forget that both the food and the body that you occupy are destined for destruction. This body was never intended for “**immortality**,” but as a place to honor God. And the most important thing to remember is that the Lord Jesus came specifically to resolve the issue of death here so that you might have life everlasting. Our confidence is that “**God, who has raised the Lord, will also raise us up by His own power.**” It requires nothing on our part but acceptance.

Meats are for the stomach, and the stomach is for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.  
1 Corinthians 6:13, 14

(6:15-17) Lest we err and think of our union with Christ only in spiritual terms, Paul reminds us, and those Believers in Corinth that there is a temporal, physical element to sanctification. The bodies we occupy now have become the physical elements of display of the Body of Christ on earth. It is important that we treat our physical presence in the world as a member of the risen Christ. Therefore, fidelity to the principles of living separated, committed lives is our spiritual and physical responsibility. Fail to do that and you are guilty of spiritual and physical harlotry, for we are married, in union with, our ascended Lord Jesus.

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members

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<sup>10</sup> NASB “mastered by anything”

of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he, which is joined to a harlot, is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:15-17

(6:18) It is because of that union with Christ and everything that obtains to its display within the world now, that the Christian must “**flee fornication.**” Since he is one with Christ, his body is one with the Body of Christ and with the Lord Himself in heaven. Therefore, to sin against Christ is to sin against the Christian’s own body. The second aspect is that the Holy Spirit has a continuing presence in the body we occupy, which makes it a temple in which we are to worship God moment by moment. As God’s temple, it is no longer our property, in terms of ownership. The price paid was the death of Jesus Christ and His blood as the price of redemption applied to our account; all as a result of the Cross. Our goal then, is to “**glorify God**” in everything that we do. As he said earlier (2:16) believers have “the mind of Christ,” now apply that to your physical lives.

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s. 1 Corinthians 6:18

**“You are not your own.”** We know that our hope is to be His own in Heaven, where He now is; but we cannot lose sight of our privilege to live as His own now. It is here, in this world, that we can exercise the privilege of glorifying Him in our bodies. This is what Paul refers to in Romans 12 as he exhorts us to “present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Him.” Here, he issues the imperative; “**Therefore glorify God in your body,**” bringing dependence and focus right down to our daily routines.

#### **Section 4 (Chapter 7)** *How to deal with circumstances common to mankind*

##### **Introduction to Section 4**

As Believers, we are to live separated lives, untangled with the cares and concerns of building security and gathering power to ourselves in this world. How does one treat his/her ambitions, responsibilities, and opportunities that are encountered throughout life? Is it wrong to gain a position of authority over others? What do we do about wealth? If we need a bigger barn to hold our “stuff,” then are we in spiritual danger of doing something that displeases and dishonors God? There are reasonable, Biblical, answers to these kinds of questions and Paul addresses many of them in this letter.

Living for God as single or married (Chapter 7:1-9)

(7:1-2) First, it is not required of Believers that they be married. Living a chaste life as a single honors God in a special way and enables one to serve Him without distraction. Paul calls this “**good**” *kalon*. However, sex is a primal, overwhelming, drive in most people; put there by God

for purposes of pleasure, to complete the union between man and women, and for procreation. So, if that need is to be indulged, let marriage satisfy it in all aspects. Marriage precludes any sexual relationship outside the union because the union now represents the union of the Believer and the Lord (2 Corinthians 11:2; Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:28-33). **“To avoid fornication”** *dia tas porneias* (lit. ‘because of fornication’) requires careful attention—note that **“fornication”** comes from the same root word that yields pornographic, something that is intrinsically, in and of itself not natural and/or right. In that sense, fornication is something that should not ever happen in the course of normal, natural, union of any man and any woman. It says that any sexual union between any man and woman outside of the bounds of marriage is *porneia*, wrong and unnatural. This is the highest view of marriage and the family that one could possibly take.

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

(7:3-5) Once married, the first thing you give up is the right to do with your body as you please. The basis for a Christian response to the abortion issue is right here. All “rights” pertaining to the use of our bodies is surrendered to the marriage relationship. Husbands and wives do not even have **the “right”** to withhold sex from their partner for any reason. **“Render unto the wife due benevolence”** *tēn opheilēn apodidotō* (lit. ‘render the due’) or ‘render unto the wife that which is due.’ You see, **“power”** in these decisions has been surrendered to the other half of the union as a demonstration of *submission to God* in all things by both parties. The only time for abstaining from satisfying the needs of your marriage partner is for the express purpose of **“fasting, and prayer,”** those are acts of worship, after which you should resume normal sexual relations. Do you remember why you got married? It was because you could not control yourself. Right now you are thinking, no, I got married because I loved him/her, because I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him/her, because we were sooooo compatible. Bull! You got married because you couldn’t keep your hands off her, because you ached to give yourself to him/her, because you wanted UNION more than anything in the world. Well, now that you have it, live in light of it so “that Satan might not keep on tempting you” (present subjunctive-Robertson).

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

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

(7:6-9) Paul offers some practical advice. If it is possible to remain single and devote your life to serving God, do it. But, if you cannot stay chaste, if God did not gift you with sexual control, then marry, **“for it is better to marry than to burn”** in your desires. Salvation is not endangered here. **“Burn”** is not a reference to hell, but to desires. The entire discussion here is living in the body consistent with your spiritual position, not salvation.

But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were

even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. 1 Corinthians 7:6-9

Dealing with separation or divorce as a believer (Chapter 7:10-16)

(7:10-12) “**Unto the married** *tois gegamēkosin* perfect active participle, (‘married and still married’) **I command, yet not I** *ouk egō, but the Lord* *alla ho kurios*” (see Matthew 5:31f; Mark 10:9-12; Luke 16:18). There is no issue more prevalent, both in the Church and in society in general today, than divorce. What is the Christian’s responsibility and what should his/her response be when faced with divorce that is forced upon you? There are cultural implications here, but sound principles emerge. The culture of the region in that day gave the husband virtually all authority over his wife. Therefore, the wife could not initiate a divorce; the only option was to abandon her husband. Consistent with what he has already said about giving authority over your body to your marriage partner, Paul says that the Lord’s command is that the wife **should not** abandon her husband. But, “**if she does depart,**” (third class condition, maybe she will and maybe she won’t) acknowledges that there are situations where separation is absolutely required for reasons that include personal safety or abuse. However, separation does not include the right to marry a second husband. “**Let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband**” *ē tōi andri katallagētō* (to exchange something of equal value, as coins). The very act does violence to God’s faithfulness to His Bride, His Church, and the same thing applies to husbands..

To the husband, who has the legal authority to “**put away**,” divorce, his wife, the command is that he is not to “**put away his wife.**” This is hard to construe any other way than as an absolute statement. Your wife is your wife for life. “Until death us do part” is not a misnomer, it is a vow, real and tangible, made *before* and *to* your heavenly Father. It is the same vow that the Lord Jesus made to you and to His heavenly Father when He took you to Himself as His Bride. The reality is that we have been conferred with life eternal in Christ, and the union is forever! So also is the standard for marriage among Christian men and women.

If a Believer has a wife who is not a Believer, but she is “**pleased**” to continue to live with him as his wife, then the husband should not “**put away his wife**” either by separation or divorce.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother has a wife that believes not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 1 Corinthians 7:10-12

(7:13) If a believing wife has an unbelieving husband and he is “**pleased to dwell with her,**” then she should not separate herself from him or abandon him in any manner other than for abuse. This has far-reaching implications where there are children. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 21, Jesus has been asked about the signs immediately preceding the Tribulation and coming of the Son of Man. (v.7). In His response, Jesus tells them of the wars, earthquakes,

plagues, famines, and the signs in the heavens. (v.10, 11) Then He tells them of the personal persecution by governments of those bearing His name. They are to take care to prepare beforehand to defend themselves physically and with the concepts of grace and freedom on which Christianity is founded (v.15). Armies will surround Jerusalem and those people that are there will know its destruction is at hand (v.20). At that time, all who follow and worship God should abandon the city and flee to the mountains (v.21). A special lament follows these instructions: “Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days” (v.23). Who are these parents? They are ones who are bearing children conceived after the Church was taken out of the world, or who had children born to them after the Rapture of the Church. In both cases, an innocent child has been brought into the terrible, catastrophic, events of the tribulation period because of the prior unbelief of its parent. Here, Paul is telling these believers in Corinth that in a marriage between an unbelieving parent and a believing parent, that the children are set apart unto God, prior to their reaching the age where they might make their own decisions regarding the Gospel. While I cannot be dogmatic, there is an implication here that at the Rapture of the Church, children are taken with their believing parent, but if both parents are unbelievers, their children may be left to go through the terrors of the events that follow. That does not mean that God’s grace towards those children is lessened, but that they have not been **“set apart” hagios** (holy) by a believing parent.

And the woman who has a husband that believes not, and if he is pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 1 Corinthians 7:13, 14

(7:15-16) What these next two verses say to Believers today is something like this: if two Believers are married and one decides to leave the marriage, then the recourse is to the leadership of the Body of Christ to intervene and bring reconciliation on the basis of Christ’s testimony. Appropriate disciplinary measures are available where Christians are concerned. If one of the partners in the marriage is an unbeliever, then there is no jurisdiction, no authority, held by the Assembly or its leadership over the unbeliever. Should the unbeliever, whether husband or wife, decide to leave the marriage, then the believing partner is not bound to the marriage. But, there is no inference that may be drawn from these verses that the one abandoned is therefore free to remarry another. Remember that marriage is to picture the union between Christ and His Church. Even though the Church drifts into error, idolatry, or spiritual harlotry, yet He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself (see Notes on 2 Timothy 2:11-13).

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what do you know, O wife, whether you shall save thy husband? Or how do you know, O man, whether you shall save thy wife?  
1 Corinthians 7:15-16

God calls us individually to service (Chapter 7:17-24)

(7:17-20) Following the admonition to continue to minister the Gospel, even as a marriage breaks up, Paul goes on: **“God has distributed”** refers to several things; (1) the skills and abilities with which to face life and (2) the challenges that life offers. Then, we are to be

reminded that it is “**the Lord Who has called every one**” of us as individuals. We have been called to service right where we are, “**so let (us) walk.**” Were you “**circumcised**” (a Jew) when God called you to the Gospel? Then you should not seek to become “**uncircumcised**” (a Gentile). Were you called as a Gentile (uncircumcised)? Then you should not seek to become a practicing Jew. Messianic Judaism is a farce. It is a situation where Believers are attempting to take on the traditions of Judaism that were practiced prior to the first coming of the Lord Jesus without a commitment to keep the whole Law.

In the context of these verses; **Circumcision = separation unto God.**

Now, why is this no longer important—it is because every Believer is called by God, prepared by God, appointed to service by God, and therefore holy (separated) unto God. It’s true of the children of believing parent(s), of the believing half of a mixed marriage, of the Gentile called to minister in the Land, and of the Jew called to minister to his own brethren; so let us walk according to this truth today.

