

PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH AND TO THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

There has been some debate over the question as to how many letters Paul wrote to Corinth. There is no debate as whether or not Paul wrote three letters to Corinth. In addition to the epistles that we know as I & II Corinthians, we know beyond doubt that Paul wrote a letter to Corinth, prior to his writing I Corinthians. Paul referred to the earlier letter in I Corinthians 5:9.

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

This earlier letter was not preserved and so the only thing that we know about it is the above quote.

Many scholars see in II Corinthians 2:4, evidence for another letter, written between I Corinthians and II Corinthians.

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you,

Those who hold this view state that this description does not fit I Corinthians.¹

I disagree with this conclusion. In my opinion, this is an apt description of I Corinthians. As Monte Shanks has pointed out,² Paul's I Corinthian letter contains more rebukes and exercises more apostolic authority than any other Pauline epistle except Galatians (I Corinthians 1:11; 3:1-3; 4:6-7; 4:18-21; 5:1-8; 6:1-8; 7:5; 11:17-18; Chapters 12-14; 15:12; 15:33-34). Twice in this epistle, Paul even shames the entire Corinthian church (I Corinthians 6:5; 15:34).

In II Corinthians 7:5-13 Paul wrote about Titus' report concerning how the Corinthians had received the letter mentioned in 2:4.

For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.⁶ But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it-- for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while--⁹ I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

¹¹ *For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.¹² So although I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.¹³ For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.*

¹ *Word Biblical Commentary*, Ralph Martin, Editor, Volume 40, 2 Corinthians (Waco, TX Word Biblical Publishers) 1986, page 36

² <https://mashanks.wordpress.com/2018/05/14/how-many-letters-did-paul-write-to-the-church-at-corinth/>

There is no reason why the II Corinthians 7:5-13 reference could not apply to I Corinthians, rather than to some lost letter.

In Paul's letters, he addresses conditions in the local church, correcting aberrant practices, identifying heretical tendencies, defining valid spiritual authority, and discussing the appropriate relationship between the local church and its surrounding society.

Many of the topics that Paul addressed are relevant to situations faced by the 21st Century Church in America. As Gordon Fee has so aptly written,

“A final word needs to be said about the considerable importance of this letter to today's church. The cosmopolitan character of the city and church, the strident individualism that emerges in so many of their behavioral aberrations, the arrogance that attends their understanding of spirituality, the accommodation of the gospel to the surrounding culture in so many ways – these and many other features of the Corinthian church are but mirrors held up before the church of today. Likewise, the need for discipleship modeled after the “weakness” of Christ (4:9-13), for sexual immorality to be seen for what it is (5:1-13; 6:12=20), for the expectation of marriages to be permanent (7:1-40) – these and many other are every bit as relevant to us as those to whom they were first spoken.”³

Thus, we title this study, *Paul's Letters to the Church at Corinth and to the Church in America*. Because I Corinthians is the letter that initially addresses the issues discussed, our procedure will be to proceed through I Corinthians, chapter by chapter. When comment is made in II Corinthians, concerning how Corinth responded to I Corinthians, we will take note of Paul's response to their response.

As our text, we will use the New American Standard Version, unless noted otherwise. In some rare instances I will adjust the wording to bring it closer to the Greek text.

THE CITY OF CORINTH – ITS HISTORY AND ITS GEOGRAPHY

To have an understanding of the city to which Paul came with the Gospel in 51 A.D.,⁴ we must take note of its history and the relevance of its geographical location.

Corinthian History

Corinth had lived two lives. First as a Greek city-state and then, as a Roman colony.

Greek Corinth rose to prominence in the Seventh Century BC. By the end of the Fifth Century BC, Corinth had developed into a prosperous city-state, with a reputation for wealth that was unrivaled in its day.

In the Fifth Century BC, a confederation of the Greek city-states of the northern and central Peloponnese was formed, taking the name, κοινὸν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν (*koinon ton agaion*) i.e. League of the Achaeans. The league lapsed a century later, then was reformed in 281 BC. The Achaean League sought to develop a form of federalism that balanced the need for collective action with

³ Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1987, page 19-20

⁴ Acts 18:12-17 describes Gallio as the proconsul of Achaia, when Paul was in Corinth. An inscription found at Delphi (discovered in 1900) states that Gallio became proconsul of Achaia, July 1, AD 51 and served in that capacity for about one year. This makes Paul's time in Corinth the most accurately dated event of his ministry.

local autonomy. Some of the writings of the Achaean statesman, Polybius, had an influence on the Constitution of the United States. Corinth was the leader in the reconstituted league

The league aligned itself with various groups in the warring conflicts that surrounded its region. Sparta and Athens often competed for the role of dominance in the region. At times, the league aligned with Sparta, in the southern Peloponnese, and at other times it sided with Athens, which was northeast of the Corinthian Isthmus that bridged the Peloponnese with mainland Greece.⁵ The league aligned with Rome in the Second Macedonian War (171-186 BC), but the relationship with Rome later deteriorated. In 146 BC, the relationship completely collapsed, resulting in the Achaean War.

In the winter of 146 BC, The Romans, under the command of Lucius Mummius defeated the Achaeans at the Battle of Corinth. Mummius and his troops completely destroyed Corinth, setting the city on fire, and leveling all of the walls and the buildings of the city. For centuries, Corinth had been known as a depository of fine art and statuary, all of which was preserved and taken to Rome. Every man found in the city was executed. The women and children were sold into slavery. Corinth no longer existed.

For almost one-hundred years, the area was desolate, with scarcely any vestige remaining of the once glorious city. When Julius Caesar became emperor,⁶ he planned to reestablish Corinth as a Roman colony. Caesar was assassinated, March 15, 44 BC. He had begun to rebuild Corinth in 46 BC, two years prior to his death. After Julius Caesar's death the rebuilding of Corinth accelerated, and the rebuilt Roman colony of Corinth became a thriving port city.

Various classes of Romans were sent to Corinth to populate the colony. Of special note is the influx of retired soldiers. Roman society was very hierarchical, with class distinctions being very rigid. During the years in which Rome was a republic (prior to its having an emperor), only members of certain classes were allowed to serve in the military.

⁵ See ADDENDUM A

⁶⁶ In the centuries prior to 509 BC, Rome was a kingdom with a king. In 509 BC, the king was overthrown by Roman noblemen. In the years immediately after the fall of the monarchy, Rome was in a bit of a turmoil, with different ideas as to what its government should be. Finally, Rome was established as a republic, in which Romans who had voting rights elected those who would rule them. Two men were elected as consuls. Consuls were primarily generals who led the army in military attacks. The Senate consisting of noblemen, supposedly had an advisory role, but because of the collective influence of its members, it wielded great authority. At times, when military emergencies required it, a single counsel was chosen to be dictator, but he could occupy that role of supreme commander for only six months. Every effort was made to make certain that no one man would become too powerful. When the Plebeians (lower classes) tried to seize power, the senate chose to give greater power to the dictator. Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (commonly known as Sulla) was dictator 82-79 BC (some state that the dates are 82-81 BC). He was a powerful and aggressive general. Later leaders, such as Julius Caesar, followed his example, which resulted in Rome's having an emperor and becoming the Roman Empire.

The requirements for being in the Roman military, during the Roman Republic, were:

- He had to be a member of the fifth census class or higher (a tax payer)
- He had to own property worth 3500 sesterces⁷
- He had to supply his own armaments
- If he were a member of the equestrian class, he had to supply his own horse.

Gaius Marius, a successful Roman general, was elected consul in 107 BC. Shortly after being elected, and fearing a barbarian invasion of Rome, Marius realized that he needed to increase the size of the Roman army. In order to do this, he changed the rules that regulated entrance into the Roman military. Marius removed the requirement that a recruit had to be a member of the upper class and the necessity for one to be a landowner in order to be in the military. All Romans, regardless of social class could enter the army.

The unemployed and poor began enlisting for military service. The size of the military immediately greatly increased. Those who gave lifelong service were rewarded with the prospect of being settled in conquered land. The newly established Roman colony of Corinth became the recipient of many of these retired Roman soldiers. They constituted a significant portion of the inhabitants of Corinth when Paul arrived in the city.

In order to repopulate their new colony, the Romans not only gave Corinthian property to retired military veterans, but also recruited freed slaves and citizens from the poor classes to relocate to Corinth.

Corinth became a senatorial provincial capital. Numerous buildings were built to accommodate government business. In 51 AD, the year that Paul brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this robust city, major construction of government buildings was taking place.⁸ The newly-arrived governmental staff became a part of the Corinthian population.

The new Corinth was slightly less than 100 years old, when Paul arrived in the city.

Corinth's Geographical Location

In order to have an understanding of the church in Corinth, we also must take note of the city's location. Its location drew certain classes of individuals who would not have been in Corinth otherwise.

Corinth was located on the isthmus that connected northern Greece with the Peloponnesus.⁹ The Corinthian Isthmus was bracketed by two harbors:

- Lechaem, the port on the Ionian Sea, northwest of Corinth
- Cenchrea, the port on the Aegean Sea, southeast of Corinth

⁷ It is difficult to convert the value of a Roman sesterces to current American dollars. Its value changed with the times. Early in the First Century AD, a Roman soldier was paid 900 sesterii per year, but under Domitian (81-96 AD), the pay was raised to 1200 sesterii per year. At one point, one sesterces was worth two and a half asses. Other sources say that it was worth two loaves of bread, which would make its value at about \$3.00. Be that as it may, it is difficult to determine the dollar value of a sesterces.

⁸ Archaeologists have found evidence of significant construction in Corinth during the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD). Paul would have been in Corinth during the later years of Claudius' reign.

⁹ See ADDENDUM A

The distance across the isthmus (a straight line between the two ports) is approximately 3 ½ miles.¹⁰ The actual distance traveled between the two ports would have been closer to 11 miles, because of the irregular route of the road that connected the two.

Because of the frequent violent storms that were experienced around the southern tip of the Peloponnesus, sailors wanted to avoid sailing through that region.¹¹ Therefore, ships coming from the west (the Ionian Sea) would dock at Lechaem, unload their cargoes, which then would be transported over land to Cenchrea. At Cenchrea, they would be loaded onto another ship that would sail into the Aegean Sea. Vessels coming from the Aegean Sea, would do the same thing in reverse.

In some instances, ships were transported overland from one sea to the other. Northeast of Lechaem was the port of Diolkos,¹² where ships were transported over the isthmus by machinery. Grooves were made in stone pavement, to control the wheels of wagon-like vehicles, that were drawn by dray animals. Ships would be placed on these vehicles and hauled from the Gulf of Corinth (Ionian Sea) to the other side of the Isthmus (the Aegean Sea) or in the opposite direction, if they were traveling east to west.

As a result of this geographical location and the resulting maritime activity, Corinth became an emerging growth center. The vigorous shipping industry supported a large service industry of sailors, longshoremen, haulers, dock workers, and ship builders. This generated a large support industry, such as hotel keepers, cooks, grooms, saloon keepers, and prostitutes. The vigorous life of Corinth drew to the city artisans, craftsmen, stonemasons, foundry workers, and other trades associated with the construction industry. Corinth became one of the major cities of the Roman Empire.

The varied workers and immigrants from many cultural backgrounds supported the brothels, saloons, and other “recreational industries,” that contributed to Corinth’s reputation of immorality. The Greeks coined a word, κορινθιάζομαι - *corinthiazomai* – “to live the Corinthian life,” which described someone who was living immorally. When a Roman or a Greek described a girl as being a “Corinthian girl,” that meant that she was considered to be a girl with loose morals. Interestingly, archaeologists have uncovered in Corinth, 33 wine shops with underground cisterns for cooling drinks.¹³ Hedonism became the cultural atmosphere of Corinth. This atmosphere drew visitors from many nations, who came for the “what happens in Corinth stays in Corinth” experience.

Corinth sponsored the Isthmian Games that were held a few miles from the city. The Isthmian Games were held every two years and were second only to the Olympics in importance. These games always drew huge crowds of tourists. The Isthmian Games took place in the spring/summer 51 AD, the same time that Paul was in the city. The Isthmian Games attracted athletes from throughout the Greco-Roman world. Typical of Greek style, all of the athletes competed in the nude. One reason for this practice was to make certain that all of the athletes were male. Because there were no accommodations for housing in the vicinity of the games, the athletes and others who had traveled to the isthmus for the games stayed in tents.¹⁴ It is possible

¹⁰ See ADDENDUM B

¹¹ Cape Malea: see ADDENDUM A

¹² See ADDENDUM B

¹³ Dan P Cole, “Corinth and Ephesus,” *Bible Review*, December 1988, page 25

¹⁴ In later years, motel type structures were built at the site for visitors to the games

that Paul, plying his trade of tent-maker, during his first days in the Corinth,¹⁵ found customers for his tents at the Isthmian Games site.

During the games, raucous crowds of spectators were interspersed with merchants hawking their wares, itinerant teachers/preachers/writers expounding their latest philosophy to whomever would listen. Pickpockets and hucksters were aplenty, trying to profit from the unsuspecting tourists.

Corinth as a Religious Center

Religion helped to create the licentious ambiance of First Century Corinth. Being multicultural and “consumer oriented,” Corinth tried to satisfy even the most discriminating pagan desires. Gods and goddesses worshipped at Corinth included:

- the traditional gods/goddesses of the Greek pantheon (Zeus, Hera, Athena, and Hermes)
- the Greek goddess of good luck, Tyche (Fortuna was her Roman name)
- Apollo had his own temple at Corinth
- Poseidon (Roman Neptune) god of the sea
- Asclepius, the god of healing, had his shrine, the Asklepieion
- Aphrodite (Roman Venus), the Greek goddess of fertility and love

There also was a Jewish community in Corinth. The community was large enough to erect a synagogue, the lintel of which was discovered by archaeologists in 1898. The lintel was found on the road that led from Corinth to Lechaem, on the steps that led to the region in which temples were erected. Because the lintel is quite heavy, it is assumed that it was not transported to this area, but, rather, that this was the location of the synagogue.¹⁶ Upon his arrival in Corinth, Paul first presented the Gospel to the Jewish community in a synagogue service. This lintel probably is the lintel of the synagogue in which Paul presented the Gospel to the Jews.¹⁷

Aphrodite was considered to be the patron goddess of the city. Prominently situated on the summit of the *Acrocorinth*,¹⁸ the temple of Aphrodite dominated Corinth’s landscape in Paul’s day. Associated with the worship of Aphrodite was the practice of sacred prostitution. From the Sixth Century BC, Greek cities openly sanctioned brothels, regarding them as being “supportive of family life.” Also, during Roman Corinth, the Roman government profited from the substantial taxes received from the prostitute industry. Prostitutes were viewed as being professionals practicing their profession.