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.  
1 Corinthians 7:17-20

(7:21-24) These next few verses present a concept that is foundational to our position and walk as Christians and, at the same time, is a most radical departure from the way people view life and purpose today. We are driven today by the very idea of becoming *successful*, of gaining *control* over our lives. Education gives us choices; career performance gives us upward mobility and increases our power over where we work; 401K plans insulate us from the vagaries of retirement; Insurance plans give us power over our health choices; and Government provides flood, earthquake, and catastrophic fire coverage. We live in a world where risk-management is a major factor in every decision we make. This is the politics of fear, driving the marketing programs of an incredible segment of our decision-making process. How is the Believer to work, to move, to live in these days and in the face of these ubiquitous challenges? With the sweep of a single phrase, the whole force of career planning is removed from the table of concerns for the Believer who is standing on the ground of peace and in the light of God’s Gospel of grace. If you were “**a servant**” when you were “**called**” by the Spirit to the Lord Jesus, then your station in life as a servant should not give you one cause for concern. It should not occupy your thoughts at all. In many cases this was debtor servitude. You have an obligation to pay, or to serve, as under obligation to God for your service. “**But**” introduces contrast—“**If you should be made free**” then you take on the life of the freeman, obligated only to God. You are to “**use**” your circumstance to God’s purpose and advantage.

“But, where are my rights as an individual?” you might ask. This is precisely the issue—All “rights” are now subject to the life of the Lord Jesus in you. Whether you are a servant or free, both positions should be used in service to God, for in His eyes the free are His servants and the servants are free in Christ. Because you have been “**bought**,” and at great cost, you are now the

property of a heavenly Lord, so “**abide with God**,” or, as Miles Stanford says; “*abide above.*” That means taking your life, the mandates for living, from your heavenly Father, rather than from the stream of circumstances that you face here. In doing so, you will find that the same situations face you on a day to day basis, but the reasons why you do what you do will dramatically change. You will be looking for different results in your life. All at once, your progress is not as important as your opportunity to reach others with the Gospel. That doesn’t mean that you go to work with a pocket full of tracts, but that you go to your workplace aware of those around you in terms of their spiritual needs that you can meet. It means that when your mind comes to rest, it’s not on baseball, or the market, or on that new Audi 5000 you saw on the way to work, but on God and His provision, *on Christ your life!*

Are you called being a servant? Care not for it: but if you should be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. You are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. 1 Corinthians 7:21-24

Living with natural and common urges (Chapter 7:25-40)

(7:25) The mandate was clearly stated in verse 20; “**Let each man remain in that condition (concerning marriage) in which he was called**” by God to Himself. It was restated in verse 24; “**Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.**” It is restated in verse 26; “**it is good for a man to remain as he is**” with respect to marriage. With the three statements, Paul has made clear that our focus is not to be on building relationships here but there, with God. Our view of our very existence should be *heavenly*, not *earthly*—even though we are here for the moment. This is visualization as God always intended it to be applied. Our lives should revolve around pleasing Him, satisfying His demands on our time and attention. It should be with the most serious consideration given to our lifestyle that we change the condition in which the Lord found us and called us to Himself. “Abide with God” calls us to Heaven for our citizenship, for our authority to act, for the resources with which we live here. Remember that Paul said in Romans 6:25 “I myself with my mind am serving the law of God.” That is an *act of will* directed by the Holy Spirit within. It is the source of our *abiding*, our taking on the mind of Christ here, sourced from where He is there.

(7:25) For young, single, women, Paul says that he has no direct commandment from the Lord, but he is willing to give his advice in order to be “**faithful**” to his stewardship of the mercy extended him by God. Let’s not lightly pass this by. Here is God’s chosen Apostle to the Church, setting a magnificent example for us to follow. He has taken the mercy of God’s forgiveness as a spiritual asset, used that to power his ministry, his charge for service, and treats both the gift of mercy, and his knowledge gained from God for service, as a stewardship. From that basis, he moves into life with confidence as regards the stewardship decisions he faces in his own life and in the lives of Believers around him.

Now, apply that to your own life. God has granted you the same gift of mercy, and He has charged you, and prepared you, with an area in which to serve Him and the Body of Christ. Are we taking the attitude of one who is holding assets in trust for another, in this case, God the

Father? Are we dispensing those assets, or spending those assets (for either might be the case, and equally valid functions) with confidence. Are we at rest in our minds that we are serving the law of Christ, the rule of the New Creation (Galatians 6)?

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

(7:26) Watch how Paul transfers the principles that are clearly delineated for male Believers to young women. It is the rule of the New Creation being applied.

“**Therefore**” ties his supposition to all that he has previously said. The mandate for men in service to Christ is to “**remain in the condition in which they were called.**” So, it is logical that the rule for young women would be the same, because of “**the present distress.**” They are faced with extreme persecution, a condition that has not been the norm for Western Christianity for a long time. We have to get into the mind of Believers at the moment that this was being delivered as practical advice for living. The question is; ‘If the distress is no longer the order of the day, is the advice changed, and are both men and women now encouraged to marry rather than to remain single?’ I think it is apparent that Paul is addressing the needs of Believers to deal with the “**present distress**” in a manner that effectively ministers the Lord to the lost through the separated Church. That Church is not to be seen building permanency here, but working as short-term tenants. So, if the Lord calls you to Himself and you are married, “**do not seek to become loosed**” or free from your obligations as a married man. In other words, your ministry does not ever set aside your responsibilities and obligations as a husband and/or father. If, on the other hand, you are single when called to the Lord, then “**it is good**” to remain single and serve God without the distraction of married responsibilities.

“**But,**” introduces contrast—in contrast to remaining single, whether male or female—“**if you marry**” that is not a sin, for either the single man or woman; however, it is going to present you problems “**in the flesh**” because you have a responsibility that supercedes your desires to serve the Lord.

I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art you bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.  
1 Corinthians 7:26-28

(7:29-31) “**But**” introduces yet another contrast—this time it is a contrast to the sum of what he has just told them—there is an exception to the rule he has just given them. “**The time is short**” refers to the period of persecution that the young Church is facing at the hands of the Roman Empire. Paul is looking at an immediate escalation in severe persecution that is going to rend life as they know it and demand extraordinary actions from virtually every Believer. Therefore, “**it remains a fact,**” says Paul that “**the fashion of this world is passing away**” and nothing that you consider normal is going to continue to exist as you have known it.

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remains, that both they that have wives be as

though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

(7:32-34) Now comes a very practical observation by the Apostle. One who is unmarried pays careful attention to the one he serves. In the Believer's case, his attention is solely on the Lord and how he may please Him. But, the Believer who is married has his attention on things within the world and how he may please his wife. This is not criticism, but an observation of the way that priorities are set between married and unmarried. By the same token single women may devote their entire lives to serving Christ, while married women have to devote a large part of their time to pleasing their husbands.

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. 1 Corinthians 7:32-34

(7:35) The issue here is not the rightness or wrongness of marriage, but of freedom to serve the Lord without "**distracted**."

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

1 Corinthians 7:35

(7:36, 37) Does this mean that two single people who find themselves in love should not marry? No! If their desire is to be married and they have determined that they cannot be happy apart, then it is not sinful to marry, it is good! This next statement is couched in terms of the male decision, because that was the practice and consistent with the mores of the day. Women did not have the choice over mates and marriage that they do today. So the Apostle deals with the one making these decisions, the man. If he, the man, determines that he can best serve the Lord as a single adult, then he should not enter into a marriage, but keep his intended wife as a virgin. This is not an excuse for sexual intimacy between two singles outside of marriage. It should be noted that, in today's culture, the same rules apply for women as for men.

But if any man think that he behaves himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sins not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. 1 Corinthians 7:36-37

(7:38) As a final note, Paul points out the same rule as applied to the father of the single woman, since he is in the position of responsibility and decision-making as her husband-to-be.

So then he that gives her in marriage does well; but he that gives her not in marriage does better. 1 Corinthians 7:38

(7:39-40) First, he gives an opinion regarding the law of the day—a wife is bound as long as her husband is alive, but if her husband dies, she is then free to marry another. Then, he adds a caveat to her choices, **“only in the Lord.”** Believers should never consider themselves free to marry unbelievers, for that is becoming unequally yoked at the point of marriage by choice. In Paul’s opinion, and he thinks that he is speaking the mind of Christ by the Spirit, she would be better off remaining an unmarried widow and devoting her service to Christ.

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

1 Corinthians 7:39-40

### Subdivision 3 (Chapters 8-10)

#### Prevalent and open idolatry, Satan's work

##### ***Introduction to Subdivision 3***

The attention of the letter now turns to issues regarding idolatry. Corinth is filled with pagan worship and temples dedicated to pagan gods. This is a huge segment of society and commerce; to the extent that Believer's are thrown into close association with idolaters on a frequent, if not daily, basis.

##### **To know and be known of God (Chapter 8:1-6)**

(8:1) Paul does for these Believers in Corinth what my friend Phil Richman does faithfully for me—he reminds them that simply knowing the principles and the truth is not enough. Left alone, it becomes a point of departure into self-sufficiency, pride, and failure, for knowledge alone “**puffs up.**” It takes *agape* love “**charity**” to edify, to build up, for we are, after all, mind, emotion, and will, and it is the love of the brethren that should drive our actions and life as it unfolds before them.

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge.  
Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. 1 Corinthians 8:1

(8:2-3) A little introspection, please—are you just a tad too comfortable in your belief that you “**know**” what the mind of the Lord is about things in your life? Be reminded that your knowledge is ever limited by your experience, your relative immaturity, and your preconceptions about how God would view the question at hand. “**But**” introduces a contrast, in contrast to your imperfect knowledge about God and His ways, God knows you thoroughly and intimately. Therefore, bask in the grace of your souls being laid bare before Him. Deal with the fact that there is nothing, not one little thing about you that your Heavenly Father does not know—and He still loves you and accepts you as His own. Amazing grace.

And if any man think that he knows any thing, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.  
But if any man loves God, the same is known of him. 1 Corinthians 8:2-3

(8:4-6) It is very important to connect these next verses dealing with things offered to idols with the foundation just laid—we are totally bare before God and known in the greatest possible detail to Him. Therefore, when we engage in eating something that has been offered to an idol, we “**know**” that the idol is “**nothing**” as far as God is concerned. Think carefully about what this can teach us today. We are not likely, in our daily routines, to encounter food that has come from animal sacrifices to pagan idols, a common occurrence in Corinth. It was a practice of the priests of the various temples to resell meat brought as sacrifices to the gods of the temples. This was how they raised their support for temple and staff; and it was certainly true that, in many cases, the best steaks in town came from the markets associated with the temples.

The Apostle, therefore, reminds these Believers that there is no power in the idol, for there is but

one God over all and it is His we are. We need to be reminded of that very same lesson, if we are giving the least bit of consideration to the validity of the horoscope in the daily paper, or “lucky” days, or “good luck” charms. We do not serve a God of chance, but of deliberate action and sovereign choices.

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there are those that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

### **The believer's conscience, free or condemning (chapter 8:7-13)**

So, how does this change or impact our behavior as Christians? Well, first, there are some within the Body of Christ who have no assurance of their forgiven status. They do not understand the finished work of Christ that has already paid, in full, for the sin and sins of mankind. So, they carry this tremendous load of guilt from every infraction of the rules that exist in their own head, rules that they have constructed, quite apart from biblical mandates imposed on the Body of Christ. Therefore, they treat behaviors that are labeled as taboo's in a manner that fails to consider the supreme Lordship of the Creator, who's they are. They believe that the vows of man change the status of man before the Lord of the Universe. By the same logic, they give place and strength to the vows made by others to idols, symbols, or practices originating in the human ego. One man believes that not eating meat on a fast day makes him a more spiritual, therefore more worthy, person. The corollary to that is that violating the fast day rule makes one a less spiritual, less worthy, person. Paul reminds the Corinthians, and us, that neither of these statements is true—“**meat does not commend us to God' for neither, if we eat, are we the better, neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.**”

The truth is, we stand before God the Father in the righteousness of the Son and we assume His character. He is the only acceptable sacrifice and we are identified with Him in that role. Based on that truth, we realize that we are free to eat the meat from the idolater's market and that alone should not cause us any guilt, as far as our own conscience is concerned. But, another issue is raised; at what point does our exercise of liberty cause another brother to stumble? Suppose a brother with a real sensitivity to idolatry sees us eating this meat, which was previously a sacrifice to a pagan God, and (1) is offended, because he thinks it is sin, or (2) is encouraged to do likewise and thereby drawn back into familiarity with things from which he has been redeemed. Then hasn't your liberty become the cause of your brother's stumbling? Two rules apply—

*The Rule of Liberty*—The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. There is only one God, so idols are nothing of consequence. Therefore, I am at liberty to enjoy the bounty of the earth, even that which others have given to pagan, so-called, gods.