As a result, burgeoning populations of prostitutes (known as *ethereals*) plied their trade in Corinth, often commanding large prices for their services. According to the famous Roman geographer, Strabo, over one thousand sacred prostitutes “worked” the temple of Aphrodite. In most pagan religions, prostitution associated with a temple was related to the belief that such worship promoted fertility. However, in Corinth, no such connection existed. The worship of Aphrodite was a celebration of sex. In Corinth, sex became a recreation.

¹⁵ Acts 18:1ff

¹⁶ The inscription on the lintel reads, “synagogue of the Hebrews.” Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth, Texts and Archaeology*, (Wilmington, DE, 1983)

¹⁷ Acts 18:1-6

¹⁸ The term, *acrocorinth* (ἀκροκόρινθος), literally meaning, “upper Corinth,” refers to the monolithic rock overseeing the city of Corinth.

With all of these things in mind, we can see how Corinth presented a missionary setting that was an unexcelled challenge and a unique opportunity. Commenting on this situation, Wayne Stacy has written,

“Here Paul had taken the Gospel into the very teeth of pagandom. If Christianity could take root here, it could take root anywhere. The Corinthian congregation was for Paul a *mission impossible*. He believed that Christianity could survive and even thrive without resorting to the coercive moral restraints within Jewish legalism.”¹⁹

In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul described with stark honesty the moral bankruptcy of Corinth, and then declared, *such were some of you... but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*²⁰

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

No society, regardless of how perverse the culture might be, is impregnable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sadly, the reason there seems to be little response to the Gospel in some places, is the fact that the Church has not ventured forth to proclaim the truth of Jesus. Even so, as we will see in Chapter 3, genuine response to the Gospel depends on the Holy Spirit’s directing the proclamation and the Holy Spirit’s opening the hearts of hearers.

Paul’s Ministry in Corinth

Paul and his team, consisting of Silas and Timothy,²¹ had been driven out of Thessalonica by the Jews. When they arrived in Berea, they had significant success until the Jews from Thessalonica learned of their Berean ministry. Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up crowds to the point that the Berean brethren sent Paul to Athens, where he planned to await the arrival of Silas and Timothy.

While preaching in the Athenian market place, Paul gained the attention of some of the Athenian philosophers. Athenian philosophers and other interested bystanders regularly assembled on a low hill in Athens, called the *Areopagus*²². The members of the Aeropagus circle (for the most part, Epicurean and Stoic philosophers) were always seeking to hear some new thing. Having heard Paul in the marketplace, some of these philosophers conducted Paul to the Aeropagus where they asked him to expound on “this new teaching.”

As a lead-in to his sermon, Paul referred to their very religious leanings, evidenced by the many temples in Athens. He noted that they had one temple dedicated to the Unknown God. Paul stated that he was going to tell them about that Unknown God. Interestingly, Paul used the threefold Platonic outline of the world that his pagan hearers would have known well: all things come from the One (17:24), are sustained by that One (17:25), and will return to the One (17:31).²³ Paul then preached a summary Gospel message, concluding with a reference to Jesus’ being raised from the dead.

¹⁹ Wayne Stacy, “Corinth’s Moral Climate,” Liberty University Faculty Publications and Presentations, paper 376, (1997) http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/Its_fac_pubs/376

²⁰ I Corinthians 6:11

²¹ At this point in Paul’s journeys, Silas was the leading member of the team, under Paul. Timothy was with them on the journey (see Acts 16:1-3; then Acts 17:14-15), but he is not mentioned in most of the narrative of this series of events.

²² The term means, *Ares Rock*

²³ See *Christian History Magazine*, “Medieval lay mystics”, Issue 127, (Worcester, PA, Christian

When they heard Paul declare Jesus' resurrection, many of them sneered, but others said that they would like to hear more. A small number believed, but no information is given to us concerning their further history.

Having had little success in Athens, Paul walked south to Corinth – a distance of slightly more than 50 miles. When he arrived in Corinth, he met a Jewish couple, Aquila and his wife, Priscilla – obviously a “divine appointment.” The Roman Emperor, Claudius, had ordered all Jews to leave Rome and as a result, this couple had migrated to the colony of Corinth. All rabbinical trainees were required to learn a trade before becoming a rabbi. As a future rabbinical student, Saul/Paul had learned the trade of tent-making. Aquila and Priscilla were tent-makers and so Paul took up residence in their home and joined them in their tent-making business.

After arriving in Corinth, Paul began attending services in the Synagogue on the Sabbath. Each Sabbath Day, Paul would seek to persuade the Jews and the Greek proselytes that Jesus was the Christ. When Silas and Timothy arrived, Paul gave up tentmaking and devoted himself to fulltime preaching the Gospel to the Jews. When the Jews resisted and blasphemed, Paul shook out his garments and said, *Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I go to the Gentiles.*²⁴

He moved the site of his preaching from the synagogue to the house of a man named, Titus Justus. Justus' house was next to the synagogue. Interestingly, the leader of the synagogue, a man named Crispus, as well as his entire household, became believers in Christ. Many other Corinthians also became believers, and all were immersed into Christ.²⁵

In a night vision, the Lord said to Paul, *Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.*²⁶

Note the two things promised/declared in this statement:

- No one will be able to do harm to Paul
- Many Corinthians were going to accept the Gospel

This last statement gets our attention, because God foreknew that many Corinthians were going to become Christians. He knew who they were, in advance of their conversion.

Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months, teaching the word of God to the Corinthians. The harvest of souls was significant. This was one of the largest, if not the largest, church born out of Paul's ministry. It also was the church with the most problems – which is to our advantage, because in response to those problems, Paul wrote very instructive things, which benefit us, today.

When the Jews saw the huge success of the Gospel, they grabbed Paul and took him before the judgment seat of Gallio, the proconsul.²⁷ Before Paul could defend himself, Gallio put a stop to the proceedings, saying, *If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be*

History Institute) page 15

²⁴ Acts 18:6

²⁵ Acts 18:18

²⁶ Acts 18:9-10

²⁷ See ADDENDUM C

*reasonable for me to put up with you; but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.*²⁸

Gallio told the Jews to get out and stop bothering him. The Gentile bystanders demonstrated their anti-Semitism by grabbing Sosthenes, who had succeeded Crispus as head of the synagogue, and began beating him. Gallio ignored their behavior.²⁹

Thus, the things promised to Paul in the night vision were fulfilled. No one was able to harm Paul and the harvest of souls was huge.

Paul remained in Corinth for several more days, then accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, he left Corinth and sailed to Ephesus.

The Occasion for Writing I Corinthians

Paul remained in Ephesus for a few days. While there, he visited the local synagogue and presented the Gospel. When he left Ephesus, Paul promised to return to the city. Aquila and Priscilla remained in Ephesus.

Paul spent a brief time with the church in Caesarea, then traveled to Antioch, from which his missionary journeys had begun. Leaving Antioch, Paul traveled north and west, through Cilicia, and Pisidia, then returned to Ephesus for a second visit that lasted three years.

Shortly after arriving in Ephesus for his second visit, Paul wrote the letter that he referenced in I Corinthians 5:9ff. This letter was not preserved. We do not know what prompted the letter, but in all probability, someone from Corinth had contacted Paul asking for direction concerning issues in the church.

From his comments in I Corinthians 5, we know that in this lost letter he dealt with two issues:

- fornication
- idolatry

Both of these practices were dominant in the culture of Corinth and, as a result, the church struggled with how to deal with them – especially when some of the members tended to continue to follow the culture.

The Corinthians misunderstood his letter and his motives for writing. In response, they wrote a letter to Paul. Their letter was delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaius (16:15-17). One of the reasons for Paul's writing the document that we know as I Corinthians was to correct these misunderstandings that became apparent in the letter these men had delivered to Paul.

Another reason for the letter is a report that came to Paul from some members of Chloe's household concerning the growing division in the church (I Corinthians 1:11). There is no information given as to when or how Paul received this report.

Thus, Paul wrote I Corinthians

- in response to the report from Chloe's people
- in response to the issues raised in the letter from Corinth
- in response to the reports of the men who brought the Corinthians' letter to Paul

²⁸ Acts 18:14-15

²⁹ Acts 18:17

There are hints in I Corinthians that some in the Corinthian church had decided that since they had become *spiritual* (πνευματικός - *pneumatikos*), they were equal to Paul in authority. Throughout the letter, Paul, sometimes subtly, sometimes directly, and sometimes sarcastically, contends that he is right, and they are wrong. Paul comes against them with statements such as *do you not know that*, (ten times in the epistle); *if anyone thinks that he is....* (three times). In II Corinthians, Paul deals with false apostles that have come into the church from the outside, but I Corinthians deals only with aberrations that have arisen from within the church.

I Corinthians was written during the latter portion of Paul's lengthy ministry in Ephesus, probably in the spring of 56AD (I Corinthians 16:8ff).

Clement's Letter to Corinth

Clement of Rome's Epistle to Corinth, is of special interest to students of I Corinthians. Clement's Epistle and the Didache are the two oldest extant early writings of the Church. Clement was a member of the church at Rome, during the last third of the First Century. In his epistle, Clement makes comments concerning persecutions that the church in Rome recently had experienced. Because of this, most date it as having been written in 96 A.D., the last year of Domitian's persecution of the church. If this date is accurate, and no one seriously questions this date, that would mean that Clement's letter was written within a year of John's writing the Book of Revelation.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Clement rebuked the church for deposing their elders.³⁰ Evidently, some younger members had tried to take over the leadership. He chastised them because the elders had been ordained by the apostles and that since no moral charges were brought against the elders, the younger men who had deposed them were out of God's will. Clement refers to I Corinthians, and the statements that Paul made in that letter. This would indicate that I Corinthians was known in Rome as well as Corinth before the close of the First Century.

Another thing of interest in Clement's letter, is his reference to church leaders in Corinth who were ordained by apostles. In the Acts record of Paul's time in Corinth, there is no mention of his having appointed church leadership. Neither is there any information concerning this in his Corinthian letters. Evidently, such leadership was chosen during one of his non-recorded trips,³¹ or during Apollos' visit, or during a later visit by one of the apostles.

A decided characteristic of Paul's letters to Corinth is that they are not addressed to church leaders, but to the entire church. Almost every statement is made in the second person plural.³² We must leave the question of how and when leadership was appointed as an unanswered question.

³⁰ Clement uses the terms, *bishop* (overseer), and, *elder*, interchangeably, as does Paul – both terms were used for elders, since elders were the overseers of the church.

³¹ In II Corinthians 2:1-4, Paul mentions a trip that he made to them in "heaviness." The description given in II Corinthians does not fit any description of the recorded visits.

³² When he does shift to second person, singular (five times in the epistle), it seems he has particular individuals in view (4:7; 7:21, 27; 8:9-10; 14:16-17; 15:36-37)

I CORINTHIANS: THE EPISTLE

THE SALUTATION (1:1-3)

Our contemporary letters begin with the salutation, *Dear.....*. Almost all letters from the Greco-Roman world begin with a threefold salutation:³³

- Name of the writer
- Name of the Addressee
- Greetings

Paul subtly incorporated into this threefold salutation, elements that relate to the underlying problems at Corinth.

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

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

Paul cited the source of his calling and authority, *called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*³⁴

In this salutation, he emphasized his authority, by distinguishing his role as an apostle, from that of Sosthenes, *our brother*. We do not know the identity of Sosthenes. The only other mention of a Sosthenes is in Acts 18:17, the man who succeeded Crispus as leader of the Ephesian synagogue. Sosthenes was a common name.

The letter is to those who have been *sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling*. The two terms rendered as *sanctified* and *holy* (i.e., ἁγιάζω - *hagiadzo* and ἅγιος - *hagios*), carry the same idea. The terms refer to being set apart. God is holy, meaning that He is not a part of His creation, but that He is a being whose existence is totally autonomous. When these terms are applied to humans, the idea is that such beings are set apart to God and that their character and behavior are consistent with that of God. Including these terms in the salutation is relevant to some of the attitudes and behaviors that Paul will be addressing in the letter – attitudes and behaviors that were a contradiction of this truth.

Paul emphasized the fact that the Corinthian Church was not some independent body. The Corinthian Church was a part of *all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours*. Furthermore, in his declaration of truth in the epistle, he states that what he said to the Corinthians was what he had said to all of the churches.³⁵

³³ All true New Testament letters (including the letter from James in Acts 15:23-29), follow this pattern, except for III John, which lacks this standard greeting.

³⁴ The salutation in the Epistle to the Galatians (1:1) has a similar emphasis, because a similar problem existed at Galatia – Paul's authority. *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),*

³⁵ I Corinthians 4:17; 7:17

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

No local congregation should consider itself to be a “bone alone.” This lesson is especially important for independent congregations. Each congregation must see itself as a part of the whole body of Christ.

The blessing that he pronounced on the church, in the conclusion of his salutation, is the one that he customarily used in his letters, *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*³⁶

Thanksgiving (1:4-9)

Paul customarily gave thanks for those to whom he was writing. His usual pattern is seen here:

- Give thanks
- To God
- Always
- For the recipients
- For certain reasons which he then elaborates

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

One thing that is of interest in these verses is Paul’s thanking God for the very things in the church that, because of abuses, were causing him grief.

We normally think of grace as referring to undeserved salvation – i.e. unmerited favor. Although Paul does use the term, *charis*³⁷, in that sense, he also used it in the sense of *charisma/charismata*³⁸ (i.e., gift/gifts). When so used, it refers to God’s gracious activity in His giving of functional gifts to His people. A clear example is Romans 12:6-8:

And since we have gifts (χαρίσματα charismata) that differ according to the grace (χαρίς charis) given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

As we shall see in Chapters 12-14, this is one of the major concerns of the epistle. Paul, recognizing that God is the source of these gifts, is grieved by their abuse of them. They are good things that have gone sour.

³⁶ Rom. 1:7; 16:20; 1 Co. 1:3; 2 Co. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 1:4

³⁷ Χάρις

³⁸ Χάρισμα/χαρίσματα

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

So often, in contemporary churches, the tendency is to domesticate the faith, eliminating anything that is troublesome. Paul's model is to examine the manifestation, determine what is of God and what is not (usually it is the attitude or motive that is wrong), then to make corrections.

An example relevant to 21st Century churches has to do with the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Two of the greatest outpourings of the Holy Spirit were seen in the First Great Awakening in the mid-18th Century, and the Second Great Awakening of which the Cain Ridge Revival of 1801, which was the landmark event. In both of these great revivals, the Holy Spirit manifested Himself and thousands were brought to conviction and repentance. However, many emotional manifestations also took place, causing both Jonathan Edwards (the First Great Awakening) and Barton W. Stone (the Second Great Awakening) to seek corrections to these emotional excesses. They defended the move of the Holy Spirit and the fact that manifestations occurred. However, they condemned many of the manifestations as pure human emotion.³⁹ Sadly, because of these fleshly excesses, many churches rejected any manifestation of the Holy Spirit, including any of the charismatic gifts. Most present-day denominations who are descendants of these two revivals do not acknowledge the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rather than correction, they have chosen rejection.

Another example of rejection rather than correction is seen when those who seek to adhere to the clear commands and models presented in Scripture, become very legalistic and somewhat externally oriented. As a result, their opponents, claiming to be spiritual, feel free to discard clear commands of Christ. This is the wrong response. The abuses should be corrected but obedience to Christ's clear commands is important. Such a conduct mirrors Jesus' statement concerning the legalistic religionists He encountered.

saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. (Matthew 23:2-3)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23)

The principle presented here is an important one and one that is often missed in our churches. What is commanded, even outward matters, we are to obey – but such obedience must be accompanied by – even the expression of – a right heart. Otherwise, it is pure legalism and odious to our Holy God.

Paul, knowing that he was going to have to address the abuses related to the spiritual gifts, still thanked God for them, and for their affluence among the Corinthians, for they were God's unmerited gifts to His people.

Confidence in the Day of Christ's Return

Paul's Gospel always had in view, the anticipated return of Christ. He expressed confidence in God, not in the Corinthians, to bring them blameless to that day (1:7-9)

³⁹ Jonathan Edwards addressed this issue in a series of sermons, *Religious Affections* (1746), in which he sought to define the "distinguishing marks" of true revival.

An Incomprehensible Truth

The closing statement in Paul's salutation is a marvelous, incomprehensible truth – our salvation not only means that we are freed from the guilt of sin and thus, we have assurance in the day of judgement, but in this life we *called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*. Those who are redeemed have a living relationship with the Son of God – through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

THE FIRST REBUKE: DIVISION (1:10-17)

Having begun the letter on a very positive note, Paul launched into the first of many corrective words of the epistle.

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ *For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.*

¹² *Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."* ¹³ *Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* ¹⁴ *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,* ¹⁵ *that no man should say you were baptized in my name.*

¹⁶ *Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.* ¹⁷ *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in wisdom of words⁴⁰ that the cross of Christ should not be made void.* (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

It is of interest to note that this is an exhortation, not a command. Paul sought to approach the subject at hand in a somewhat tender manner, calling his addressees, *brethren*. Yet, authority is given to the appeal, in that it is given in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That being true, it is an exhortation that the Corinthians are obligated to obey.

EXCURSUS: WHO WAS APOLLOS?

Apollos⁴¹ was an Alexandrian Jew (Acts 18:24). He reached Ephesus in the summer of 54 AD, after Paul had departed from the city. He was an eloquent speaker with a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 18:24). He *had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John* (Acts 18:25). No information is given as to when and where Apollos had received this instruction, but it probably was when John was preaching at *Bethany beyond the Jordan* (John 1:28).

Priscilla and Aquilla, whom Paul had left behind in Ephesus, heard Apollos' bold proclamation in the synagogue. Realizing that his knowledge of the Gospel was not complete, they took Apollos aside and presented to him *more accurately the way of God* (Acts 18:26).

After a season of ministry in Ephesus, Apollos went to Corinth, carrying letters of commendation from the Ephesian Church. He was well received by the church in Corinth and experienced a powerful ministry in that locale.

⁴⁰ The NAS rendering, *cleverness of speech*, conceals a line of thought that Paul uses in this section, in which he contrasts the word of wisdom with the word of the cross.

⁴¹ ἄπολλώς is the short form of the very common name among the Syro-Macedonians, Apollonius.mo

And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace; for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts 18:27-28)

Paul returned to Ephesus in the spring of 57 AD and by this time, Apollos had returned to Ephesus (I Corinthians 16:12).

It is clear that Paul and Apollos were not in competition with one another, but truly considered themselves to be common yokefellows in the ministry of the Gospel.

The last mention of Apollos is in the letter to Titus, in which Paul commends Apollos and the lawyer Zenas to Titus (Titus 3:13). In all probability, Apollos was the one who delivered the letter to Titus in Crete.

An examination of key terms in verse 10 gives a deeper grasp of Paul's exhortation:

- The term rendered, *divisions*,⁴² refers to a tear, as a tear in a fabric. Paul is exhorting them to avoid any situation that would tear them apart.
- The term rendered, *made complete*,⁴³ has as its primary understanding, fitting something together (each element in its properly functioning place), or mending something. The King James rendering, *perfectly joined together*, is closer to the sense of the Greek.

Paul stated that the reason for his concern over their being torn apart was the result of a report from *Chloe's people* (KJV *house of Chloe*; NIV *Chloe's household*). The specific identity of these informants escapes us. The Greek only has *the*⁴⁴ *of Chloe*. The language could mean that these were a part of Chloe's family, or Chloe's slaves, or members of Chloe's house-church, or any other sort of relationship that these informants had with Chloe. Although various ones have speculated about the identity of Chloe and those *of Chloe*, we must be honest and say that we do not know the answers to these questions. The Corinthians obviously knew the identity of the aforementioned.

The problem that Paul addressed is not that some Corinthians preferred one man's preaching or ministry over that of another. There were "quarrels." The problem was the divisive attitude that gave no thought to the health of the local Body. Throughout this epistle, we see evidence of this divisive spirit, expressed in a variety of forms. Satan is the source of division and he was having a heyday at Corinth.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Needless to say, Paul would be appalled by the "celebrity" mentality that permeates so much of the contemporary church. Many present-day churches, especially non-denominational churches, are built on the personality of the man in the pulpit and his oratorical – sometimes entertaining – skills.

⁴² σχίσμα - *schisma*

⁴³ καταρτίζω *katartidzo* This is the term used in Ephesians 4:12, usually rendered as, *equipping the saints*. This really is a poor rendering of the term in Ephesians 4:12, in that it does not convey, accurately, what the apostle is saying. The idea behind the term in Ephesians 4:12 is that one of the roles of church leadership is to help each member to find his place of functioning in the Body of Christ..

⁴⁴ The term, *the* – τῶν, is plural.

All of the Corinthians had been immersed into Christ (Acts 18:8), or else Paul's argument in verses 12-13 would be flawed. In order to deflect any who claimed to be "of Paul," he declares that most of them were immersed by someone other than himself. He declares that he did immerse Crispus (head of the synagogue) and Gaius – then, as an after-thought, he recalled that he also immersed the household of Stephanus. Whether or not he immersed anyone else, he just didn't remember.

Interestingly, Paul here makes a distinction that many miss – the difference between the Gospel message and the salvation message. The Gospel message is the good news concerning what Our Lord has done to provide our salvation. The salvation message is what we must do to obtain the benefits of that atoning work – which is, as Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost,

And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins⁴⁵; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

Paul declared that his primary calling was to preach the Gospel and either he, or someone else, would immerse those who believed and accepted the message. Because he did not claim some sort of clerical/priestly role in which he, alone, could immerse, he was not open to the charge of immersing anyone into Paul.

Not only that, as is reflected in the next section, he did not seek to convince anyone of the truth of the Gospel by using his rhetorical skills – he preached an unbelievable message that the Holy Spirit enlivened and many believed. Paul argued that any results were not the result of his talent, skill, or manipulation. Furthermore, he implied that any response to anything else would make the cross of Christ void (the Greek term rendered as *void* (V 17), is κενόω (*keno 'oh*), which carries the idea of being empty (NIV *empty of its power*).

GOD'S WISDOM AND POWER IN CONTRAST TO HUMAN VALUES (1:18-25)

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.²² For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom;²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Verses 17 & 18 are a single thought, contrasting one *word* with another *word*.

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in wisdom of words⁴⁶ that the cross of Christ should not be made void. For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

⁴⁵ Literally: *into the sending away of the sins of you* -εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν

⁴⁶ The NAS rendering, *cleverness of speech*, conceals a line of thought that Paul uses in this

Unfortunately, most English translations miss this play on words. Paul wrote that Christ did not send him to preach with the *word of wisdom*, but the *word of the cross*.

To the Jewish rabbinical student, Saul, there were two categories of humans: Jew and Gentile. When the Jewish zealot Saul encountered the glorified Jesus, and then was called to become the apostle Paul, the redeemed Saul/Paul reclassified humans into two new categories:

- those who are perishing
- those who are being saved

Both Jew and Gentile continue to exist, but now both Jew and Gentile, in the natural world, belong to *those who are perishing*.⁴⁷

On the other hand, both Jew and Gentile who accept the Word of the Cross are *those who are being saved*.

Paul cited the two concerns of Jew and Gentile:

- Jews seek after confirming signs
- Greeks seek after wisdom

The Jews demands for miraculous signs is a reflection of Jewish messianic expectations. God had moved powerfully in their behalf in history and they looked for a messiah who would act powerfully on their behalf once again. We note that the Jews had challenged Jesus, “show us a sign” (Matthew 11:38-39; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; John 6:30) i.e. “validate your messianic credentials with some sort of powerful display.”

The Greeks were known for their wisdom and were proud of their reputation as such. Herodotus wrote, “All Greeks were zealous for every kind of learning.”⁴⁸ Their advanced civilization and learning caused many to abandon traditional gods and turn to *Sophia* (wisdom). They made an idol of ultimate Reason – i.e. what *we* deem reasonable.

In his argument, concerning the wisdom of humans, Paul cited the Old Testament – Isaiah 29:14, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside*.⁴⁹ In its context in Isaiah, the passage is warning men to not try to match wits with God.

Concerning the Jews looking for miraculous signs – there is no mention of any miracles in Paul’s evangelistic ministry in Corinth (Acts 18), as contrasted with prolific miracles in Ephesus (Acts 19). For that matter the statements made here and the argument following would lack credence if there had been miracles in Corinth. There may have been manifestations of spiritual gifts, as evidenced in Chapters 12-14, but there is no mention of such, in the biblical record.

In II Corinthians 12:12, Paul does defend his apostleship on the fact that miracles were performed in Corinth, at his hands.

*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Corinthians 12:12)*⁵⁰

section, in which he contrasts the word of wisdom with the word of the cross.

⁴⁷ Both of these expressions are present participles, (ἀπολλυμένοις *-apollumenois* [perishing]; σωζόμενοις *sodzomenois* [being saved] indicating on going action or a continuing condition.

⁴⁸ Herodotus, *History*, 4.77. Herodotus flourished in the mid-5th Century BC.

⁴⁹ Paul quoted the Septuagint version

⁵⁰ Greek language exegetes differ over the sense of some of the terms in this verse. However, it is evident that some sort of miraculous manifestation is in view

When did these miracles occur in Corinth? Acts records two visits of Paul to Corinth:

- Acts 18:1-18 Paul's first visit was a lengthy visit. The Acts 18 account is quite detailed.. No miracles are mentioned.
- Acts 20:2-3 records Paul's second visit to Corinth, a visit of only three months. As one works out the chronological details of Paul's travels, it becomes evident that Paul had chosen Corinth as a site in which to spend the winter. Acts records only one event that transpired during this visit – the Jewish plot against Paul that began to form, just before Paul's planned departure. No details of the plot are given, nor does Acts record any other details concerning what transpired during this visit.

It is not out of line to conclude that this was the setting in which the *perseverance, signs and wonders and miracles* were displayed in Corinth.

Also, based on comments in II Corinthians, we do conclude that during this second visit, false apostles had come to Corinth and challenged Paul's authority. It further appears that the Corinthians failed to come to Paul's defense.⁵¹

Verse 24, *but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks*, presents us with a question that has been a point of controversy in the Church for many centuries – the issue of man's freewill and God's sovereignty. Verse 24 harks back to God's exhortation to Paul,

...go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." (Acts 18:9-10)

God knew who in the city were His, even though they had not heard the Gospel. This certainly speaks of God's foreknowledge, but does it also refer to His intervention by calling some and not calling others?

Three groups have emerged in this debate over God's sovereignty and man's freewill:

- Calvinists, who argue that God predestines who will and who will not accept the Gospel.⁵²
- Armenians, who argue that man, in his unredeemed will cannot say, "yes," to the Gospel and so the Holy Spirit "preveniently" acts on a person's will so that he/she can freely say "yes" or "no" to the Gospel.⁵³
- Freewill advocates, who argue that God does not, nor does He need to, do anything to influence us; we are born with a freewill and exercise that one way or the other when we hear the Gospel.