*The Rule of Sacrifice*—Though I am at liberty to do certain things, for the sake of not offending, or instructing, my brother, I will forego my liberty, willingly and graciously.

However, there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat does not commend us to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man sees you who has knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Wherefore, if meat makes my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend. 1 Corinthians 8:7-13

### ***Christian privilege relinquished to God's use (Chapter 9:1-22)***

#### ***The claim of privilege (v.1-7)***

(9:1-7) Paul has just completed his instructions on self-control in order to reach those around us who might not be saved. To emphasize his point, he reminds them that leadership, indeed Apostleship, does not relieve one of those limitations. We all have the right and ability to eat and drink. But even those simple acts are to be committed to God's use as we serve His purposes. This brings service right into the daily and routine activities in which we serve Him. In other words, don't attempt to separate service from your life in general. We are serving Him constantly. Paul's rhetorical questions drive the lesson home—He is free to marry and occupy himself with family, as does Peter and others, but he does not in order to more effectively serve the Lord Jesus. He points out Barnabas as another following this same principle of working without distraction in God's service.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My answer to those who examine me is this--Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goes to warfare any time at his own authority? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat of its fruit? Or who feeds a flock, and does not eat of the milk of the flock? 1 Corinthians 9:1-7

Here's an observation on this principle of serving God with our total lives. We live today as Believers with a plethora of para-church organizations surrounding us with their individual approaches to evangelization, Bible memory, spiritual development, Christian life training, performing groups, and ministries to any number of targeted groups. Why this explosion of activities? I believe that it is directly related to the fact that Christians can't see the simple truth that redemption and all that follows with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit sets each life apart unto service as the norm of our daily existence. We don't have to be doing some identifiable activity, just getting on with our lives, taking care of our business, and acknowledging Him is every single moment and duty. The activities can, all too often, shield us from giving ourselves totally!

### *Both Old Testament scripture and Gospel support for privilege (v. 8-14)*

(9:8-11) God has granted rights to man. These were stated prior to the Law and within the Law as well. Among these are: the privilege to marry, the right to take profits from your labors, and the right to work to improve your lot in life. As Christians, these rights and privileges are not done away with. On that basis, the spiritual labors that Paul and Barnabas have invested should bring some spiritual profit, i.e. their spiritual growth through following what they have been taught. This is the true wages of any Believer in service to the Lord Jesus Christ. God never promised us an easier life, more of the world's goods, real estate, or material wealth, in return for our service. When we serve Him by serving others, it is *their* spiritual growth and development that is our reward.

Do I say these things as a man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Does God take care for oxen? Or does he say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that plows should plow in hope; and that he that threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 1 Corinthians 9:8-11

(9:12-14) “**If others be partakers**” refers to those in life who take profit from your labor, bankers, employers, and merchants that you do business with daily. Each of them takes profit from whatever business you do with them. So too do those who spiritually labor on your behalf have a right to expect profit from their service to you. But, Paul points out, he and Barnabas have not used their right (“power”) to spiritual gain, but forego any material support lest they “**should hinder the Gospel of Christ.**” Paul supported his own ministry by working so that no one could ever accuse him of being in the ministry for the money. This is in contrast to the practice in the Old Testament Temple, where worship was to provide meat for the priests out of the sacrifices brought to the temple. The gospel is the substance that provides life for both the one who hears and receives and the one who ministers it, and it is a spiritual profit! The profit to the minister who fills the pulpit is spiritual growth within his congregation. When we realize that the Lord never owned a single material piece of property, we can begin to see the magnitude of this commitment to serve Him. After all, it is His life that flows through us to others.

If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so has the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:12-14

### *Privilege offered as a sacrifice of service (v. 15-22)*

(9:15-17) Having established that those who labor in the ministry of the Gospel are worthy to receive support for their labors from the Church to which they minister, Paul goes on to demonstrate that he is offering that privilege up as a sacrifice to the Gospel. He does not want any hint that he is serving the Church for money or reward. Preaching the Gospel is an

imperative, something that he must do. His willingness to follow God's leading and command will be rewarded, but the task is "**committed**" unto him and he knows that he cannot back away from it.

But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it would be better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 1 Corinthians 9:15-17

(9:18-22) What, then, is his reward to be? It is the salvation of the lost! He has been made the "**servant of all**" at the same time that he has been made "**free**" out from all men. Where he was once captive of sin and in the body of lost men, now he has been made free and set apart to God's service. It is with that full sense of freedom that he indentures himself to the Lord Jesus in service of the Gospel.

What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 1 Corinthians 9:18-22

### **Ministry of the Gospel brings testing (Chapter 9:23-10:14)**

"In this world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33) Where in the world do believers get the idea that following Christ is going to mean that all their problems with life are going to be solved, that their health is going to remain stable and strong until the moment the Lord takes them home; that their businesses will prosper; that they will have money for all the ministries they wish to support; that there will always be a convenient parking place when they are short on time; and that the departure time will be delayed when they arrive at the gate late? Christ did not die in order that your course in this life would be easier, but that in whatever difficult situations you face there would be a well of joy from which to draw strength to endure; or a presence of spirit that drives you to higher disciplines; or a sensitivity to the needs of others that shields you from your own pain; all for the sake of the Gospel and His glory. You want to see trouble my friend? Then, just get right next to the ascended Jesus. Walk by means of the Holy Spirit and allow that blessed person of the Trinity reproduce in you the mind and life of our Lord. The minions of Satan will array against such a one in ways subtle and blatant.

*Take the challenges as they come (v. 23-27)*

The Lord put it this way, "Be not anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself.

Today has enough tribulation of its own.” (Matt. 6:34) Paul says that life is like a race in which all men are running. The object is to run with the goal of winning in mind and for the Believer, winning is the advancement of the gospel. In order to accomplish this, the first requirement is to get your body “**under subjection**” through personal discipline. That discipline is a mark of submission to both natural law and the spiritual laws of detachment from things of this world.

And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know you not that they that run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such manner that you may win. And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. 1 Corinthians 9:23-27

### *Learn from those who have gone before (v. 1-14)*

It is never God’s intention that we should “**be ignorant**” of His purposes. So, He allows us to see the record of His people who have gone before us as His elect nation, Israel. The “**cloud**” refers to the pillar of smoke that the people of Israel followed during the day as they left Egypt under Moses’ leadership.<sup>11</sup> The “**sea**” is the Red Sea (or possibly the Reed Sea) over which they passed on dry land, while the pursuing Egyptians drowned in the waters. These two types of God’s provision, present vivid images of hovering under the protective wings of the Lord. It is a picture seen today in Christian Baptism, illustrating the believer’s *union* with Christ and coming under the protective umbrella of the Father’s grace. They were **baptized**, set apart, “**unto Moses**” as the believer today is baptized by the Holy Spirit and set apart unto Christ. After being set apart, they “**all ate the same spiritual food**,” *faith*, which was embodied in the manna provided for their sustenance. The “**spiritual drink**” that they shared was the water drawn from the rock by Moses by means of his obedience to God’s command (see Hebrews 5). It represented God’s provision for temporal circumstances. Today, we know that to be *obedience to the Holy Spirit who indwells* each of us. Just as Israel received water from the rock by spiritual means, so, too, do we receive spiritual water by means of the Holy Spirit within each of us. It is in this precise sense that Jesus declared that those who took Him in would find a well of living water within them (See Notes on John 7:37-38). When we act in obedience to the Spirit’s leading in our lives, it is the life of the Lord Jesus that pours forth, bringing life-giving water to dry, lost, souls.

For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that our fathers all were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

“**But**” introduces a contrast. There were “**many**” with whom “**God was not well pleased**” because they did not accept His provisions and were disobedient in their use of them. These

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<sup>11</sup>Ex. 13:21

were quickly “overthrown” *katestrōyhēsan* (from the same root we get ‘catastrophe’ an unexpected event) by sin. Is there a parallel in our own lives to be seen here? They were miraculously provided for; their food was both a bread-like substance (manna-Exodus 16:35), found on the ground every morning, and also abundant quail. Yet, some among them still longed for the onions and spices of their previous land of bondage. Would people trade their freedom just to break their boredom with God’s provision? Apparently some would and that is where sin overtook them and dragged them down. Could we be so easily turned away from the Creator simply to sate an animal pleasure of food? Would we be so easily enticed to sacrifice principle for power, or success, or fame, or simply an easier life? How much prayer is directed towards pleading with God to remove those things that trouble us? How much of our anxiety is associated with solving the problems common to humanity, just so our path will be more pleasant? If we are honest, most fit on both counts. Well Paul tells us that these things were recorded as “examples” *egenēthēsan* for us so that we might know some of the ways our forefathers failed to follow God in obedience. It should serve as both a warning and a signpost of our own missing-the-mark and giving in to our “lust” after things that are not righteous. A pastor-friend of mine offered this definition of lust; “*anything that makes you breathe hard.*” Now that could be anything from a John Philip Sousa march, a red Ferrari, the beauty of a coral reef, a full moon over the Pacific, a six-pack gut, the sound of a steam locomotive, the first chapter of a new book, a stunning brunette, Christmas morning, S’Mores, antiques, power, speed, or you name it. Just how bad was the problem then, and how bad is it likely to be among men today? Well, in one day, twenty-three thousand individuals fell to their own practice of sexual immorality with the Midianites (Numbers 23:9). “**Neither be ye idolaters**” *mēde eidōlolatrai ginesthe* (lit. ‘stop becoming idolaters’) clearly implies that some of them were already practicing their idolatry.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 1 Corinthians 10:5-9

(10:9) Are we to test God? Are we to set out our fleece, to set conditions of proof for the Creator? “*Trust Me, try Me, prove Me said the Lord of Hosts,*” are the words of an old Christian hymn. But that does not say to *dare* God to do—it says, rather, that if we start with trust in Him, apply that (“try”) to our circumstance, then we will see in our own life that He does have answers to our dilemmas and solutions to our challenges that are, more often than not, quite different than anything we would have devised. It’s going to God and saying, “What will You have me do?” rather than going to God and saying “This is what I am asking You to do.” Bottom line, we are to stand in His strength, not our own.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.<sup>12</sup> Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let

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<sup>12</sup> Numbers 21:3-9

him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:9-12

(10:13, 14) Christians seem to love to believe that they are singled out for unusual attacks by Satan. That he places things in their pathway just to bring them down. Well, this admonition by Paul seems to contradict that idea. The same temptations that we face are “**common to man.**” “**But**” introduces a contrast, in contrast to unbelieving man, who must meet the temptations out of the human resources he possesses, “**God is faithful**” to us and will not allow us to be “**tempted above what we are able**” to bear. There is no room in the Christian life for ‘the devil made me do it.’ In every single case, God has made “**a way to escape.**” Our responsibility is to “**flee from idolatry.**” Don’t put yourself in situations where you know you are weak. It’s rather like an alcoholic attempting to run or own a bar.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 14