In the context of the verses before us, and statements made in Chapter 2, it is apparent that Paul considered the influence of the Holy Spirit an essential element in bringing about the conversion of *those who are called*.

⁵¹ II Corinthians Chapters 10-13

⁵² Some Calvinists do not hold to the view that God predestines anyone to hell, but practically, those who are not predestined to accept the Gospel are already condemned.

⁵³ This view was first expressed by the 16th Century Dutch theologian, Jacob Arminius. John Wesley accepted most of Arminius theology, but he disagreed on two points: (1) that a person who had drifted into apostasy could not be saved (Wesley argued that such a one could come back); (2) Wesley argued that one can attain a level of sanctification in which one no longer commits voluntary sin. This latter view of divine perfectionism is held by the Nazarene denomination, one of Wesley's heirs.

Wrestling with these issues must not cause us to overlook the message of this section:

- The cross of Christ was foolishness to the Greeks, it did not fit their logical sense of reason.
- The cross of Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews because they were looking for an all-conquering messiah to come in power and conquer their enemies.
- *but to those who are the 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.*

**PAUL DECLARED THAT THE CONSTITUENCY OF THE CHURCH
ILLUSTRATES THE TRUTH HE HAS PUT FORTH
(1:26-31)**

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are,²⁹ that no man should boast before God.

³⁰ *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,³¹ that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

Once again, we encounter God's initiative in the exhortation, *consider your calling, brethren,* and, *by His doing you are in Christ Jesus.*

Paul told them to look at themselves – note the background of most of those who are members of the church. Instead of the “beautiful people,” God chose “nobodies” to make up His new people in Corinth. No one can boast before God, “You chose and called me because I am a person of importance.”⁵⁴ It is all from God and of God.

**PAUL'S PREACHING
(2:1-5)**

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

With this paragraph, Paul concluded his argument by pointing out that his style of preaching at Corinth was not powerful rhetoric. Yet, in spite of his weak delivery, Holy Spirit power brought to the faith, great numbers of the Corinthians. We can only assume that the Holy Spirit anointed the preaching and at the same time, opened hearts to the message. It was all by the power of the Spirit, not by the power of the preacher.

⁵⁴ There must have been a few people of financial prosperity in the church, or else the scene pictured in Chapter 11 would be difficult to explain.

**GOD'S WISDOM, REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT
(2:6-16)**

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory;⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

⁹ *but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him."*

¹⁰ *For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.* ¹¹ *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*

¹² *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,* ¹³ *which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

¹⁴ *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* ¹⁵ *But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.* ¹⁶ *For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

An important term in this section is that which we render as *mystery*.⁵⁵ The term is, μυστήριον (*mustayrion*) and it refers to something that has been revealed, but could not have been known had it not been revealed. So, it is something that we can know without a doubt, but we could not have known it, had God not chosen to reveal it to us. This term encompasses the rest of the paragraph. Paul declared that he preached what no human intellect, whether great or small, could have deduced. Only by the revelation of the Holy Spirit could these things have been known.

This passage calls to mind the scene recorded in John 14-17. These chapters describe the final hours that Jesus spent with the apostles before He went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Here are some pertinent verses from this section:

"These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. ²⁶ *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:25-26)*

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ *"He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.* ¹⁵ *"All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you. (John 16:13-15)*

When Our resurrected and enthroned Lord sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles, they recalled things that Jesus said – things that they had forgotten. Also, by revelation of the Spirit, they

⁵⁵ The English term, *mystery*, implies something that is a bit of a puzzle. The Greek term that expresses the idea conveyed by the English term, *mystery*, is the Greek term, ἀινιγμα (*ainigma*), from which is derived the English term, *enigma* – a puzzle or an obscure saying.

understood Jesus' sayings that they did not understand when Jesus spoke them. Such knowledge could not have been theirs without the Holy Spirit's disclosure - μυστήριον.

We also recall Paul's statement in the Galatian Letter (Galatians 1:11-19), in which he asserts that the message that he preached was not something that he learned from any human, but rather what he received directly from Christ - μυστήριον.

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³ *For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it;¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.*

¹⁵ *But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.*

¹⁸ *Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.¹⁹ But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians 1:11-19 NAS)*

Paul concluded this paragraph (2:14) by asserting that natural man, on his own, just can't grasp these truths – they are foolishness to him. Indeed, we see such phenomena today, when some “intellectuals” reject God's Word because it doesn't make sense or cannot be explained, logically. It is not unusual for such individuals to view believers as being somewhat ignorant or gullible. On the other hand, some of the greatest intellectuals of history have been, and are, committed Christians. The difference seems to be between those on whom the Holy Spirit has acted and those on whom He has not acted.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

An important point for the contemporary Church is to recognize the source of the Apostles' teaching. As was true with Paul, all that they taught had come from the lips of Jesus and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The documents that we call, *Scripture*, have been labeled that because of the source from whence they have come.

Sadly, an increasing number of churches in America are allowing culture and humanistic reasoning to become their authority and guide. These groups and individuals fit Paul's description of the natural man (verse 14). The same can be said about some seminaries and other institutions of “higher learning.”

THE CORINTHIANS' BEHAVIOUR LABELS THEM AS IMMATURE AND FLESHLY

(3:1-4)

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

²*I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,* ³*for you are still fleshly.*

For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴*For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?*

Paul's elementary instruction to the new converts in Corinth gave opportunity to his opponents to criticize him as being a shallow teacher rather than one who had the "mind of Christ."⁵⁶ Paul's response was that when he left them, they were so immature that they were not able to receive deeper instruction. Far from being mature disciples,⁵⁷ they still were influenced by the passions of the unregenerate life from which they had come; they had not completely died to that life.

Neither Paul, nor Apollos (or for that matter, Cephas [Peter], who had not visited Corinth) were the source of the divisions that had developed in the church. The divisions had occurred because of the infantile, fleshly nature, of the Corinthians.

Instead of behaving like redeemed saints whose sole concern would be their place in Christ, the Corinthians were manifesting the divisive fleshly traits of sectarian identity. Perhaps the fact that so many different ethnic groups were represented in the population of Corinth had an impact on congregational life. Perhaps various ethnic groups declared themselves to be Appollosites, some, Paulites, some, Cephasites, and some...Christians.

In these verses, Paul made more evident than he did in Chapter One, the origin and manifestation of their divisions. Quarrels (1:11)⁵⁸ were motivated by jealousy of some sort and had gone beyond polite disagreement, to the level of strife in the body. Satan is the author of division and in the Corinthian Church he had reached the pinnacle of success.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

How often the contemporary church has experienced the sort of thing that Paul is describing here. Sometimes the jealousy is over one's role in the church, - someone receives some sort of honor or recognition, and someone else becomes jealous. Sometimes the strife is over some incidental matter that has little, if any, spiritual relevance. I (JWG) personally know of a congregation whose unity was disrupted over the brand of organ to purchase. A dominant woman who was a member one wealthy family wanted one brand of organ, and a woman who was a member of another wealthy family, wanted a different brand. Each generated a following, even though neither woman nor her followers knew anything about the different qualities of the respective organs. It was just a matter of who was going to run the show, so to speak. Similar tales could be repeated over and over again. The Corinthian disease still is prevalent.

⁵⁶ The false apostles who later came to Corinth (II Corinthians 11:12-15) criticized him as a man of weakness and a shallow teacher (II Corinthians 10:10).

⁵⁷ Ephesians 4:13

⁵⁸ The Greek term, ἔρις (eris) is understood as *strife* or *contention*

THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE CONCERNING GOD'S SERVANT LEADERS

(3:5-9)

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

Paul declared that he and Apollos were but servants whom God used to bring faith to the Corinthians. Paul's terminology, *For we are God's fellow workers*, is elaborated in II Corinthians 5:20-6:1. Note that Paul states, *through whom*, not, *in whom*.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—

Paul emphasized that he and Apollos were not lords to whom the Corinthians should attach themselves. The tendency of church leaders to seek some sort of elevated role and the tendency of followers to put them into that role, was addressed by Our Lord.

But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, (Matthew 23:4-6)

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Once again, here is a challenging truth for the Church in America. Sadly, in many American churches the preacher/minister/pastor/elder is elevated and, in some settings, treated like royalty. I personally (JWG) have been in situations in which various church leaders just couldn't call me "Jim," or "brother Garrett." They had to give me a label, such as, "apostle." I could not get them to see me as a slave of Jesus Christ. Of course, one reason for their inability to do this was that in their settings, they expected/demanded to be held aloft by their churches.

One tragedy that comes out of this elevation of religious leaders, is that each leader is human. When that humanity displays itself, those under his care often become disillusioned with the faith and turn away from the Lord. William McDonald has written aptly,

"When we give a man or a woman the place in our life that only God should have, we are in for bitter disappointment. We will soon learn that the best of men are men at best. Although they may have some very fine qualities, yet they still have feet of iron and clay. This may sound like cynicism, but it is not. It is realism."⁵⁹

Even though Paul emphasized the model of servant leadership, which is the heart of any genuine leader in the Body of Christ, he found himself having to walk a fine line. Since he was an apostle, and since the Corinthian Church was the product of his initial evangelistic endeavor, he was responsible to God for correcting errors of doctrine and conduct. Thus, at various times in

⁵⁹ William McDonald, *One Day at a Time*, (Grand Rapids, Gospel Folio Press) 2007, page 147

his letter he had to emphasize his apostolic authority in all of the churches, but especially his responsibility for Corinth (in 4:15, he emphasized his “fatherhood” role in the Corinthian Church). Concerning a congregation’s respect for and obedience to its leaders, Paul wrote,⁶⁰

Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)

A church leader who has a heart for the church usually regrets having to take a position of authority. Yet, in certain situations, when doctrine or conduct of the body is out of line, he must take authority or answer to God for having abrogated his role.

NOTE: the last phrase of verse of I Corinthians 3:5 has been rendered with different understandings in contemporary English versions:

- *ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man* (KJV)
- *Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.* (NAS)
- *servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task.* (NIV)
- *Each of us did the work the Lord gave us.* (NLT)

The difference in these versions indicates how the translators of the various versions understood the identity of the *each*.

The Greek in this verse reads literally, *servants through whom ye did believe, and to each as the Lord gave*.

Does the verse refer to each one to whom the Lord gave the opportunity to believe (KJV and NAS), or is the reference to those to whom the Lord gave opportunity to be the ministers of the Gospel message (NIV and NLT).

The Greek does not give any clue as to which one of these options represents what Paul was seeking to communicate. The translators were forced to interpret what Paul meant and different translators decided differently.

In my opinion (JWG), the NIV and NLT are preferred because of the context. The verses immediately following (verses 6-9) emphasize the labor of the ministers and the reward they receive for their faithful service.

An important point Paul made in this section is that God is the one responsible for results.

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

The role of the disciple of Jesus is to be obedient to God’s command, whether the general command for the Church or a specific command for an individual disciple. God’s role is to determine the results of that obedience.

⁶⁰ Although some question the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, I (JWG) hold to the view that Paul was the author. The situation pictured in Hebrews 13:18-19, 23 fits Paul’s life experience. Also, some of the early church fathers indicated that Paul was the author (examples: Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origin)

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

This is a difficult challenge for American churches, which tend to be focused on results. Focusing on the institution and its growth results in the use of human techniques and merchandising schemes in order to increase the size of the congregation and the size of its budget. Once one focuses on the institution, the driving concern is how to increase the number of bodies and bucks. This thinking is at odds with Paul's view. To Paul, the role of God's servant is to present the Gospel and leave results to God. If one has been obedient in that presentation, and there are no results, the servant is a success in God's eyes, because he has been obedient. On the other hand, if the Gospel is not being presented at every turn, then the servant and the local church are a failure, regardless of the results.

Reflecting on this situation, the missionary martyr Jim Elliott wrote,

“What a ragged, shoddy thing Christianity has come to be, honoring men, and means, places, and crowds – Oh Lord, deliver me from this faithless generation. How I long to see the simplicity and powerful beauty of the New Testament fellowship reproduced, but no one seems to similarly exercised here, so I must wait. Oh Christ, let me know Thee – let me catch glimpses of Thyself, seated and expectant in glory, let me rest there despite all wrong surrounding me.”⁶¹

Jesus did not say, *Go and build My Church*. He said, *I will build My Church*.⁶² Yet, even though it is Jesus who is building His Church, He does it through the team that He assembles and directs. Jesus is the builder, but He has a construction crew. After Our Lord ascended, He gave to the Church certain individuals who have roles in the building of the Church.

He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherd/teachers⁶³, for the equipping⁶⁴ of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; (Ephesians 4:10-12)

Emphasizing both this truth and, at the same time, the fact of God's ownership, Paul wrote, *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building* (verse 9).

Even though the one planting and the one watering are on the same team, each one will be judged individually and rewarded individually, according to how faithfully he has fulfilled his specific role. (verse 8)

⁶¹ Elisabeth Elliott, *Shadow of the Almighty*, (New York, Harper & Row)1967, page 81

⁶² Matthew 16:18

⁶³ This rendering reflects the literal sense of the Greek, i.e. four gifts, rather than five, as is implied by some English translations.

⁶⁴ The Greek term rendered, *equipping*, is the noun, *καταρτίσμος* (*katartismos*), which is derived from the verb, *καταρτίζω* (*katartidzo*), which conveys the idea of putting things in place or putting things in order – it also is used for mending something broken. This is the term used in Hebrews 11:3 which describes God's framing the world. Thus, one idea resident in Paul's Ephesian description of the work of shepherd/teachers is to help each member find his/her place in functioning in the Body of Christ.

**LEADERSHIP MUST BE CAREFUL CONCERNING HOW IT FUNCTIONS IN THE
ONGOING BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH
(3:10-15)**

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

¹² *Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.*

¹⁴ *If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward.¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.*

Paul had laid the foundation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is the only foundation of the true Church. A church that is built upon the person of some charismatic leader, or merely on some doctrine or philosophy, is built upon the wrong foundation and it will fall.

Jesus' response to Peter's good confession declares the foundation,

And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." ...and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. (Matthew 16:16, 18)⁶⁵

In the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord declared,

...everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.²⁵ "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.²⁶ "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.²⁷ "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27)

Our Lord clearly stated that individuals, and by implication, the Church, must be built upon His words. The Church is not a democracy, but a theocracy, with a King in Whom rests all authority. A church that substitutes some sort of wisdom, or feelings, or anything in place of the commands of Christ, no longer is the church that Jesus built, and it will not survive the Day of Testing. Even prior to the great Day of Testing, we presently are witnessing the decline of those denominations that are turning away from biblical orthodox doctrine, and the survival of those that are adhering to orthodoxy.

Paul had laid a good foundation, and at this point in the letter, he addressed those who had been leading the church since his departure. How had they built on the foundation that he had laid?

When Paul wrote of building with gold, silver, and precious stones, as compared to wood, hay, and straw (V12), he probably had in mind the regular occurrence of these elements in describing Solomon's Temple.⁶⁶ This image was written in preparation for the next section.

⁶⁵ For an exposition of this passage, indicating that the rock, to which Jesus referred, is Jesus Himself, see ADDENDUM D

⁶⁶ Examples: Haggai 2:8, gold and silver; I Chronicles 22:14, 16 (stones, but not precious stones); I Chronicles 29:2, gold, silver, and fine stone.

Because of his reference to *the day*, it seems obvious that he is referring to the Day of Judgment.⁶⁷ Interestingly, the Greek of this verse allows for two understandings:

- The work of each will be revealed
- The Day will be revealed

As Fee has pointed out, putting the two thoughts together results in *For the Day of Judgment will expose every person's workmanship, whether Gospel or Sophia [human wisdom], because that Day, when it comes, manifests itself with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.*⁶⁸

Roman Catholicism uses this verse as its single piece of New Testament evidence for the doctrine of purgatory – i.e. that the fire will purify the worker (the fire of purgatory). This does not fit the imagery of verse 15, which refers to the testing of one's work, not the testing of one's spirituality or holiness, and certainly not the purification of the builder.

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

The fire of the Day of Judgment will test the quality of the work

Those who built with gold, silver, and precious stones were those who were building with the Gospel as Paul had presented it and the doctrines consistent with that Gospel. Those building in this manner will see their work survive. Those who were looking to human *Sophia*, would see their work destroyed. Proverbs 3:5 quickly comes to mind,

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Paul is quick to qualify his statement that although their work will not survive, this does not have implications for one's salvation. It does, however, have implications for what reward one will receive in the Judgment Day. Salvation is not based on works, but it is by grace.

A WARNING TO THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY GOD'S TEMPLE IN CORINTH (3:16-17)

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Of note is the term rendered, *temple*. In Greek, there are two words that in English routinely are rendered as, *temple*.

- ἱερόν (*hiearon*), referring to the building or sacred grounds
- ναός (*naos*), referring to the Holy of Holies – the very sacred room in the Tabernacle/Temple where rested the Ark of the Covenant above which was the Holy Shekinah (the presence of God). No one could enter this sacred room except the High Priest, and he only once a year – the day of Atonement.

⁶⁷ The imagery of fire in the Judgment is frequently used in Scripture. Paul used it, for example in II Thessalonians 1:7-8, *and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

⁶⁸ Fee, page 142

It is the second of these, *ναός*, that is used in this passage. A local church, that is built on the right foundation and with the appropriate elements built on the foundation, is a Holy of Holies, something sacred and holy to God.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Paul presented a truth about the local Church that must bring awe to all who consider it. The Church is not a human organization, nor a loosely gathered group of people who can have a variety of ideas or preferences. It is the Church of Jesus Christ and as such, in each locality, is a Temple of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ Because it is a Temple of the Holy Spirit, the local church is holy and anyone who destroys a local church by creating division – or through any means – will be destroyed by God.

This is the strongest statement in Scripture concerning those who take the church lightly and would destroy it by division or pursuit of worldly wisdom.

CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER: ALL ARE CHRIST'S (3:18-23)

*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise.*¹⁹ *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness";*²⁰ *and again, "The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless."*

²¹ *So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,*²² *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,*²³ *and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.*

Paul brought to a conclusion the lengthy argument of 1:18 – 3:4. He made certain that the long argument had not been just some rhetorical exercise. He pointed to the root of their ongoing strife (3:3). Note that he presented the conclusion in two parts, each beginning with *let no one*.⁷⁰

- The first part addresses their self-justification, based on *Sophia* (wisdom),⁷¹ *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age...*
- The second part addresses quarreling in the name of various leaders or preachers,⁷² *let no one boast in men.*

He turned their statement, *I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas*, on its head by stating, *you are of God*. In a rather unusual twist in the argument, he stated that instead of their belonging to Paul, or to Apollos, or to Cephas, just the opposite is true: Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, belong to them, because the Corinthians belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. These three preachers are God's ministers, called to serve those who belong to God.

Paul asked, "Why should anyone boast in men, when no man, whether leader or follower, has anything that you do not have?"

⁶⁹ Two examples of the Temple of the Holy Spirit are described in this epistle. Here, the local church and in 6:19 the physical body of a believer.

⁷⁰ There is a third part of the problem, which is quite sensitive, and he does not address at this point in the letter: their attitude toward Paul, which he addressed in Chapter Four.

⁷¹ 1:19 – 2:16

⁷² 3:1ff

Paul listed five things that to many people are lifelong bondages of tyranny and in some cases, fear:

- The world
- Life
- Death
- Things present
- Things to come

None of these five things are outside of Christ's jurisdiction and the Christian belongs to Christ, who is Lord of everything.

THE CORINTHIANS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR APOSTLE

(4:1-21)

We will consider this lengthy passage in sections.

In this passage, Paul began to deal with their dismissal of his primary role as an apostle. As noted earlier, he had to navigate a difficult channel to do so, emphasizing servant leadership, yet at the same time, asserting his authority.

At this point, in the life of the Corinthian Church, the problems had arisen within the church. After the writing of this epistle and before the writing of II Corinthians, false apostles had come to the church and they posed another challenge to Paul's apostolic role.⁷³

The false apostles who later came to Corinth declared that they were apostles and that Paul was a faker. One of the things that they said discredited Paul was his conduct. They said that he did not display sufficient authority and was too shy to be a true apostle.⁷⁴ They also said that Paul lacked the credentials that they possessed. For example, these false apostles evidently had letters of commendation from someone – either another church or from some prominent person. They pointed out that Paul came without such credentials. Paul answered them,

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ²You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. (2 Corinthians 3:1-4)

Paul's credentials were seen in the effective manner that the Holy Spirit had used Paul in Corinth – resulting in the salvation of many and the birth of the Corinthian Church.

When the false apostles accused Paul of being shy and timid when present, but bold in his letters, Paul wrote a rather lengthy response in II Corinthians.

Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! ²I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

³*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we*

⁷³ II Corinthians Chapters 10-13

⁷⁴ II Corinthians 10:10

are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,⁶ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

⁷ *You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.*

⁸ *For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame,⁹ for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.*

¹⁰ *For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible."¹¹ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.*

¹² *For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. (2 Corinthians 10:1-12)*

Verses 1-5: On being judged as a servant

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

² *In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.³ But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.⁴ For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.*

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

Paul is preparing to assert his role as their apostle, but he began delicately by presenting himself and the other named preachers as servants. In 3:6-9, Paul used the language of a farmer, planting, watering, etc., declaring that they are God's field. In the opening verses of this passage, he uses the metaphor of house-servants.

- *servants of Christ*: the term rendered as servant, ὑπηρέτης (*huperetays*), indicates one who works under the authority of another, one who is an assistant.
- *stewards of the mysteries of God*: the term rendered as *stewards*, οἰκονόμος (*oikonomos*) means, "house servant."

Once again, the term, μυστήριον (*mustayrion*), which we first encountered in 2:7 (recall comments on the term in discussing that verse). Paul here used the term to emphasize, gently, that he was the agent whom God had chosen to impart to them that which could be known only by revelation. In that role, he had revelatory authority, which they must respect.

As the Lord's servant and a steward of the μυστήριον, Paul was accountable to God and not to the Corinthians nor to any other man.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Again, here is an important lesson for the contemporary Church. The apostolic authority must be honored, in every generation. Sadly, an increasing number of churches, even denominations, are taking the liberty of dialoguing about and even voting on whether or not to continue viewing apostolic writing as absolute authority. Many examples of this tragedy could be cited.

Regarding their tendency to judge him, Paul asserted a truth that is highlighted elsewhere in Scripture, i.e., that no one is able to trust the accuracy of his own self-assessment.

"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"¹⁰ "I, Yahweh, search the heart, I test the mind, (Jeremiah 17:9)

Paul exhorted the Corinthians to have an eschatological perspective – to drop their judgmental attitude and to wait for the return of Christ, when, with accuracy, God will judge every person. In another setting and addressing the tendency to judge one another concerning things that are not essential, Paul wrote to the Romans.

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." (Romans 14:10-11)

Verses 6-8 The Corinthians' Pride

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

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

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

The phrase, *not to exceed what is written*, is perplexing. To what is Paul referring – to some Scripture, to something earlier in the letter, or to some other writing? Although various exegetes have suggested a number of answers to these questions, honesty requires us to say, “we just don’t know.” Obviously, the Corinthians knew, or else Paul’s writing this would not have made any sense.

Paul had applied the previous metaphor to Apollos and himself for their sakes – seeking to address their arrogance related to their competitive loyalties to one or another apostle, i.e., *arrogant in behalf of one against the other*. The Greek text reads literally, *that you* (second-person plural) *may not be puffed up one for one against the other*.

Throughout this section, the *I am of Apollos* or, *I am of Paul*, or, *I am of Cephas*, always is in the background. So, he was urging them to stop arguing that *we Paulites are superior*, or, *we Apollosites are superior*, etc. The formation of parties that competed with one another for superiority was totally out of place.

His rhetorical question, *And what do you have that you did not receive*, is a telling question for all of us. Whatever we have, we are but recipients of our blessings and we are stewards of them. There is no place for “self” sufficiency, nor for self-inflated boasting in the Kingdom. All that we have in the spiritual realm has been given to us.

This certainly applied to the gifts of the Spirit, which Paul emphasized in a later section of the epistle (12:7-12).

We can almost hear the inflection in Paul’s voice as he sarcastically wrote, *You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; ... and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.*

Verses 9-13 The Life of a True Apostle

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.¹¹ To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;¹² and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;¹³ when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

Paul declared that he had not entered the time of reigning, and by implication, neither had they. He set forth the starkest evidence that he and other apostles had not begun to reign. He used the figure of those who are condemned to die in the arena – by their experience, they had become spectacles. Describing his own experience, he proceeded to paint a picture of sacrifice and suffering, which were the result of his being loyal to his call as an apostle.

Verses 14-21 Tenderness and a Threat

I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.¹⁵ For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

¹⁶ I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸ Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.¹⁹ But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power.²⁰ For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power.²¹ What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

What a tender conclusion to his chastisement - *I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.* Paul truly had a father's heart toward those who had come into the Kingdom through his apostolic ministry.

Even so, he was not through with his chastisement – in the light of all that has been said, how shall he establish his authority with them? In the metaphor of fatherhood, he presented the alternative – he could come to them as a punishing father, with a rod, or as a gentle father. Which of these two he would manifest on his next visit was up to them; whether or not they respected his authority and how they responded to his rebuke and verbal chastisement.

Note that Paul also emphasized that not only having the right beliefs is important, but conduct is equally important: *I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.⁷⁵*

⁷⁵ Timothy is not described as the bearer of the letter, as is done in Philippians 2:19-23. Whether or not Timothy ever arrived in Corinth has been a matter of discussion in some quarters. For example, Lightfoot, "The Mission of Titus to the Corinthians," *Biblical Essays* (London, 1893), argues that since Timothy is not mentioned in II Corinthians 12:17-18 and since Acts 19:22 and II Corinthians 1:1 imply that Timothy only made it as far as Macedonia (II Corinthians apparently was written from Macedonia) he did not make it to Corinth, accompanying those who

**PAUL EXERCISED HIS AUTHORITY CONCERNING
THE EXPULSION OF A FLAGRANT SINNER
(5:1-5)**

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

²*And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst.*

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

This paragraph begins a lengthy section of the epistle in which Paul exercised his authority in a number of situations. This first address is a bold expression of Paul's apostolic authority.

Although he could not come in person, this letter would serve the same purpose as his presence.

Paul's horror at this sinful situation is in direct harmony with the Septuagint's words of Leviticus 18:7-8.

'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness. ⁸*'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness.*

The verb, *to have*, when used in a sexual context implies not just a one-night stand, but an ongoing sexual relationship.⁷⁶ We do not know what happened to the father. He may have died, or the couple may have been divorced. It is not likely that both father and son were having intercourse with the same woman. Such a practice was forbidden by all ancients, both Jewish and pagan. Since only the man is mentioned, and not the woman, it is probable that the man was a member of the church, but the woman was not. Otherwise, she also would have been brought under judgment.

Also, since the woman is not called his mother, it is obvious that she was his step-mother, rather than his biological mother.

For Paul, the church's relaxed attitude in this matter was as horrible as the sin itself. They had become arrogant (*puffed up* φουσιόω - *fusio-oh*), rather than being horrified and grieving that a brother could commit such a sin.

Paul exercised strong apostolic authority, declaring that he should be obeyed in his absence just as he would have been obeyed if he were present - the man must be disfellowshipped – barred from being in their meetings, and for that matter, church members should not even welcome him in a social setting.

were bearers of the letter. This question is a moot point. The important fact is that Paul sent Timothy with the instructions to urge the Corinthians to follow Paul's example.