### **You have responsibilities as a Believer (Chapter 10:15-33)**

One can identify with Christ or with Satan’s demons v. 15-22

(10:15) Every day we make choices and those decisions are based on what we know and believe to be true. This is the application of truth to our experience, the very essence of wisdom. When, therefore, Paul says, “**I speak as to wise men**” he is saying that they should be calling every bit of truth that they know to bear on the issue he is putting before them. The “**cup of blessing**” is the wine shared in communion with one another and with God at the Lord’s Table. It represents the shed blood of the Lord Jesus in payment for the sins of mankind. The “**bread, which we break,**” represents the communion of the Body of Christ with one another and with the Lord Jesus as we honor His body, which was broken for us, the perfect Lamb of God, slain to satisfy the demands of the Law and a righteous Father. As we share these elements together with all present, before the Lord of Heaven, we are stating before the entire world that this is the basis of our common faith and our trust is solely in the price paid on our behalf for freedom from sin and assurance of victory over death. That commonality binds us together into a single body, the Body of Christ. This is who we are, **one** bread, **one** Body, gathered to **one** Lord. **Our individual identity is lost in His.**

I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:15-17

(10:18-22) **Here is the beginning and end of our similarity to Israel as God’s people**—The priests of Israel ate of the sacrifices brought by the faithful. The priests were also those who led in tabernacle and temple worship. Now, consider the Israelite who ate of the sacrifices brought to the pagan temple! There is no way that they could separate themselves in identity from the altar to which the sacrifice was dedicated or to the idol that occupied it. It doesn’t matter that the

idol is nothing or that the offering brought to it isn't tainted, but having the knowledge that the Gentiles sacrificed “**to devils and not to God**” ought to have been enough to cause one to avoid the appearance of tolerance of those pagan beliefs. This is clearly a call to curb your liberty **in order to preserve your identity with Christ.** We are called to be “**set apart**” in our lives. To fail to do so is to “**provoke the Lord.**”

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they, which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar? What say I then; that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things, which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? 1 Corinthians 10:18-22

### ***Your conscience and service to the Church v. 23-33***

#### **The Four Spiritual Laws of the Christian Life--**

(10:23) **The law of liberty** says that “**all things are lawful for me.**” The handwriting of ordinances that governed the life of Israel and defined sin has been satisfied and every demand met. Therefore, it no longer constitutes the rule of life, or ethic that governs the Believer under grace. The Law is no longer our standard. It could define sin, but it could not make one righteous. It provided for sin to be covered, but not for sin to be removed. That's why the pronouncement of John was so startling when he said; “Behold the Lamb of God that *takes away* the sin of the world.” That was like a cannon shot down the halls of Judaism! It announced at the baptism of the Lord Jesus that a new age was coming in.

**The law of expediency** says that; though all things are lawful for me, “**all things are not expedient.**” The rule is seeking “**another's wealth.**” Our lives are to be spent enriching others in their pursuit of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, though we are at liberty to do certain things, we measure them against whether or not they help or hinder others who might be watching or have knowledge of our testimony. Remember, this is coming right on the heels of Paul's teaching that we are identified with Christ and have lost ourselves in Him. It might be an OK thing to do, but it might not be the *right* time to do it. If it damages another it is wrong!

**The law of edification** says that, though all things are lawful for me, “**all things edify not.**” The word for “edify,” means to build up. If through our acts, a brother is caused to stumble or to have his growth stopped, then regardless of our liberty, it is wrong to do what we are considering. We should exercise our liberty to do whatever most benefits our less mature brother or the unbeliever who is watching.

**The law of sacrifice** says that, we are free in Christ to expend our lives entirely for the benefit of others—we have the liberty to not live for our own benefit, but for others benefit. That is perfectly following the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lest we have trouble finding practical applications, he gives one here that is easy to follow.

The “**shambles**” was a market near to the pagan temple.<sup>13</sup> There you could go and purchase meat and other things that had been brought to the temple as sacrificial offerings to the idols of the temple. Food was served to the public in the shambles as well as produce. If fact, it was probably the best steak house in town and groups gathered there often. It would not be uncommon for a Believer to be invited to a feast, a gathering of friends, at the shambles, or in a private home where food taken from the shambles was to be served. Presumably you would be invited there by friends or acquaintances. When the food is served, feel free to eat it without any pangs of conscience, for you know that “**the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.**” The idol means nothing to you and it’s all His anyway, so enjoy. But, should one say to you, “**this has been offered in sacrifice to idols,**” then you “**eat not**” because it is an issue in the mind of the one who pointed it out and because you have the liberty to refrain. Now, look carefully at when this decision was made—“**If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast,**” sets the stage—you have been extended an invitation to join unbelievers at a celebration. The very next phrase is so all-important; “**and you are disposed to go.**” It clearly says that you have considered the possibilities and made a decision to go, but for what purpose? As a Believer the clear implication is that you might have opportunity to tell them about the love of the Lord Jesus; look ahead at verse 30. Before you eat the meal that is served, what are you going to do? You are going to give thanks to the Lord who owns the earth and all its fullness. Think about it! You have decided to accept the invitation knowing that when the meal is served you are going to give thanks to God for the provision in front of those very pagans who obtained the meal from the shambles. You are not there as an innocent and uninvolved bystander, but as one with a mission to proclaim the Lord of Heaven and His ownership of all things. That’s what is implied in “**and you are disposed to go.**” We are to eat, drink, and breathe every breath to the glory of God. And we are to exercise our liberty in every case based on the needs and understanding of others around us. There is absolutely no room for assertion of *our* “rights.”

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake, for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my

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13 Archaeology. The American School of Classical Studies has been excavating at Corinth since 1896, except for war years. Much of their attention has centered on the agora, which was seven hundred feet from E to W and three hundred feet from N to S. Following the natural configuration of the land, the southern section was about thirteen feet higher than the northern part. At the dividing line of the two levels stood the bema where public officials could address crowds and render judgment; no doubt Paul stood before Gallio there (Acts 18:12-13). The bema was flanked by a row of central shops. Along the S side of the agora lay an immense stoa (covered porch) filled with shops of meat and wine merchants, probably the “shambles” (1 Cor 10:25) where Paul told the Corinthians they could buy meat with a clear conscience. At the E end of the agora and S of the stoa stood two similar basilicas used as law courts. Built in the first century A.D., they may well have been the places where the litigious Corinthian Christians went to court against their brethren (1 Cor 6).

liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

## DIVISION 2 (Chapters 11-14)

### The activities and fellowship of the Church

#### Introduction to Division 2

In the second division of the letter we see the practical, day-by-day, expression of the believer's union with Christ through the Church. That fact, **that we are alive unto God by means of our having been joined to His Son now risen and ascended to His right hand**, is the foundation on which all of our relationships must rest. Fail to make that distinction and the temporal relationship will crumble, or it will no longer represent our true relationship to God. What we are talking about is submission to authority and leadership. Who can argue that the believer is not to be under submission to God? Who would argue that the believer is not to be attentive and obedient to the voice and leadership of the Holy Spirit? Who could argue that those principles of Christian living espoused primarily by God's Apostle to the nations, Paul, can be ignored with impunity and no expectation of discipline from a righteous God? So Paul looks at the evidence from experiences, which are apparently common knowledge about this particular congregation, and takes them to task, reminding them of God's standards and provisions.

#### **Headship;** of Christ and of man (Chapter 11:1-16)

Everyone who accepts a position of leadership must realize that those who follow him/her are going to be imitators of what they see their leader doing. It is imperative that Christian leadership lives and moves in submission to the leadership and example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is our head, our redeemer, and our Savior. It was through His sacrifice that we have been saved from condemnation and by His headship that we are alive unto God and man. When Paul says that these Christians should "**remember me in all things**" it is with assurance that he is following after the Lord. They are to keep the traditions of Christian walk and worship alive, just as he delivered them.

As an Apostle, he is demonstrating his submission to Christ, who gave Himself in submission to the will of His Father. In light of that, it is a small thing that we should submit to the wisdom of the Apostle who speaks the mind of Christ.

You be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, because you remember me in all things, and keep the traditions as I delivered them to you. 1 Corinthians 11:1-2

If these believers are to deal with the internal problems that assail them they should know the line of authority to which they must surrender. "**Every man**" is under the headship of "**the Christ**" (the definite article<sup>14</sup> "*ho*" is there denoting specific fact, not theoretical idea). And, "**the**

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<sup>14</sup>The absence of the definite article calls our attention to the character of the noun (as in John Chapter 1; "In beginning was the Word *ho logos*, and the Word was with the God *ton Theon*, and the Word was God." The Jehovah's Witnesses would insert an indefinite article (something the Greek does not supply) to make it read; "and the Word was a God" in support of their position against the Trinity. However, "a God, or properly, God" simply points to the elements of the character of God as the definition of what separates Him from man. John is

**head of woman is the (“*ho*”) man;”** the definite article again denoting specific headship, not theoretical. Woman has her individual head, “**the man**,” not just mankind, but an individual man. **“And the head of the (“*tou*”) Christ is the (“*ho*”) God.”**

But I wish you to know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3 (KJV)

Now our religious practices and habits should display the reality of our relationship to God, in even the smallest details that we can control. In this first generation assembly there are men praying on behalf of others or the assembly and there are others who are **“prophesying”** (lit. forth-telling [not foretelling], announcing) the works and Word of God. When they do this, they were to do so with their heads bare before God. This is a mark of distinction from Jewish practices and a sign of their total submission to God. It was customary in that period for a man to wear a turban or similar head-dress, in which symbols of his family wealth, status, or position were displayed. These coverings are to be removed when in the assembly gathered in worship before God. This is so they may indicate to all who might be watching their common submission to God’s leadership. Since it was also the custom for women to weave gold thread and strands of precious gems into the braids of their hair as a sign of wealth and honor, these were to be covered when she prays or speaks forth as God leads. The purpose in either case is the same; to make clear the Christian’s total, and common, submission to God’s will and direction. Wealth does not exempt, position does not exempt, age does not exempt, reputation does not exempt, physical attractiveness does not exempt, calling to serve God does not exempt; there is only the common ground of grace on which we all stand as redeemed sinners and our demeanor should portray that fact!

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman is not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

1 Corinthians 11:4-6

The reason for these behavioral mandates is clear—**“Man is the image and glory of God.”** Adam was made and Eve was taken out from him. This was done because it was decreed that man should not live alone, but that he, like the balance of the animal kingdom, would live as male and female. It takes them both to constitute a whole before God. Family represents just that, the whole of mankind.