⁷⁶The Greek term that Paul uses in this passage to describe the man's sin is πορνεία (*porneia*), which refers to sexual immorality, without defining the specific nature of the sexual sin. The term for committing adultery, i.e. being sexually unfaithful in marriage, is μοιχεύω (*moicheuo*).

Some people consider church discipline as harsh and unloving. They often cite, *Do not judge lest you be judged.*⁷⁷ Yet, the goal is the salvation of the sinner's soul and his/her restoration to the family of God. If this man persisted in his sinful lifestyle, he would be damned to hell.⁷⁸

The expulsion was to take place when the church was fully assembled – probably during a Sunday worship service. All who were assembled were to sense Paul's presence with them – they would be obeying Paul – and Paul gave the order *in the name of our Lord Jesus*, and, *with the power of the Lord Jesus*.

When something is done in the name of someone (the Greek phrase is ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι [*en toh onomati*]) it is as if the one in whose name it is done is the one who is doing it. For example, in Acts 2:38, *be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ*, means that the action is being done upon the authority of Jesus and it is as if Jesus, Himself, were doing the immersing.

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan, must refer, at least, to abandoning the man - i.e. removing him from the covering of the church and any contact with redeeming fellowship.

Some Greek exegetes⁷⁹ strongly argue that more than excommunication is anticipated. They contend that the phrase rendered, *destruction of the flesh*, clearly implies some sort of physical illness or plague that the apostle anticipated coming upon the man, after his expulsion. The term on which they make that is ὀλεθρος (*olethros*), i.e. *destruction*, and since the goal is the destruction of the flesh, then some sort of resulting physical infirmity must be anticipated. Although this argument does carry some weight, we can only speculate about that possibility.

EXCURSUS

The NIV rendering of verse 4

The NIV rearranges the word order of the Greek text, resulting in the sense that they were gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than the act of expulsion being done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸⁰

I Corinthians 5:4 NIV: *When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,*

Those who defend the NIV's reordering of the text do so on the basis of Matthew 18:20, which is the concluding verse of a section on church discipline.

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.

The first flaw in this argument is the difference in Greek terms. Matthew 18:20, contains the Greek term, εἰς (*eis*) which conveys the idea of motion, i.e. *into*. Thus, Matthew 18:20 literally states, *For where two or three have gathered together into My name, there I am in their midst.*

⁷⁷ Matthew 7:1-6 Note that what is warned against in these verses is hypocritical, self-righteous judging.

⁷⁸ Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8; 22:15, etc.

⁷⁹ G. G. Findlay, B.A., "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," Volume Two, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1976, page 809

⁸⁰ The NIV is the only contemporary version that makes this adjustment, although the NLT paraphrase is ambiguous and could be understood in this manner.

It seems awkward in English to render this preposition, literally, in such a sentence. Yet, the failure to do so, obscures what is being said. The Greek preposition, εἰς, when used in such a setting, indicates more than just intellectually believing in something, but rather, entering into a relationship with someone. Here are some examples of literal translations, where this preposition is used:

Matthew 28:19 *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them **into** the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

1 Peter 1:8 *and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe **into** Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*

John 11:26 *and everyone who lives and believes **into** Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Every verse in John, which English versions render as *believe in me*, contains the preposition εἰς, (6:35; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 14:12), which conveys the idea of *into*. Thus, these verses do not refer to just believing in someone, but rather, entering into a relationship with them.

Such is the case with Matthew 18:20. When the church is gathered *into the name of Jesus*, i.e., in a conscious relationship with Him, then He is in their midst.

Therefore, since the prepositions in the two texts are different, Matthew 18:20 cannot be a justification for changing the word order of the Greek text in this verse to produce the rendering of the NIV.

Here is the literal rendering of the Greek text.

ἐν	τῷ	ὀνόματι	τοῦ	κυρίου	Ἰησοῦ	συναχθέντων	ὑμῶν	καὶ	τοῦ	ἐμοῦ
in	the	name	of	the	Lord	Jesus	you	being	gathered	together
						also	the	of	me	
πνεύματος	σὺν	τῇ	δυνάμει	τοῦ	κυρίου	ἡμῶν	Ἰησοῦ			
spirit	with	the	power	of	the	Lord	of	us	Jesus	

A second objection/ flaw to the NIV's rendering is that rearranging the word order of the Greek syntax produces an interpretation of the text, not a translation. For these reasons, we cannot accept the NIV rendering as conveying what the apostle intended in his letter.⁸¹

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Church discipline never is a pleasant event. Sadly, most Protestant Churches do not take this matter seriously. Roman Catholics do, to the degree that one needs to go to confession prior to participating in the Eucharist.

Many megachurches have very little knowledge about the moral lives of their members, and thus, church discipline is not a part of their church life. Some probably don't want to get involved in these matters because it might decrease the attendance in their Sunday meeting. At Tulsa Christian Fellowship, church discipline is taken very seriously. TCF has a Church Discipline Procedure to which every member must agree, before being accepted into membership. For a copy of the TCF Church Discipline Procedure, see ADDENDUM G.

⁸¹ Other Greek exegetes, such as Fee (pages 206-208) present additional problems with the NIV's rendering of this verse.

**PAUL DECLARED THE NECESSITY FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE, WHILE
RECOGNIZING THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO LIVE AMONG A
SINNING POPULATION OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH
(5:6-13)**

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

⁹ I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.

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

¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges.

Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

To illustrate his point, Paul used the metaphor of the Passover bread, for which unleavened bread was required. Even the smallest bit of leaven will leaven all of the dough into which it is placed. The same is true of the spiritual leaven of evil. Should a congregation tolerate open sin in the life of a member, sooner than later, moral perversion will infect the entire church.

Paul had addressed the matter of immorality in the earlier letter that he had written (see page one of these notes: **EXCURSUS, How many letters did Paul write to Corinth?**). Paul realized that his first letter might have been misunderstood and so he emphasized that Christians have no choice but to live in a world of sinners and to do business with them. It is God's responsibility to judge sinners of the world, but when it comes to the church, any Christian who persists in a sinful lifestyle should be shunned.

Asserting apostolic authority, Paul ordered the church to excommunicate the sinning member.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

This truly is a three-pronged lesson for the contemporary Church.

- Apostolic authority must be acknowledged by the Church. For contemporary churches, that authority is communicated in the Scriptures.
- Standards of moral conduct are being ignored in many contemporary churches and such laxity must end.
- Some churches are so obsessed with judging outsiders that they distort the appropriate focus, which should be evangelism by modeling kind and gracious lives, while preaching the Gospel at every opportunity.⁸²

⁸² A glaring example of this conduct is the Westboro Baptist Church, of Topeka, Kansas, which has become well-known for its protests at military funerals and strident anti-LGBTQ demonstrations.

**PAUL'S REBUKE IN II CORINTHIANS FOR THE CHURCH'S FAILURE TO
RECEIVE THE REPENTANT EXCOMMUNICATED MEMBER
(II Corinthians 2:5-11)**

The Church had obeyed Paul's command and had excommunicated the sinning member. The member did repent, and the church refused to receive him back into fellowship. Paul addressed this matter in II Corinthians.

But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree-- in order not to say too much-- to all of you.

⁶ *Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority,⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*

⁸ *Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.*

⁹ *For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.*

¹⁰ *But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,¹¹ in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*

Note that Paul wrote that the punishment *was inflicted by the majority*. This probably reflects the presence of an anti-Paul segment in the church, i.e. a minority. Paul wrote that one reason he had so strongly insisted that the man be excommunicated was to test the church – to see *whether you are obedient in all things*. The majority had passed the test.

The excommunication Had its achieved its goal - the man had repented, but the church would not receive him back into fellowship. The church focused on Paul's final command, *Remove the wicked man from among yourselves*. Yet, they ignored the motive and goal of the action, *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Here also, is an important example for the contemporary church. Excommunication is for the purpose of repentance and redemption. The hope and prayer of the church should be that one who is excommunicated will repent and be restored to the Lord and to the Church. Sadly, there is a history, especially in some small communities, that when someone is "churched," he is treated as a pariah from that point on.

**SHAME ON THE CHURCH FOR NOT FULFILLING ITS ROLE IN
ARBITRATION OF PROBLEMS BETWEEN MEMBERS**

(6:1-8)

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

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?

If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?⁵ I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you

one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

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

In Greek, the manner in which one emphasizes a point is to begin the sentence with that which he desires to emphasize. Paul opened this sharp rebuke with the word, *τολμάω* (*tolmao*), which means *to dare*. The KJV brings out the passion of the Greek in Paul's statement, better than more recent versions: *Dare any of you, having a matter against another* (which is the order in the Greek text).

Paul expresses shock over the fact that Christians would go to a secular court to settle disputes. His language indicates that he knew that this was an ongoing practice of Corinthian Church members.⁸³

His use of the second person plural, *your* (*I say this to your shame*), indicated that he was shaming the entire church for failing to fulfill its role as arbiter in matters of conflict between believers.

Paul then went so far as to express the principle that Jesus elucidated in the Sermon on the Mount, *Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?*

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.⁴⁰ "And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. (Matthew 5:38-40)

Paul's view was that the local church should function in accordance with Jesus' instructions to His disciples.

And if your brother sins (many manuscripts state, sins against you), go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;

and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.

⁸³ It should be noted that even though Paul used a strong word to describe the Roman courts (*ἀδίκος* - *adikos*, i.e., *unjust* or *unrighteous*) he was not demeaning them. For that matter, when dealing with unbelievers, Paul himself had recourse to the Roman courts more than once (see Acts 16:37-39; 25:10-12). His point was that the church should fulfill the role of judging/arbitrating disputes between church members.

A very interesting use of Greek verbs occurs in the statements concerning binding and loosing. In both instances the verbs are *periphrastic future perfect*. This form of the verb results in a literal rendering as, *shall already have been bound in heaven*, and *shall already have been loosed in heaven*. Thus, the sense is that when a member of the church participates in arbitration before the assembled church and he/she refuses to accept the church's decision, then heaven already views him/her as an outsider – heaven disfellowships the obstinate member and the church is only carrying out what heaven already has decreed.

This is the same as a situation in which a judge orders the eviction of an occupant from a building, and the sheriff carries out the eviction notice. Heaven has declared the eviction and the church is carrying out heaven's decree.

Paul shames the church for failing to take the responsibility for arbitration, and he shames individual members for not turning to the church for arbitration. His declarations are in line with Jesus' statement on this subject.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

In the litigious society that America has become, this is a challenging word to American churches. Most church members do not take seriously the error of going to a secular court to sue a brother or sister. One has to wonder what would happen if Christians began turning to the elders of their church, or to some delegated group within the body, to arbitrate disputes between them.

One thing of note, Paul does not address a situation in which a believer is going to court against an unbeliever.

A REMINDER OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE IN THE CHURCH AND THOSE OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH (6:9-11)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

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

In essence, Paul reminded them that they were not to behave like the unrighteous of the world, i.e., being offended by one another and going to court against one another. Some of them were the worst of sinners, but they had been justified and cleansed, no longer were they like the unredeemed of Corinth.

Paul's catalogue of sins is worth comment:

- Fornicators: any sexual sin, usually connotating something other than adultery.
- Idolaters: participation in the worship of any false god, or for that matter the worship of any physical representation of the true God
- Adulterers: Married individuals who have sexual relationships outside of marriage
- Effeminate: The Greek term, *μαλακός* (*malakos*), has the basic meaning of *soft*. In the Greco/Roman world it came to refer to the younger, more passive partner, in a pederasty relationship, which was the more common form of homosexuality in the Greco/Roman world. The NIV's rendering this term as, *male prostitute*, is based on the practice of

young men of that culture's dressing as women and serving the sexual needs of older men, sometimes for a fee.⁸⁴

- Homosexuals: ἀσεννοκοίτης (*asenokoitays*) This is the earliest occurrence of this word in any preserved ancient literature. It is a compound of two terms indicating male intercourse. The term, κοίται (*koitai*) was a vulgar term for intercourse (similar to the contemporary fxxx). Because of this, it seems that later authors hesitated to use the term that Paul used here.
- Paul concluded his list, repeating some of the items that he listed earlier (5:10-11), *thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers*. Little comment is needed on these terms, they are obvious.

THE CORINTHIAN PRACTICE OF GOING TO PROSTITUTES

(6:12-20)

*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*¹³ *Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them.*

*Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body.*¹⁴ *Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.*¹⁵ *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be!*¹⁶ *Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "The two will become one flesh."*¹⁷ *But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

*Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.*¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*²⁰ *For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.*

Paul did not begin by attacking their behavior, but their theology on which their behavior was predicated. *Everything is permissible for me*, probably was a Corinthian slogan – note that Paul cites it again in 10:23. Paul used this slogan as an entrance into his argument.

Once again, Paul launched into a discourse with rather unusual maneuvering. There are hints in his opening salvo that the pneumatics of Corinth had a view similar to the Gnostics, who had begun to plague the church during this era. The Gnostics stated that all things spiritual, in their very essence, were good, and all things physical, in their very essence, were evil. Therefore, the body was of little consequence to Christians. Since the spirit is essentially good and cannot sin, what one's body does has no impact on one's spirit. Thus, everything is permissible, because God will destroy the body, but the spirit will remain unscathed. For that reason, going to

⁸⁴ The Greek practice of pederasty came suddenly into prominence at the end of the Archaic period of Greek history; there is a brass plaque from Crete, about 650-625 BC, which is the oldest surviving representation of pederastic custom. Such representations appear from all over Greece in the next century; literary sources show it as being established custom in many cities by the 5th century BC. See, Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press) 1989. p. 205-207

prostitutes, which was the common practice in Corinthian culture, was permissible – and some church members must have been following their culture.

For Paul, that which the Greeks stoics called, ἀδιαφόρα (*adiaphora*), things that are indifferent (non-essentials such as food, drink, days, circumcision, etc.), were permissible. Yet, such looseness did not apply to Christian ethics – which he demonstrated in the following verses.

For that matter, even those things that are permissible must not control the Christian. Paul used a term that is a derivative of the term for delegated authority (ἐξουσία - εξουσιάζω *exousia* – *exousiadzo*). Paul declared that he would not delegate to anything the authority to control him.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH MEMBER

It is important for believers to be aware of anything in their lives that controls them, other than the Lordship of Christ. It is easy for innocent things to become masters of a believer – food, drink, music, etc., even God-approved sex in marriage. As long as one can enjoy these pleasures but also can do without them, then there is no problem. However, when these pleasures and others begin to dominate a believer's life – where one's time, money, etc., are controlled by these desires, then the believer has delegated to that thing/activity the authority to control him.

These verses contain one of Scriptures most important statements concerning the theology of the body. A Christian's body is holy. Paul used strong language of rebuke, *do you not know...* as if to say, how can you be so ignorant of these matters.

As noted earlier, when discussing the fact that the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit, there are two Greek terms for temple, ἱερον (*hiearon*) and ναός (*naos*).

- The first of these refers to the temple building and its environs.
- The second refers to that Holy of Holies in the temple, where the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Shekinah glory dwelt – the room that no one could enter except the High Priest, and he only once each year, on the day of atonement.

It is the second of these terms (the Holy of Holies), that Paul used to describe both the local church (3:16-17) and body of a Christian. A Christian's body is a Holy of Holies, wherein dwells the Holy Spirit.

This was the promise given on the Day of Pentecost.

And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

Four times in his epistles, Paul stated that the fact that a Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit is a guarantee that heaven is his eternal destiny.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:16 NAS)
Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,²² who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 5:5 NAS)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Ephesians 1:13)

Not only that, but in a mystical way, a Christian's body is member of Christ – an organ in Christ's body, so to speak.

When sexual intercourse takes place between two persons, they become one flesh. What an horribly blasphemous act, to take Christ's body and to make it one with a prostitute! It is difficult to think of any stronger argument that Paul could make against fornication for a believer than he makes in this short paragraph. What Paul declared on this subject was totally countercultural to the Corinthians.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

In America, today, with sexual looseness being such a characteristic of our culture, this paragraph is of utmost importance to the contemporary Church. Our culture has become a mirror of Paul's description of a culture from which He has removed His hand (Romans 1:18ff). Sadly, such looseness in sexual ethics has impacted many churches.

APOSTOLIC COMMENTS ON MARRIAGE AND CELEBACY (7:1-40)

Because this is a lengthy passage, we will consider it in sections

NOTE: Beginning with this chapter and continuing through 16:12, Paul addressed matters that were raised in the letter that he had received from Corinth: *now about*, or, *concerning*, occurs in the epistle six times from this point onward (7:1,25; 8:1 [8:4]; 12:1; 16:1: 16:12).

In Chapter 7, there is more comment on marriage than is found anywhere else in the New Testament. Of special note in this chapter is Paul's frequent statement that he is giving his opinion. Only in verse 10 does he state that he has a word from the Lord.⁸⁵ This does not mean that his opinion has no authority and can be ignored. Paul wrote at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and so we must assume that his opinion, recorded in this portion of the letter, carries Holy Spirit authority.⁸⁶

- In verse 25, he stated that in giving his opinion, he is trustworthy.
- In verse 40, he said that in giving his judgement, he had the Spirit of God.

Verses 1-7 Those who are married should stay married, with full conjugal rights

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

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

³ *Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.* ⁴ *The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*

⁵ *Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

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

⁸⁵ That word was what Jesus had said during his earthly ministry, recorded in Matthew 19:3ff

⁸⁶ Note that in II Peter 3:16, Peter label's Paul's writings, *Scripture*.

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

Paul acknowledged the value of celibacy (he addressed this more fully later in this section), but he recognized that most men and women do not have the gift of celibacy (V 7).

If, indeed, Gnosticism had invaded the Corinthian Church, then Paul was addressing the form of Gnosticism, which taught that one should deprive the body of any pleasure in order to elevate one's spirit. Paul clearly gave the lie to that view. God created humans as sexual creatures and for that reason, sex within marriage is good.

In these verses, the Apostle recognized the reality of human nature. Perhaps the reason some men were going to prostitutes (6:12-20) was because their wives were depriving them of sexual pleasure.

Paul recognized that a husband and wife may decide to abstain from sex for a brief season, so that full attention can be given to prayer. Even so, that season of abstinence is to be brief. To do otherwise is to open the door to temptation and the resulting adultery.

Verses 8-9 Apostolic advice to the unmarried and widows

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

Paul's use of the Greek term, ἄγαμος (*agamos*), meaning, *unmarried*, in this passage has engendered a lot of discussion among exegetes. Because Greek exegetes have made such an issue of this question, we will consider it, briefly, even though it is a bit of a distraction from our consideration of the point that Paul was making.

To whom does the apostle refer by the use of this term? He obviously did not use the term to refer to all unmarried individuals, because widows would have fit that category and the further mention of widows would have been redundant. Since he later deals with virgins as a class of individuals (7:25ff) and essentially presents the same conclusion in that discussion that he presents here, it seems that some category other than virgins were included in this present discussion.

Some conclude that since the Greek term, ἄγαμος, is a masculine term, it must refer to men,⁸⁷ and widows refer to women. However, this position is weakened in that the term is used in verse 11 to describe women who have left their husbands.

Furthermore, the linguistic gender of Greek nouns does not necessarily indicate male or female in the same sense that English makes that discrimination. For example, the masculine noun, πέτρος (*petros*) as noted earlier, refers to bed-rock. The feminine noun, πέτρα (*petra*) refers to a small stone – something that one could pick up and throw. In neither of these words is there the idea that one sort of stone is male and the other female.

Throughout this section, Paul balances his statements to men and women. Because of this, and since he clearly cites widows - i.e. women who once were married but now are not - then it is

⁸⁷ G.G. Findlay (page 825) considers the term to refer to all unmarried men, not just widowers. In my opinion, that doesn't make sense, since Paul addresses single men throughout this section, using other terms. To use the term here, to refer to all single men would be quite redundant.

probable that Paul used the term, *unmarrieds*, to refer to widowers - men who once were married but now are not.⁸⁸

Classical Greek does have a term for *widower*,⁸⁹ but it was seldom used, and never used in *Koine* Greek. In *Koine* Greek, the language of the New Testament, the term, ἄγαμος, was used for both bachelors and widowers.⁹⁰

If we understand Paul's use of the term to describe widowers, his statement has balanced consistency – Paul is writing to those who once were married (widower or widow) and that his preference for them would be for them to remain single. However, if a widower or a widow has trouble maintaining self-control over one's sexual desires, it would better for them to get married.

Be that as it may, the point that Paul is making is that single men and women, widows, widowers, or otherwise, should remain celibate, if possible. However, if one's sexual obsession cannot be controlled, then *it is better to marry than to burn*.

The expression, *it is better to marry than to burn*, can be understood in one of two ways:

- To burn with uncontrollable desire
- To burn in hell

The text itself does not give us any help in deciding which of these two was on Paul's mind. Both understandings could be defended from the use of this image elsewhere in Scripture. The fact is, both understandings of the terms could be simultaneously true. Those who burn with desire are of danger in falling into sin and then falling away, which would result in their eternal destiny's being hell. The point that Paul is making is that better option would be to marry and avoid the risk.

Verses 10-11 Divorce is to be avoided among Christians

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband¹¹ but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband, and that the husband should not send his wife away.

Paul reiterated Jesus strong declarations on the subject of divorce and remarriage.⁹¹ Jesus had not commented on a wife's putting away her husband because He was addressing a Jewish culture. In Jewish culture, a man could divorce his wife, but it was unheard of for a wife to divorce a husband. In the Greco/Roman culture, women did divorce their husbands and lived independent lives. Since Paul was writing to the Greco/Roman culture of Corinth, he was addressing a practice that was not foreign to the Corinthian Church. The principle elucidated in the statements made by Jesus Paul applies to both husbands and wives.

Though he forbade divorce, Paul recognized that some might ignore this mandate. Facing that reality, he declared that the divorced should either remain celibate or reconcile with one's spouse. Reconciliation always is the preferred action in God's economy – whether in a marital

⁸⁸ Fee, pages 287-288

⁸⁹ Χήρος - *chayros*

⁹⁰ Fee, page 288; Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1968 edition, page 5, under the entry for ἀγάματος

⁹¹ Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18

situation or when there is conflict between believers.⁹² It is implied that a divorced person who remained celibate was not excommunicated, otherwise, Paul's further instructions would be somewhat meaningless.

Verses 12-16 Special instructions for a believer who is married to a non-believer

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away.¹³ And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away.

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

¹⁵ *Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.* ¹⁶ *For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?*

The Jewish members of the Corinthian Church might have been inclined to divorce their unbelieving spouses, based on the principle elucidated in Haggai 2:11-14.

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Ask now the priests for a ruling:

¹² *'If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?'" And the priests answered and said, "No."*

¹³ *Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered and said, "It will become unclean."*

¹⁴ *Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,' declares the LORD, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.*

This passage in Haggai indicates that under the Mosaic Law,

- Something that was ceremonially clean does not make clean something that is unclean, by touching it.
- On the other hand, if something that is clean touches something unclean, that which is clean is made unclean, because it has touched something unclean.

Therefore, some Corinthians with a Jewish background might have used this to justify divorcing an unbeliever.

Also, Paul's dictum in his lost letter, which he repeated in 5:11, instructed them to not come in contact with fornicators, idolaters, etc. The most intimate comingling would be in marriage and so some might have been inclined to divorce an unbelieving spouse, in order to be obedient to the apostle's instruction.

Once again, Paul gave his opinion, asserting that even if one is married to an unbeliever, divorce is to be avoided. Throughout this section, Paul advocated that which Our Lord clearly taught, i.e., that marriage is a permanent covenant that should end only with the death of one's spouse. That covenant should be respected equally by Christians and non-Christians.

⁹² Matthew 5:24

In what way is an unbelieving spouse sanctified by being married to a believing spouse and how are why are children unclean if the believing spouse leaves and holy if the believing spouse remains in the home?

Earlier, in 1:30, and 6:11 Paul had used the Greek terms which are rendered as, *sanctification*,⁹³ as a metaphor for salvation. *Obviously*, being married to a believer does not automatically make the unbeliever sanctified, in the sense of salvation. Paul cleared this up this possible misunderstanding by stating that if the believer remains in the marriage, the unbeliever may become a believer, and thus, be sanctified.

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

This is in harmony with Peter's exhortation,

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. (1 Peter 3:1-2)

The same thing would be true of the children. The influence of the godly parent would impact the children's lives and move them in the direction of holiness. If that godly influence were removed from the home, then the children would not have anything to direct them toward holiness.

On the other hand, if the unbeliever chooses to abandon the marriage, the believer is to let the unbelieving spouse depart.

What does Paul mean by stating that if the unbeliever leaves, the believing spouse is *not under bondage in such cases*? Does this mean that the believer no longer is bound by the marriage covenant and is free to remarry? Because the phrase, *not under bondage*, is rather ambiguous, some freedom must be extended to those who hold varying understandings of the phrase.

Examples of the different views:

- The Roman Church takes the view that remarriage is not allowed, unless the marriage is annulled for a reason recognized by the church.⁹⁴
- The Lutheran Church takes the view that remarriage is allowed in *desertio malitosa* (malicious desertion).
- Most Protestant Churches accept the view presented by Matthew Henry, I.e. that when an unbeliever leaves a believer, the covenant is voided – no longer is the believer bound to the unbeliever and remarriage is permitted. Here is how Henry expresses that position.

“But, though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such a case a brother or sister is not in bondage (v15), not tied up to the unreasonable humor, and bound servilely to follow or cleave to the malicious deserter, or not bound to live unmarried after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried...

⁹³ 6:11; 7:14 ἁγιαζω (*hagiadzo*); 1:30 ἁγιασμός (*hagiasmos*)

⁹⁴ For example, see <http://canonlawmadeeasy.com/2018/11/22/why-would-i-need-an-annulment-since-my-civil-marriage-was-obviously-invalid/>

In such a case the deserted person must be free to marry again, and it is granted on all hands. And some think that such a malicious desertion is as much a dissolution of the marriage-covenant as death itself.

For how is it possible that *the two shall be one flesh* when the one is maliciously bent to part from or put away the other? Indeed, the deserter seems still bound by the matrimonial contract; ...It does not seem reasonable that they should be still bound, when it is rendered impossible to perform conjugal duties or enjoy conjugal comforts, through the mere fault of their mate: in such a case, marriage would be a state of servitude indeed.⁹⁵

The fact is, Paul does not discuss the subject of remarriage when an unbelieving spouse leaves a believing spouse. We must admit that little help on the subject is given in these verses. The question of abandonment, divorce, etc., must be dealt with in the larger context of Scripture.

Verses 17-24 As far as a believer's social position in this world is concerned, one should seek to remain in the state in which he/she was in when he/she came to Christ.

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

¹⁸ *Was any man called already circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised.* ¹⁹ *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.* ²⁰ *Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called.*

²¹ *Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.* ²² *For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.*

²³ *You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.* ²⁴ *Brethren, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called.*

Again, Paul asserted that the position he espoused here is the one that he presented in all churches – this is not something imposed uniquely on the Corinthian Church because of the Corinthian Church's its unique constituency.

The point of this section is that the call to Christ transcends all societal relationships and thus, such relationships are irrelevant to a believer's spirituality. Because of this, a Christian should not view his call to Christ as something that cancelled all human relationships or societal roles.

The one change that he suggests would be of spiritual benefit is to be freed from slavery, if that can be done without causing difficulty. A freed slave is free to pursue God's calling without the restrictions imposed by his earthly master. This is similar to his statements that being unmarried frees one to pursue the things of God without distraction.

Regardless of one's societal condition, all believers, having been bought with the blood of Christ,⁹⁶ are Christ's slaves.