Now, having decreed that God’s will is for woman to submit her will to the will of her husband, there is a reason given for the woman to have authority on her head. The token of her submission to the will of her husband is to have her head covered before God when she prays. The token of his submission to God is to have his head bare before God. Two acts, distinct in

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saying that “the Word was God in all of His character and infinite being.” “The” would point us to His position as Sovereign, Creator, and Supreme Ruler, establishing relative position between two or more things..

their illustration of truth, but one truth. The apostle John put it this way; “for me to live is Christ, to die is gain.” In other words, from the moment we claim Jesus Christ as Lord, our personal interests are made subordinate to His interests. In laying aside our strengths and abilities, we make ourselves dependent on His strengths and abilities. Who then gets the praise and glory for the production of our lives? He does. The antithesis to that is the assertion of our own “rights” as an individual. Go ahead, if that is your bent; but know this; His strength, His will, and His way, was ever to give place to the will of His Father, and the purpose of His life was to honor and glorify His Father. If He, who had a legitimate claim to power and authority as God, saw fit to lay that aside and assume the position of a mere man, then where in the world are we going to assert our “rights” as a man or woman when He is offering us a position in union with God? We reject the royal wedding cake and hang fast onto the stale cookie of humanity.

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For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 1 Corinthians 11:7-9

In the final analysis, the woman is to exercise her choice regarding her display of submissiveness to her husband **“because of the angels.”** It is because there are angels in attendance to all man’s dealings and they are instructed by God’s interactions with us. Our willingness to follow His instructions, especially when they seem to contradict human ingenuity solicits God’s mercy, love, and justice.

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. 1 Corinthians 11:10-12

(11:13-16) The word *prepo* (comely) carries with it a sense of order—If a woman prays with an uncovered head does she represent the order that God has established for the family and the assembly? The man prays with his head bare of any distinctive mark, his very bare head placing him in a body of equals with all who pray in like manner. His prayer signifies that he is male and that he is one of a grand company of males who are equally submissive to the God to whom they pray. But, if a woman should pray with bared head, her hair becomes a source of personal glory, which should be veiled in deference to God. Now many fundamental groups today practice prayer with the woman’s head covered by a shawl or, bonnet, or even a lace or crocheted cover. That’s following the letter of Paul’s instructions, but it is the spirit of order, the visible submission to leadership, that is more important.

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman prays unto God uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man has long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. 1 Corinthians 11:13-16

**Identification with the death of Christ** (Chapter 11:17-34)

There are no greater truths in Scripture for the Believer than those pointing out our identification with Christ in His death. Our union with the Son of God in His death to Sin is the rock solid foundation on which our New Creation life rests. It is because we have died to Sin in Christ (Romans 6:1-8) that we now live in freedom from condemnation (Romans 8:1, 2). For that reason, The Lord's Table, the remembrance of that death to all that we were "in Adam," is a central and solemn memorial to our spiritual rebirth. It calls for the most serious reflection on what we were and what we now are, because of our having been joined to the risen, ascended, Jesus. Any false witness, any less-than-sincere testimony, any word offered as rote utterance, rather than as contrite confession, should come under spiritual scrutiny, first by the Believer and then by those with whom you are joined in worship. In this simple ceremony, God has provided an ongoing experience for Believers that brings them together with other Believers in a unity of purpose that lays us bare before Him. In Baptism and in the celebration of the Lord's Table there is unity for every Believer. In every thing else about living in service to the Lord Jesus, there is diversity.

**Our union with the Son of God in His death to Sin is the rock solid foundation on which our New Creation life rests.**

(11:17) Paul raises the very accusation against these believers that they are not practicing self-judgment and honest contrition when they do come together to celebrate the Lord's Table. There is the fact of public divisiveness among some of the members of the assembly. This very lack of outward unity contradicts the heart and spirit of the "oneness," which is the nature of the Body of Christ. If these obvious contradictions are so widely known and, (as he says) "**I partly believe it,**" then it must spring from doctrinal error, "**heresies.**" You meet and act in error because you believe in error, is the sense of his criticism. How important is doctrinal study, it is essential, if we are to guard against false testimony in our public worship. It is through clarification of matters of faith and practice among the assembly that true leadership ("**they which are approved**") is identified. In other words, don't choose to follow those who exhibit any other propensity for leadership than a dogged determination to pursue truth.

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must also be heresies among you, in order that they, which are approved, may be revealed among you.

1 Corinthians 11:17-19

(11:20, 21) Now, here's a good bulletin item—

"IN MEMORY OF THE DEATH AND SACRIFICE  
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
THERE WILL BE A COVERED-DISH SUPPER  
SUNDAY EVENING IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL  
JUST BEFORE THE EVENING SERVICE."

This is precisely what had happened in that assembly. The Lord's Table had evolved into a feast, a grand celebration of food and drink. Fellowship and pleasure had replaced the solemnity

of the remembrance, to the extent that those participating were indulging themselves and ignoring those among them who had nothing to contribute or bring for their own consumption. How much farther from the spirit of self-sacrifice could you get? How much more of a departure from the provision of unity that the Cross so thunderously provided to Christ's own? Paul's accusation rings in their ears—**“You are not coming together in one place to eat the Lord’s Supper, but to satisfy your own appetites, even to excess.”**

When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating every one takes his own supper before others: and one is hungry, and another is drunk. 1 Corinthians 11:20, 21

(11:22) What is the answer? Paul said to eat at home! If you cannot meet with other believers on common ground when sharing food, then keep food out of it! Indulge your appetites in private and stop using this most solemn ceremony as an occasion to separate yourself from others by the very feast in which you indulge to the exclusion of others.

It is the Cross that must surely come to your mind. When the cup is held and lifted to your lips, the blood of Calvary soaking into the ground on Golgotha has to be in your mind’s eye; that cleansing stream that flows from the Lamb of God without limit or end. Crushed and fermented, nature’s fruit is bruised, soured, and sieved. The broken skin of the grape yields the acid that gives the wine body and preserves its life; just as the side of the Lord Jesus was pierced and His blood, and His death, preserves our spiritual life. Nothing should impinge upon our total focus on His sacrifice, His victory over death, and His redemptive purpose.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death till He comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

(11:27, 28) WARNING: If there is any doubt in your mind that you have committed every known sin in your life to the Cross, and there appropriated the blood poured out on your behalf to it, then let the bread and the cup pass! Why? Because, to take those elements in testimony and agreement with all those who are sharing in the ceremony with you that Christ’s sacrifice and the price He paid was all-sufficient, and then withhold sinful practices from that judgment, is to say that the price He paid was not enough—that there are still sins you want to deal with on your own. It is the gravest of lies!

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 1 Corinthians 11:27-28

(11:29, 30) WARNING: What is the penalty for this lie? There were many in that assembly who were physically weakened, who were chronically sick, and some of them had died. There is a sin

unto death—it is lying to the Holy Spirit about the death and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

(11:31-32) There is an antidote, a preventive measure; self-assessment with a righteous standard. We are asked to hold our own lives and thoughts up to the standard of the risen, ascended Jesus and then take whatever does not measure up directly to the Cross. Will we fail to do this? We will, on occasion, of course. But, we always need to keep in mind that when we do fail, we are judged by the righteous Christ, our standard, and “**chastened**” by Him *now*, in order that “**we should not be condemned**” *then*. All the punishment ever to be experienced by the Believer will be experienced *here*, in time; because, *then*, in eternity, we are joined to the Son in blessed union forever. “**There is therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**” (Romans 8:1) has sweeping implications. Too many Believers still want to exact some payment for sin, even in eternity; but that denies the completeness of Grace and makes forgiveness something less than as far as the east is from the west.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

1 Corinthians 11:31-32

(11:33-34) So we have a rule for our gathering as an assembly before God—we should always meet with a personal view towards serving the other's needs. If we have personal needs (“**if any man is hungry**”) they should be taken care of privately, so that our meeting should be a time of concentration on serving the Body of Christ.

Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. And if any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together does not result in condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. 1 Corinthians 11:33-34

## Chapter 12--The Church, the Body of Christ

How do Christians recognize one another? How does the world know that we are Believers and members of the Body of Christ? Francis Schaffer offers John 13:33-35 in response to this question—“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that you **love** one another, as I have **loved** you, that you also **love** one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have **love** one to another.”

This mutual concern for the well being of other Believers is the mark of the Christian. It cannot be faked, nor can it be sustained as a matter of lifestyle except by the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells each Believer. It is the outward manifestation of the indwelling Holy Spirit

producing the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in us.

There is unity in diversity v. 1-6

(12:1-2) Now added to that universal mark (**love**), which unifies us in Christ, there is unlimited diversity in the Body of Christ. That diversity is expressed in the varied “**spiritual gifts**” with which God has prepared every Believer for service. Redeemed from idolatry and ritual practices, they are now to be driven by the Spirit of God to serve their fellow-Believers in a selfless attitude of love.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led.

1 Corinthians 12:1-2

(12:3) The Creedal Test of Genuine Faith: In his book, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, J. I. Packer points out that there are two passages that present the basis for the believer’s Creedal test of whether or not faith, either his or another’s, is real, Spirit-inspired, or some facade—John 4:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 12:3. First, “**no man speaking by means of Spirit, which is of God says: accursed is Jesus,**” and “**no one can say: LORD JESUS, except by means of Spirit, which is Holy.**” Note that the emphasis (by absence of the definite article before ‘Spirit’) on the statements made in this verse is on the quality, character, or essence, *of the Spirit*. It is tacit recognition of the fact that there are other spirit influences on man in this world, but that only that blessed, third-person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is God, can move the inner man to acknowledge Jesus as LORD and absolutely restrain that man from calling Jesus “**accursed**” (anathema).

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 12:3

(12:4-6) This is a caution that, while there are “**diversities of gifts**” it is important to recognize that all must be identified with the “**same Spirit**,” the Spirit of God. The enemy is a master charlatan and can be expected to counterfeit every possible aspect of the Church of Jesus Christ. That’s why it is absolutely essential to measure every manifestation of “**gifts**” against Scripture. Leave a dispensational approach and you will be hopelessly lost in appropriating the sign gifts given to Israel, to the Church’s experience today. This Charismatic Confusion will lead to more error and away *from the separated life to which God has called us in Christ*.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which works all in all. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

**Unity should never eliminate diversity v. 7-13**

(12:7) The key to these next few verses is “**manifestation**” *phanerōsis* (revelation). There is but

one spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is the source of every gift of service found in the Body of Christ. He gives the gifts in order that “**every man**” should “**profit**” by their use. Think of that! All the diversity that we see around us—each individual specifically prepared to serve the Body of Christ and to reach the lost around him/her in a unique way. Our unity does not every eliminate the special and unique way that God has fashioned us as ambassadors of the Gospel. Here is a list of the Spirit’s enablement “**given by the Spirit**”—“**word of wisdom**” *logos sophia*, (*logos* is reason, then speech; *sophia* is intelligence, then practical action) means speaking deliberately out of the Spirit’s leading and in the spiritual intelligence of the moment. “**Word of knowledge**” *logos gnōseōs* (from *gnosis*, knowledge formed into doctrine) is **insight by kata** (according to) **the same Spirit**.” “**To another** is given **faith** *pistis by the same Spirit*” *en tōi autōi pneumatōi*, (lit. “in the same Spirit”) in contrast with “**by**” *dia*, or “**according to**” *kata*, in verse 8. “**Healing**” *iamatōn* is (acts of healing) (as in Acts 4:30; James 5:14), so we read this as “**to another the gifts of acts of healings by (in) the same Spirit**.” “**Miracles**” *dunameōn* (‘powers,’ see Notes on Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4) which means that miracles other than healings were possible by means of the Spirit in them. “**Prophecy**” *prophēteia* (to speak forth) is the gift to preach, to announce God’s message under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit within. “**Discernment of spirits**” *diakriseis pneumatōn* means the determination of whether a gift or evidence of a gift is really of the Holy Spirit or merely a natural, though strange, and/or a diabolical part of Satan’s deception. There is no word in the Greek for “**divers**” for the entire phrase is *genē glōssōn* (lit. ‘sorts [of] languages’). There is a great deal of confusion as to the gift of tongues as found in Corinth, for they prided themselves in this gift, which had had become a source of disorder. There were varieties of tongues (languages) displayed in this gift, but unlike Pentecost, there were little or no varieties of languages present when it was used. The speaker could not always make clear to those who did not know the tongue spoken (see 14:13) so it was obvious that the only person edified was the speaker (14:4). In Corinth, where a variety of languages was not spoken by the assembly at Corinth, it required an interpreter for those present to gain the benefit of the speaker; the gift of “**interpretation of tongues**” *hermēneia glōssōn*<sup>15</sup> was very much appreciated and needed. “**But**” gives us contrast, in contrast to this variety of gifts, “**all these**” gifts “**work**” *energei* (energize) “**that one and the selfsame Spirit**.” Is there any source of pride, conceit, or elevation to be seen here for any vessel used of God? Absolutely not!

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of *tongues*; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

(12:12-13) Here is this wonderful comparison between the human body and the spiritual Body, the Church of Jesus Christ. As the Church has members, the body has organs, and in each case the different members of the whole must function for the body to operate as designed. It is important to note that there is a definite article before Christ—“**As the body is one and has**

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15 Interpretation *hermēneia* is from *Hermēs* the Greek god of speech.

**many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.**” The single body into which we are “**all baptized**” is *the Christ*—He *is* the Church! This is seamless logic, not an analogy, but a statement of fact. (Harry Ironside puts it this way; “**Christ**” means “*the anointed*,” and our Lord Jesus is *the Anointed*. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power. That is why He is called Christ.) Now, since we too have been anointed (2 Corinthians 1:21) by the Spirit of God, our union with the ascended Lord Jesus stretches from heaven, where He is, to earth, where He resides in us.

For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13

The Church, a body of individual, special, gifts v. 14-31

(12:14-26) The comparison becomes a great analogy between the body and the Church. It is a warning against establishing positions of hierarchy within the Body of Christ. Though we are different in terms of function and ability, we are all of the “**one**” Body. As different as the foot is from the hand, they are still members of a single body. It takes all the members of the body working in concert for the body to perform as it was designed to do. The principle is diversity within unity! “**If the foot shall say,**” *ean eipēi ho pouς* is third class, a supposition, “**Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;**” **is it therefore not of para touto** (lit.-‘alongside of this’) **the body?**” A member cannot make itself independent of the whole simply by its own declaration. Even Believers who have the same gift of service will find that their opportunities are unique, the administration of their gift suited to their level of maturity and their spiritual readiness for the specific challenge that they face. This means that we should never look at another Believer and fault them for not approaching their ministry or their gift of service in the manner that we would if we were in their shoes. The words of our Lord come ringing through; “what is that to you? You follow Me!”

“**If** (second class condition, and it is not) **the whole body sōma were an eye**” *ophthalmos*, though marvelously useful (Numbers 10:11) and the ‘light of the body’ (Luke 11:34), then how grotesque that huge round rolling orb would be without the other members! So we have “**many members, yet but one body.**” Listen, I might be an eye, looking out for errors or drift in our doctrine; or I might be a mouth, loudly proclaiming those truths that we revere and study, and you might be an ear, quietly listening, hearing each statement and taking it in. But without you I am like a tree falling in the forest, and without you others next to you are without the encouragement that they need to hang in there until it makes sense to them. You are just as essential to our function as a body as we loud-mouth parts.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, ‘Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, ‘Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body;’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it has pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are

they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, we bestow on them more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

(12:27) With all the diversity, there is yet but one body, “**the Body of Christ.**” The Church is that depository of the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. Separate members we may be, but in union with our Lord and with one another as a single entity before the Father.

Now you are the body of Christ and members in particular. 1 Corinthians 12:27

(12:28-31) There is a hierarchy of gifts here in terms of their having been given to bind all into Christ and form that base from which the gospel is ministered. “**First apostles,**” tells us that this group of called out men were the first wave of God’s provision for a new, growing, assembly. The word *apostolos* means ‘one sent with a message.’ They were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus and empowered to demonstrate their authority with miracles and wisdom. The first 11 were appointed to take the gospel to Israel. Paul, alone, was called and commissioned by God to take the gospel to the gentile nations. Those men, like Barnabas, Titus, Timothy and others were not Apostles, but were gifted evangelists and pastors who gave themselves as fully to the ministry of the Gospel as did the Apostles. Look at this list—

**Apostles**—those sent with a message and with the authority of the sender, God the Father.

**Prophets**—forth-tellers, preachers of the Gospel, or evangelists

**Teachers**—these are Pastors, responsible for the maturing of the Believers in the word of God as applied to their lives

**Miracles**—those individuals gifted with authenticating gifts to demonstrate the power of the Spirit to those who were receiving the Gospel for the first time

**Healings**—sign gifts to accompany the Gospel and to provide relief for those who needed God’s mercy

**Helps**—Literally ‘to lay hold of,’ as assisting someone or doing a job, suggesting the work of the deacon in personal ministries

**Governments**—Those who can facilitate getting things done through organization. This is *not* the Elder, whose specific responsibility is teaching the Word and spiritual oversight

**Tongues**—Note that the gift is not tongues per se, but the *diversity* of tongues

And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I to you a more excellent way. 1 Corinthians 12:28-31

## The test of practicality (Chapter 13)

Love is the first rule v. 1-3

In *The Mark of the Christian*, when Francis Schaeffer calls love “the distinguishing mark of the Christian,” he based it on this verse, which was cited at the beginning of Chapter 12—Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, ‘Where I go, you cannot come;’ so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another—John 13:33-35

He goes on to state that “this passage reveals the mark that Jesus gives to label a Christian, not just in one era or in one locality, but at all times and all places until Jesus returns.” This is a really significant observation. **“Charity”** is agape love. It is that which seeks no return, which desires only the good of the object loved, and is something that cannot be counterfeited because it is completely selfless. Language may be used in subterfuge, to deceive, to mislead, to hide a real intention—but true love never does any of those things. **“Prophecy”** is ‘forth-telling,’ not ‘foretelling.’ As such, it is the communication of God’s perceived intentions, and it might, by the very crafting of words, be misleading or garner credit to the one who ministers.

**“Understanding, knowledge, and faith”** are all marks of growth, but without the selfless love of Christ, these are only self-serving qualities. Generosity and self-sacrifice to the point of death are meaningless without the essential element, the love of the Lord Jesus for others, in us. It is not enough to simply tolerate others who are different—we must love them as Christ loved them and gave Himself for them.

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

The evidence of love v. 4-7

(13:4-7) Love *agape* is long suffering. It does not react or retaliate when wrongly demeaned or attacked. Love *agape* does not demean or attack another, but is kind and filled with tenderness. Love *agape* is devoid of envy and rejoices in the gains of others. Love *agape* has no need for vain conceit or self-aggrandizement. Love *agape* does not need to garner praise for what it does and never seeks its own gain or advancement. Love *agape* does not act in ways that would bring embarrassment to ones self or to another and harbors no evil thought. It takes no pleasure in sinful pursuits but follows after that which is true, accepting the challenges with faith, displaying the hope of the Believer in the deliverance of God through all trials.

Charity suffers long, and is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The eternal consequences of love v. 8-13

(13:8-13) Love *agape* never fails or comes to an end. At some point future to these Believers, “**prophecies**” will come to an end. It is because prophecies only reveal a part of God’s intention for the Body of Christ and will be “**done away**” when the revelation is complete. That revelation is the canon of Scripture, the Bible. There will come a time when we shall know the Lord Jesus “**face-to-face**” at the rapture. Then we shall be “**like He is**” and possess the capacity to “**know as we are known**” by Him. Until then, we are challenged to study to show ourselves approved unto God as workmen, unashamed of the Gospel of truth.

“**Tongues**” were a *sign gift* to certify to the Jew that the Gentiles had indeed received the Gospel and were now in union with the Lord Jesus in the exact same manner as they. The purpose of tongues has passed and what is passing for that gift is largely a self-delusional practice at best, or a deception by the enemy of God to lead the most immature of Believers into an emotional relationship with one another without basis in Scriptural understanding. With the completion of Scripture where is the need for the revelation of “**knowledge?**” We have the more sure word of prophecy, the Scriptures.

Charity never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect comes, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face-to-face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abides faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

## **Walking in fellowship with the Spirit of God (Chapter 14)**

The ability to prophesy, the first preference over spiritual gifts v. 1-13

(14:1) Of all the spiritual gifts, “**to prophesy**” is endorsed as an activity for every Believer. Note that this is not foretelling the future, but forth-telling the Gospel. It is the work of an evangelist and is to be the pursuit of every redeemed soul.

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy.  
1 Corinthians 14:1

(14:2-4) Here are some of the issues facing this local Assembly, even as it is being formed by the Spirit of God. Some among them had been given the gift of speaking in languages other than their native tongue. This was done in order that they might speak the “**mysteries**” of the risen

Christ to those who heard the Gospel. However, if no man is present who understands the language being spoken, then the speaker speaks only “unto God.” The one who is gifted to prophesy (preach forth) the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ does so to the “**edification, exhortation, and comfort,**” of those who hear and understand. But, in contrast, speaking in a language that no one understands “**edifies**” (builds up) only “**himself.**” “**But**” introduces contrast, “**he who prophesies edifies** (builds up) **the assembly.**” Paul is not commanding self-edification here; he is commanding the building up of the assembly.

For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; however in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that prophesies speaks unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church.

1 Corinthians 14:2-4

(14:5, 6) He makes this very clear when he explains that the object is to edify the Church and that the only way that can happen is if someone is there who can interpret what is being said. This is not a prayer gift; it is a teaching, instructing, gift to be used to communicate the Gospel to those who otherwise would not hear it proclaimed. The Body is not benefited by the fact of one speaking in an unknown language, but by knowledge, or prophecy, or by doctrine, or (in Paul’s case) by revelation. As God revealed His intention for the Church to them, His Apostles received their instructions by revelation and a direct impartation of knowledge. Since it was the *new Creation* Church, which was the mystery, they had little in the Old Testament on which to form an accurate understanding. Today, we have their record in the New Testament letters, so it is to be expected that doctrine, as defined by the Apostles, and specifically by Paul, would be in the vanguard in the growth of the Church. What prophecy did for the Old Testament saints, right up through the transitional generation in the Land, teaching and pastoring and exhortation does for the Body of Christ now.

I wish that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesy: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? 1 Corinthians 14:5, 6

(14:7-9) Speaking in a tongue that is not understood by those who hear is like speaking “**into the air;**” it’s music without melody, notes without harmony, a random bugle call without a message, a warning that does not alarm, a testimony without content. Tongues, as practiced today, are symbols without substance, a borrowed sign without an object so identified by God.

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air. 1 Corinthians 14:7-9

(14:10, 11) “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men

were building. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, the people is one and they have all one language; and this they are beginning to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’” (Genesis 11:5-7) In these short verses we have recorded for us the separation of mankind according to their languages. People separated by their individual group’s methods of communication. If you know the language, you are one of the group—lack understanding and you are an outsider, isolated to your own thoughts and unable to grow from another’s experiences. Each language has significance to those who understand, but to others, it is but babble. This should immediately bring to mind—“The soulish (natural) man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The *soulish* man is motivated by the Adamic nature, while the *spiritual* man is moved by the Spirit of God within him.

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaks a barbarian, and he that speaks shall be a barbarian unto me.

1 Corinthians 14:10, 11

(14:12-18) The principle is clear—when you pursue your desire for a spiritual gift of service, make sure it is within the context of service that others can understand and that will result in their growth (edification). For example; when anyone speaks in a language that is not understood by others in the assembly, make sure that someone can interpret what is being said. Paul says that even when he prays in a language he does not understand, his own understanding is thoroughly **“unfruitful.”** When he says that he **“will pray with the spirit”** and that he **“will pray with the understanding also”** he is not talking about two kinds of prayer, but the manner and criteria according to which he prays. The Spirit of God instructs his spirit and his mind utters the words so that understanding is increased. The same criteria govern his singing. It is because of others (and is that not to be the rule of our lives, to reach others with the Gospel and love of the Lord Jesus Christ?) Even our giving of thanks cannot be shared unless it is in a language that is shared with others around you. Here is that selflessness that Schaeffer points out as the mark of the Christian and the constant expression of love.

Even so you, forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when you shall bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what you say? For you verily give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

1 Corinthians 14:12-18

(14:18) Here is the apostle’s conclusion, and one to which we should pay careful attention—It is preferable to speak five words that can be understood by one’s self and/or others, than to speak ten thousand words in a language that no one understands. The ‘sign gift’ of *tongues* as practiced in Pentecostal, charismatic, groups today will not pass this test of understanding. The

“**gift**” of tongues was an answer to the prophecy of the Law that the Gospel of salvation would be preached to the Jew in languages other than their own. Read Acts 2 and see that brought to pass. “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven*. Now when this was noised about, the multitude came together and were confounded, because that *every man heard them (the 120 Galileans) speak in their own dialect.*” The wonder of it! Though Galileans, the message of salvation that they preached was heard in the very local dialect (not just the language of the country of origin) of the land from which they had traveled to Jerusalem. Lest we are confused that these were not known languages, the countries are listed (Acts 2:9-11).

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding: however in malice be you children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 1 Corinthians 14:18-21

(14:22) For those who would say that the gift of ‘tongues’ is a self-edifying provision, this single verse speaks to the issue without equivocation. Biblical “**tongues**” (the ability to speak a language that one has never before used or studied) were given for “**a sign**” to unbelievers, not to those who already know the Lord Jesus as Savior. If there are unbelievers in the assembly, it is preferable for the members of the assembly to preach (forth-tell) the Gospel, so that those who do not yet believe will be convinced by the reason and understanding to be found within the Body of Christ. It is through speaking in understandable terminology that the secrets held in the heart are revealed and the individual is brought before God. The key is the edification of others, whether it is through the song we sing, the principle we teach, or the language we use to communicate.

Wherfore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serves not for them that believe not, but for those who believe. If therefore the whole church has come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believes not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 1 Corinthians 14:22-26

### Order in the assembly

(14:27-33) Order is the rule! If there is to be a lesson or principle given in another language, let only a couple of people speak, one at a time, and let there be an interpretation so that all may hear the principle taught. (Remember, there was no canon of Scripture at this time. The Spirit of God was delivering exactly what was necessary to each local gathering). If there is no interpreter, keep silent. Let those who preach forth (prophets) speak in order, and let others

judge or comment on their lessons. If one who has not spoken is given insight by revelation or realization, let him explain his new found belief. Can't you see this atmosphere that is being created by the Holy Spirit for stimulating growth in this young assembly? Maximum participation is encouraged, but not without order. Expression of what God is teaching, but with opportunity for those who are more mature to “**judge**” or critique, so that there is continuity of their growing faith. The human spirits of the prophets are to be subject to the prophets as a body. This is simply a restatement of the principle that “no Scripture is of one’s own (or its own) interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20) but is subject to the entire body of truth revealed to date. In practical terms, it is a caution against building a theology or doctrinal position on a single statement derived from Scripture, but to take the whole that you have been given to work with and let that speak to your base of beliefs. You should neither be a verse ‘counter’ nor a ‘verse snatcher.’ In the first case, it is a listing of verses to see where the numerical evidence is for a given position and in the second it is snatching a verse out of its historical context and attempting to develop a universal rule by which to live today.

If any man speaks in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.(1 Cor 14:29 KJV) Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing is revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace. For you may all prophesy one by one that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

1 Corinthians 14:27-33

(14:34) The admonition to “**let your women keep silence in the churches**” addresses several issues that are prevalent in the area of Corinth. That is a city steeped in pagan temples that used priestesses in their rites. Sexual immorality was part of their practice. In addition, the practice of Judaism was to separate women and men in their synagogue meetings. Observing both of these historical traditions, Paul, in deference to setting the Church apart in practice, as well as in fact, reaffirms that there is to be order in their meetings. That order recognizes that there is a core of submissiveness to the whole structure of the Body of Christ. Christ is the head of the Church, the husband is the head of the family, and the family is willingly submissive to his leading. Love drives the relationships as the mark of the Christian. To demonstrate that practical arrangement, women are to direct their questions to their individual husbands so that none misunderstands who is responsible within that family for the things they believe to be true. It’s a matter of public testimony on behalf of the family, and it promotes good order. The challenge to women today who are public speakers is how they demonstrate that, although they are accomplished students of the Word and excellent speakers, they are still operating under the authority and leadership of their husband.

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35

(14:36-38) The counter to that position is the argument that the husband is not the student of the

Word that the wife is; or that the husband is not a public speaker, or is not gifted as a teacher. The implication is that the wife has some insight into the Word that the husband does not have, and therefore her need to teach and her message must be heard. Look carefully at Paul's answer, because it does not speak just to women, but to anyone who feels as if they have some special revelation that no one else has been given—"Did the Word of God come out of you?" He is speaking to a group that has only the Old Testament as a body of truth. The instructions of God are coming through the Apostles as the source then among men. Do you think, he asks, that it "came unto you only?" What he is saying is that order in the family and in the assembly is more important than any single individual's message. If we maintain the order that God has ordained, then each of us will have our ministry as God wills. Step outside of that order and you are operating in energy of the flesh, regardless of the sincerity of your intentions. The challenge for those within the assemblies of the Church today who claim to have spiritual insight above that of others is this; does their message square with the gospel and instructions for the church given by the Holy Spirit to the apostle Paul? Are they teaching the Pauline gospel, or are they redefining truth to suit and advance their own cause?

What? Came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.1 Corinthians 14:36-38

(14:39, 40) Effective goal setting for the Christian—Desire the ability to preach, "*prophesy*" the Word and don't forbid others from operating whatever gift they claim, including tongues. But, let everything be subjected to the rules of order previously stated.

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14:39, 40

## Chapter 15--Paul's reaffirmation of the Gospel

(15:1-8) First he reminds these believers that the salvation they claim is based on the Gospel that he preached to them and which they accepted. But, there is a note of caution; if they cannot even remember what he had preached unto them, their belief is empty (in vain). Words have meanings and belief must have its object. If the object of their belief is a false gospel, then their belief is empty and meaningless. But what if they are sincere? It is pointless and ineffective if the object and content of their belief does not derive from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified, resurrected, and ascended. This is one of the major hurdles for unbelievers today. We live in a society that has raised tolerance to such a state that no one can bring himself/herself to declare that another person might be wrong and therefore lost. It does matter what you believe. It does matter in whom you put your trust for deliverance from this body of sin. It does matter how you define the Lord Jesus Christ—He is either the Christ of Scripture or He is a figment of someone's imagination of what the Father would have done if He were a man.

It matters that the same Jesus seen by Peter and the other apostles was the man who went into the grave and was resurrected by the Father to victory over death and ascension to His heavenly position. That was the process by which the “only begotten Son” became the “first-born Son” of all mankind. It matters that the resurrected “first-born Son” revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus in order that Paul too would be an eyewitness to that One victorious over death and the grave.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

(15:9) Now lest anyone begin to think that Paul is building a case for his own authority, he sets the record straight—His opinion is that he is “**not fit to be called an apostle**” because of his previous activity in persecuting Christians. “**But by the grace of God:**” are there any sweeter words that a Believer can utter? Here we each were, lost, thoroughly sinful, desperately without hope—But by the grace of God, we are redeemed and reborn new creations. Further, that same grace is at work in us, serving God our source of life. “**Therefore**” (and it doesn’t matter who gave you the words) “**so you believed**” and came new born into the assembly of God. You see what he is saying? The grace that worked in him flowed out with the Gospel to these in Corinth and formed the very truth that they believed and the ground on which they now stand. Sincerity has nothing to do with it. Emotion has nothing to do with it. Content has everything to do with it. On the ground of peace we will discover real brokenness, godly sorrow, tears of joy and of anguish; but that is after the fact of rebirth!

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. 1 Corinthians 15:9-11

### **Christ’s resurrection is the basis for hope in our own**

(15:12) In that Corinthian assembly there were many converts from pagan religions. Some among them held to the belief that though the spirit lived after death, there was no resumption of a material body. This is contrary to one of the most fundamental beliefs of Christianity and was addressed directly by the Holy Spirit through Paul. Since they had been taught through the preaching of the Gospel that the Lord Jesus “**rose from the dead**” and came out of the tomb in the same physical body that went into it, “**how**” Paul asks, “**say some among you that there is**

**no resurrection of the dead?"** It didn't come from what they had been taught. He presses the logic by positing that "**if there is no resurrection of the dead**" in our future, then "**Christ is not risen**" and the Gospel is a lie.

The importance is that if Christ did not come out of the grave as a physical man, then there is not a Man in heaven today and our resurrection and ascension is not sure. Without that hope, "**preaching is empty**" and "**faith**" has no object. If the power of God did not raise the Lord Jesus, then we are not justified and are "**yet in our sins.**"

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. 1 Corinthians 15:12-17

(15:18) And now this resounding conclusion—If Christ is not risen from the grave, "**then they also which have fallen asleep believing in Christ are also totally perished.**" If our hope in Christ is limited only to this life and not beyond the grave and death, then "**we are of all men most miserable.**" The reason our life is lived in the discipline of grace is because of the assurance of our eternal destiny in the presence of God by means of our own resurrection. It is because Christ has "**risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits**" of all who have died believing in His work of justification that we live in hope.

Now pay careful attention to this next point—Since it was by Adam that death came to all men, it is to be through a man that resurrection must come to all who believe. The first Adam brought in death and sin. The Last Adam brought in resurrection and life. It is of the utmost importance that we see that our Savior in heaven is a Man.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:18-22

(15:23) The order of resurrection is this—Christ the *firstfruits out of mankind* and, next, all those that are in Christ (believers) when He comes to claim His own—that's first, the rapture of the Church, and second, the remnant of believers from the tribulation period that are gathered in when He returns to defeat the Antichrist. Christ is to reign until every enemy of God is defeated and all authorities are surrendered. The last enemy to be destroyed is going to be death itself, as all are brought to their final destiny; the redeemed to eternity with God and the damned to eternity in the lake of fire. We are saved by virtue of being joined to Christ and because He is accepted by the Father and exempted from death, so too are those who are in union with Him. At that time, the Son takes the entire creation and places it in subjection to the Father forever.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:23-28

(15:29-32) Here is a good case in point of verses taken out of their context (a practice the late Miles Stanford labeled, *verse snatching*) and used to build an erroneous doctrine. The LDS (Mormon) Church practices baptism by proxy based on these verses. Living people go into the temples and present themselves for baptism, marriage, and other rites on behalf of persons already dead. Through this, they attempt to ratify for eternity acts that those already in the grave would now take if they were but still alive. This is the “work” of the temple and the basis for their hope of rewards that binds them together.

To understand this statement by the Apostle Paul, you must look at it in light of its relationship to this whole line of reasoning that he is presenting. There is a logic that is unfolding here to counter mistaken beliefs being spread among members of the Corinthian believers. The history of Christianity is filled with ranks of people who have been baptized in recognition of their union with Christ in His death to sin. Each rank in turn has gone to the grave in their belief, secure in their salvation. As they pass, others are coming to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and like their predecessors, they are baptized in testimony and identification with Christ and with others who have gone before. **“Baptized for the dead”** literally says **“baptized over, or on top of, the dead.”** It is the sense of replacement, or to fill the ranks that are passing. Paul is saying that **“if the dead rise not”** then why are succeeding generations of believers being baptized to take their place? Further, why would believers put their own lives in jeopardy **“every hour”** if there is no resurrection? The truth, says Paul, is that **“I die daily.”** So what **“advantage”** is that to me, **“if the dead rise not?”** Christian endurance and perseverance become a ridiculous exercise if there is no resurrection.

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it advantage me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. 1 Corinthians 15:29-32

(15:33) Words have content and meaning. It doesn’t matter if you simply have good intentions and are ‘making nice,’ if your words contain lies, then they constitute **“evil communications.”** It matters a great deal that you believe and teach truth! That’s why we are constantly admonished to “study, study, study, to show yourselves approved unto God.” They are to be **“awake to righteousness”** through knowledge of God’s expectations of them and the manner of life that He desires. It is to their shame that there are among them some who **“have not the knowledge of God”** that they should have. Those are asking **“how”** the dead are to be raised and **“with what body”** will they come from the grave? Paul obviously considers that a

pedestrian question in light of things that they have been taught for he reminds them that the body they occupy must first die. It is then “**sown**” in the ground as seed. Now, just as the grain is sown in seed form, but it does not yield seeds, but plants, so too is the human body sown, not to yield the same kind of body, but a new body with a new life from God. .

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it die: and that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

1 Corinthians 15:33-38

(15:39) In a grand vista of the world, Paul paints in great contrasts—Animals are different from men, and fish, and birds. There are celestial bodies that shine and terrestrial bodies of earth; the sun has one glory and the moon another; yet another for the stars and differences between the stars themselves for their lights are different. In the same way, the resurrection body does not have the corruptible nature of the body that is sown into the grave.

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds. 1 Corinthians 15:39

(15:40-44) “**Sown in dishonor**” refers directly to the Adamic Nature that harbored the presence of sin within each of us. The resurrection body will have no sin nature and is “**raised in power**,” the power of the Son of God. Victory that was won by the Lord Jesus Christ is taken on as a mantel of power in the resurrection body. The word “**natural**” comes from the root for soul (*psuchikos* lit. of the animal). It is the same word used in 2:14, “**the soulish man receives not the things of God . . . because they are spiritually discerned.**”

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1 Corinthians 15:40-44

Heavenly and earthly contrasts

(15:45-48) To understand how “**Adam was made a living soul**,” we go back to Genesis 2:7 where we read; “**And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives; and man became a living soul.**” The word “**formed**” here is *yatser*, which means to build or construct. It does not carry the meaning of creation out of nothing, but of formation out of that which already exists; i.e. to take earth and make out of that a body of flesh, something entirely different. Now, into that body made from clay, but an altogether different material than that from which it was formed, God “**breathed**” the very

essence of “**lives.**” Note, please, that “**lives**” is plural, not singular. There was more than one type of life imparted to the man by His creator. One was the animal life (soul) that rendered man compatible with the physical, animal, world in which he lived. Two, was the spiritual life (spirit) that rendered man compatible with the spiritual world in which he communicated with God. This is supported by the commandment of God that man should not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge lest “dying thou shalt die.” Two deaths are pronounced on man for disobedience. The first death is instant and is spiritual death, the loss of his intrinsic capacity to fellowship with God in righteousness. The second death is physical (soulish) and comes as the body suffers the deterioration of sin in its slow return to the clay from whence it came. Every progeny of the first Adam comes into the world with the fatal flaw of spiritual death as a millstone around his/her neck. It is through rebirth that the human spirit, once within Adam, is restored to man as he is rendered a New Creation by the Holy Spirit and union with the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus was born as a man, the only-begotten Son of God, he was incarnated without a human father (so was without the Old Sin Nature) but with a human mother (so with all the human attributes of man, including a soul). This is the doctrine of the hypostatic union, perfect humanity and perfect deity in a single person, Jesus of Nazareth. It was the single instance in history that a man was born spiritually alive unto God. Where Adam was “**made**” (brought forth) as a “**living soul**,” the “**last Adam**” the Lord Jesus, was “**brought forth**” as a “**life-giving spirit**.” What a difference!!!

Adam had animal life and the Lord Jesus is a veritable well giving up torrents of spiritual life. Remember when He stood at the temple and announced to the dismay of the priests there ministering to Israel, “He that believes in Me, as the Scriptures say, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). As the first man came out of the earth, the last is from God in heaven and each of them will act true to their natures, the first Adam on the basis of his soul and the Last Adam on the basis of His Spirit.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthly: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 1 Corinthians 15:45-48

(15:49-53) I am really taken with this next statement of the Apostle—“Look” says Paul, “you don’t have to do anything but look at your own past to see your connection with Adam.” You are bearing his earthly, soulish, image. Now, in the exact same manner, you “**shall also bear the image of the heavenly**” that of the risen Lord Jesus. You know that “**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;**” because that kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. Your corrupt Adamic nature “**cannot inherit corruption,**” but a new nature is required, and that new nature comes through regeneration, rebirth into the spiritual family of God.

Looking forward to that day when the Lord Jesus comes to claim His Bride, Paul says, “**Behold, I show you a mystery.**” He begins with the conclusion and result of the “**mystery**” coming to pass—Some will not die prior to Jesus’ return, but “**we shall all be changed.**” This dispels any notion that anyone will be translated to heaven without going through the metamorphosis from corruptible to incorruptible, from earthly to spiritual, from “**mortal**” to “**immortal**.”

Paul had already addressed the “**mystery**” in his letter to the Ephesians where he said that he was “**the prisoner of Jesus Christ**” for the Gentiles. Those believers had already heard of the “**dispensation of the grace of God**” that had been given to Paul for the Gentiles benefit and that his knowledge of the mystery was by revelation from God (Ephesians 3:1-3). They needed to know that this mystery was never revealed prior to his ministry, but that it was being revealed “**unto His holy (set apart) apostles and prophets by means of the Holy Spirit.**” And, here is the content of the mystery—“**That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by means of the Gospel.**” The Law, which divided Israel from all Gentiles by its obligations, has been satisfied; its claims paid, its demands met. Its penalty was death, and the Lord Jesus died! We have been joined to Him *in His death* (Romans 6), and there we too died! Now the Law no longer stands as the great divider, but in its place is the Man, Jesus the Christ, now the *first-born Son of God*. He it is who has ascended to the right hand of the Father and is our Head. Our position in Him will become our condition in fact, either when we die, or at the Rapture when we shall be changed.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Corinthians 15:49-53

(15:54-58) Therefore, can death have any sting; can the grave have any victory? Both were defeated at the Cross, where we have already died. Based on that union with Christ in His death, we too have been raised through regeneration into new life, His life, and have been made a New Creation at one with Him and with one another. The Law as a standard has given way to the life of the Lord Jesus—not the life that He lived on earth, but the life that He now lives in us by means of the Holy Spirit in residence. Our “**victory**” is our position in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, “**be steadfast, unmoving, always abounding in the work of the Lord**” not working to please Him but filled with His work in us.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoving, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

## Chapter 16--Stewardship

(16:1-4) This is a great verse on the subject of stewardship. Paul is coming through Corinth and expects to pick up their contribution to those saints under severe economic sanction and

persecution, and he gives these believers some practical advice on how it should be collected. “**On the first day of the week**,” the Lord’s Day, “**every one**” is to “**lay by him in store, according to how God has prospered him**.” Read carefully! This is not storehouse giving. He did not say that on the Lord’s Day everyone should bring their tithes and offerings to the common meeting place, the church house. What he said was for every Believer to systematically set aside a portion of what he had gained that week, in savings against a future need! Good stewardship requires some degree of frugal living so that we are not spending all of our assets on current needs, but are laying up “**in store**” for either our future needs or the needs of others, of which we are to be made aware.

This keeps us in a frame of mind to share as God prospers, to be generous in meeting needs, to be careful not to waste or live lavishly. That doesn’t mean we should live only in the cheapest housing, or drive the smallest, least-expensive car that we can find. What it does imply is that we should treat our current possessions as temporary assets that may have to be converted to meet other/other’s needs, so we should be ready to do that. If we live according to these principles, then we would be ready to meet those needs as they come to our attention. This is the exact opposite of giving on a promise, or with the expectation that God will enable us to meet the pledge. That’s not faith giving, it’s spiritual coercion and extortion that falls into the category of tempting God. Giving today out of tomorrow’s anticipated resources does not require faith; it requires presumption!

Giving today out of tomorrow’s anticipated resources does not require faith; it requires presumption!

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

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

(16:5-9) I only want to note one thing in these verses and it is Paul’s willingness to forego his desire to visit with them in light of the opportunity to minister the Gospel at Ephesus. What a challenge to us. How many of us live our lives according to where the opportunities to minister the Gospel are presented? Does our work drive our decisions? Does our reluctance to leave family and friends to pursue God’s leading override the opportunities to minister the Gospel elsewhere? Everyday brings choices, and the motivation to follow His leading must be the furtherance of His Plan for man.

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

1 Corinthians 16:1-9

(16:10, 11) Because Timothy is young, Paul gives him an endorsement so that more of the older

crowd will respect his authority and ministry. It is important that older Believers engage in the responsibility of mentoring younger saints in their ministry of the Word. This is in the same sense of continuance of ministry through successive generations, as the replacement ranks of the baptized that he spoke of in the previous chapter. There is a succession of ranks of Christians and the passing rank must be handing back to the following rank those tools that the Lord has graciously provided our generation.

Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he works the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

1 Corinthians 16:10, 11

(16:12-18) He continues his endorsements with Apollos and Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. Their generosity has been a big help to Paul and he wants them commended by the saints for their actions. His exhortation for them to “**watch**” and “**stand fast**” echoes the words of Christ to “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptations” (Mark 3:38). As long as we are in the world, we will be subject to the wiles of the enemy of God and must remain diligent and on guard against deception. It helps to remember that Satan comes disguised as an angel of light, a false Christ. Our protection is to stand in the light, on the ground of peace, clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time. Watch you, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. I beseech you, brethren, (you know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That you submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helps with us, and labors. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge you them that are such. 1 Corinthians 16:12-18

(16:19-24) Paul ends this letter with greetings from the faithful Aquila and Priscilla and the assembly that meets in their home. As he notes, he wrote this letter personally, indicating his love for them. The word “**Anathema**” means to be accursed, the state of anyone who “**loves not the Lord Jesus Christ.**” His prayer for them is that “**the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**” be a reality to them and that they know of his love in Christ is theirs.

The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet you one another with a holy kiss. The salutation of me Paul with my own hand. If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. 1 Corinthians 16:19-24