⁹⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, 6 volumes*, Volume 6, Acts to Revelation, I Corinthians 7:15 (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers) 2010 edition. Matthew Henry was a non-conformist minister, whose heirs are reformed theologians.

⁹⁶ Ephesians 2:1; I Peter 1:18-19, etc.

Verses 25-28 Given the distress that the Church was facing, singleness was preferable to marriage

This passage makes clear that Paul was writing to a specific group in a specific era (*in view of the present distress, etc.*), and that some of his instructions in this section may not be of universal import. Some, however, are of universal application and the difference between the two will become evident in the reading of these verses.

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

²⁶ *I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.* ²⁷ *Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.* ²⁸ *But if you should marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.*

Once again, Paul addressed a topic that they had presented to him in their letter (*now concerning*). Also, once again, he stated that they were asking about a subject on which Our Lord had not made any statement, but that he, Paul, was certain that his opinion was trustworthy.

The present distress probably referred to the challenges that the Church was facing in every location. He wrote this letter during his final days in Ephesus, at about the time that persecution against Paul and the believers had begun to break out. He also would have recalled the turmoil that had taken place while he was in Corinth. Given the fact that Jesus had predicted a time of trouble,⁹⁷ Paul probably wondered if they were on the verge of witnessing those troubles.

Paul wanted to make certain that they understood that it was not a sin to marry, but being married, in a time of distress would add to one's personal stress. A married believer did not have the flexibility that a single person would have. Also, a married person not only looks out for himself, but for his/her mate.

Verses 29-35 Paul elaborated on his reasons for promoting singleness in this time of distress

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

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

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

³² *But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;* ³³ *but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,* ³⁴ *and his interests are divided.*

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

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

⁹⁷ Luke 21:20ff

The Greek word normally used for *I say*, is λέγω (*lego*). Paul began this section with another term for speaking, φημί (*phymi*). This term implies that the speaker is revealing what is on the speaker's mind. It's use here, indicates the gravity and importance of what Paul was about to say.⁹⁸

Contemporary English versions render the Greek term, ὡσιν (*osin*), in verse 29, with some different degrees of understandings. Here are some examples:

KJV *they that have wives **be as though** they had none*

NAS *those who have wives **should be as though** they had none;*

NIV *those who have wives **should live as if** they had none*

NKJ *those who have wives **should be as though** they had none*

NLT *from now on, those with wives **should not focus only on** their marriage*

YLT *those having wives **may be as not** having;*

ὡσιν is the subjunctive mood of the state of being verb, εἰμί (*eimi*)⁹⁹. In this verse, it is in a ἵνα (*hina*) clause. The subjunctive mood communicates “potential.” Such renderings as, *let us, so that, may be*, etc., are common ways of understanding various forms of the subjunctive. When the term is in a ἵνα clause, it usually indicates purpose – for example, *in order that, so that*.

In the renderings cited above, it is obvious that the translators wrestled with the best way to render the subjective term, ὡσιν, in this verse – what exactly was Paul saying?

The YLT (Young's Literal Translation) is the safest rendering, with the KJV being close behind, because these are very close to the literal. The YLT and KJV imply that conditions will be so severe that those who are married will be as if they were single. This is in contrast to the other versions cited which render the phrase as prescribing an attitude that married believers should adopt, i.e. *this is how you should live*.

When wrestling with such options in translation, the general Scriptural teaching must influence how we choose from the options available. The KJV, in line with the YLT, is the one most compatible with the general Scriptural teaching concerning a marriage relationship.

- To be married, but to live as if one were not married (*should live as if.....should be as though*), is out of step with the Scriptural principles associated with marriage.
- Such an understanding of this verse also would contradict Paul's own instructions in verses 1-7, concerning conjugal obligations in marriage.

Furthermore, the context in which this statement is made is a description of result, rather than a prescription for how one should conduct himself/herself. The list that follows verse 29 is a cause and effect list, not an exhortation/command list:

⁹⁸ G. G. Findlay, page 833

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

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

The exegetical principle of interpreting a verse within its context (a verse without a context is a pretext) would require us to understand verse 29 as the introduction to the cause and effect list – thus, verse 29, as a cause and effect statement, declared that the time was coming when things will be so intense, that for those who are married, it will be as if they were not.

Paul presented two reasons for his recommending singleness over marriage.

- The first is circumstantial – place and times:
-*in view of the present distress* (verse 26)
-*the times have been shortened* (verse 29)

Every place that the Gospel took root, persecution followed. In Ephesus, the persecution came from silversmiths who feared economic disaster (Acts 19). In many places, the persecution came from the Jewish establishment (Acts 17). Then, just a few decades after the death of Paul, a succession of Roman emperors (over a period of about 175 years), employed organized persecution of individual Christians and the corporate Church.

- The second reason Paul presented is not circumstantial, but rather, it is a universal and timeless truth - a single believer will find it easier to focus, exclusively, on *things of the Lord*, rather than being distracted by legitimate and appropriate *concerns of one's spouse*

Paul assured them that he was not laying down an ascetic law that they must obey, but rather he advocated this position because he cared about the brothers and sisters at Corinth.

He wrote from two motives:

- to help them avoid as much suffering as possible
- to point out how they might know the joy of undistracted service to God.

Verses 36-38 Special words concerning the marriage of virgins

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

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

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

Once again, we find a disagreement among popular English versions as to how the Greek should be rendered. All three of these verses (36, 37, 38) push the translator to interpret as well as translate. Here is how the most popular versions render the Greek of verse 36 and they render verses 37 & 38 in the same manner:

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

NAS *But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she should be of full age, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.*

NIV *If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married.*

NLT *But if a man thinks that he's treating his fiancée improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin.*

YLT *and if any one doth think it to be unseemly to his virgin, if she may be beyond the bloom of age, and it ought so to be, what he willeth let him do; he doth not sin -- let him marry.*

The YLT and the KJV, presenting the literal translation, *his virgin*, demonstrate the problem faced by the translators of his verse. The question has to be asked, *whose virgin?*

The translations cited above demonstrate the three most common answers to the question – *whose virgin?*

- Paul is addressing a father, a *patria potestas*,¹⁰⁰ who has a daughter who is rapidly moving toward the outer limits of marrying age. The NAS translators and Findlay,¹⁰¹ interpret the Greek in this fashion.
- Paul is addressing a man who is betrothed to a virgin who has begun to be past her prime.¹⁰² The NIV, NLT and Fee,¹⁰³ take this position.
- Paul is addressing a man who is a virgin and who is getting older. Matthew Henry, and some of the older exegetes take this view.¹⁰⁴

The Greek text does not contain the word, *daughter* in any of these three verses. The insertion of this term by the NAS translators is based on an interpretation, not translation.

The NIV and NLT also interpret, and add the words, *engaged to* (NIV), and *his fiancée* (NLT), neither of which are in the Greek text.

The KJV and the YLT, translate these verses literally, i.e., *his virgin*, without adding any defining terms. The KJV is superior to the YLT in the concluding statement, in that the exhortation is plural not singular:

KJV *let them marry*

YLT *let him marry*

In my opinion (JWG), although the NIV and NLT add terms not in the Greek text, their understanding of the verse is more likely to represent what Paul intended to communicate. My reasons for rejecting the NAS rendering is based on the Greek text itself:

- The NAS reads, *let her marry*.
- The Greek term in this text is not third person singular (*her*) as the NAS renders it. It is third person plural (*you* – referring to more than one person) and it is an imperative. i.e. a

¹⁰⁰ i.e. “power of the father” In Roman family law, this term referred to the power that the male head of the family exercised over his children, both biological and adopted, as well as any remote descendants in the male line. He alone, had the power to grant or deny marriage of a daughter.

¹⁰¹ G.G. Findlay, page 837

¹⁰² The Greek term in this passage is, ὑπέρακμος (*hyperakmos*), rendered in various versions as *past her prime*, *past the flower of youth*, *getting along in years*, which is a compound of two words, meaning beyond the highest or culminating point. The NAS does not convey this idea.

¹⁰³ Fee, pages 350-355

¹⁰⁴ Matthew Henry, Volume VI, I Corinthians 7:36

command or exhortation.¹⁰⁵ Literally, the Greek commands, *You (plural) marry*, It is not an unwarranted assumption to understand Paul as saying, *You two marry*.¹⁰⁶

- For the same reason, I consider Matthew Henry's position to be weak, i.e., in that the imperative is plural *you (two) get married* i.e., *you, betrothed couple, get married*.

Paul concluded this discussion by stating that if a couple could control their impulses, and remain single, that would be best. However, if they have a strong need to get married, they should do so, and they have not sinned by getting married. This is the pattern that Paul consistently presented throughout this chapter, i.e. singleness is preferred but getting married is not a sin, and in most cases, the best course of action.

Note that in this paragraph, we encounter hints of the presence of ascetic Gnosticism at Corinth, which also was hinted at in verses 1-7.

Verses 39-40 A final word to widows.

³⁹ *A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.* ⁴⁰ *But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.*

Once again, Paul showed his consistency – the believer will have less problems if he/she remains single, but marrying a fellow believer is not a sin.

THE QUESTION OF EATING FOOD OFFERED TO IDOLS (8:1-13)

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge.

Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. ² *If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;* ³ *but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.*

⁴ *Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.* ⁵ *For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,* ⁶ *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*

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

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

⁹ *But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.* ¹⁰ *For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?* ¹¹ *For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.* ¹² *And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.*

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

¹⁰⁵ γαμείτωσαν (*gameitosan*), the present imperative, third person, plural, of the verb, γαμέω (*gameo*) “to marry.”

¹⁰⁶ The NIV softens the command by adding the word, *should*, i.e., *they should marry*, rather than rendering it as it normally would be understood – as a command or an exhortation.

Once again, Paul addressed a topic that they had raised in their letter (*now concerning*). Ascetic Gnostics, Stoic Gnostics, Jewish converts, and run-of-the-mill Gentile Corinthians would have held different views on the issues raised here. These verses introduce a section of the epistle that, although taking many turns along the way, continues through 11:1.

Mature, knowledgeable Christians know that there is only one God and idols are no more than inert statues. To eat food sacrificed to an idol has no impact on a believer, good or bad.

Some believers had difficulty in accepting the truth that the idols are a deception and that the god represented by the idol is nonexistent. A brother or sister who had difficulty embracing this truth would believe that food sacrificed to an idol was defiled, because it had been touched by the idol's god. Paul labeled those who have not embraced the full understanding of the emptiness of idols, as having a *weak conscience*.

Those with a weak conscience, would be violating their conscience, if he/she ate food sacrificed to idols. Someone who violates his conscience has chosen to do something that he/she considers to be evil - thus, that person has chosen to do evil. By choosing to do evil, that person has sinned.

This being true, a believer who has full and accurate knowledge of the emptiness of idols, should not do something to tempt those who have not fully embraced this truth. If one who has accurate knowledge eats something sacrificed to an idol, and one who does not have this knowledge sees him doing so, the one who does not have this understanding will be tempted to eat - thus, tempted to violate his conscience and in doing so, commit sin.

The stronger brother has caused the weaker brother to sin, and by doing so, the stronger brother has *sinned against Christ*. What a sobering thought!

A Christian who truly loves his brothers and sisters will curb his freedom, if the exercise thereof would tempt a less-informed believer to violate his conscience. Love trumps knowledge.

NOTE: Paul presents this same truth in Romans 14.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

This an important truth for Christians in every culture and in every generation. For example, imbibing of wine, in moderation, is not labeled as sin in the New Testament. However, some Christians come from church backgrounds that consider it sinful to drink any form of alcohol. If a Christian who understands the moral neutrality of a glass of wine, chooses to drink a glass of wine in the presence of one whose conscience would be troubled by drinking wine - and the one with a weak conscience drank a glass of wine, as a result – the one with a weaker conscience has sinned – he/she chose to do evil.

Not only that, the stronger brother also has sinned against Christ, by tempting the weaker brother to violate his conscience. It would be far better for the one who correctly understands the moral neutrality of drinking a glass of wine, to forego his wine, rather than tempt one whose conscience is misinformed.

Love trumps knowledge.

This principle applies to a host of actions in every culture.

PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP
(9:1-2)

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

Paul suddenly, with great vigor, bursts forth with four rhetorical questions.

In Greek, when asking a rhetorical question, the writer/speaker always indicates whether a positive or a negative answer is expected. This is done by the choice of the negative term used to begin the question.

- If a positive answer is expected, the question begins with οὐ (*ou*)
- If a negative answer is expected, the question begins with μή (*may*)

Paul's four questions begin with οὐ.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Paul asks/asserts:

Am I not free? Of course, I am!

Am I not an apostle? Of course, I am!

Have I not seen Jesus, Our Lord? Of course, I have!

Are you not my work in the Lord? Of course, you are!

Paul first asserted that he was free, in order to justify his actions, which he described in the rest of the chapter.

The second question, *Am I not an apostle*, is the first direct statement in the epistle indicating that his apostleship is at stake at Corinth.¹⁰⁸ The next two questions present Paul's view of his apostleship.

Have I not seen Jesus Our Lord, is echoed in 15:8, *and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me, also.*

Paul was certain that the experience on the Damascus road was not just a vision, but that he actually had seen the risen Lord. Not only had Paul seen the risen Lord, as had many others, but when the Lord sent Ananias to anoint Paul and to immerse him for the forgiveness of his sins, a commission was given to Paul. Two accounts give details of Jesus' instructions to Ananias and Ananias' encounter with Paul. In both accounts, Paul's commissioning is referenced.

And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

¹³ *But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name."*

¹⁵ *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶ for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:11-16)*

¹⁰⁷ When οὐ occurs before a vowel with smooth breathing, its form is οὐκ, the form in which occurs before the first two questions in this passage. When οὐ occurs before a vowel with rough breathing, its form is οὐχ, the form in which the term occurs before the third question in this passage. The fourth question, begins with a simple, οὐ since it occurs before a consonant.

¹⁰⁸ It had been hinted at several times earlier (1:1, 12: 4:1-5, 8-13, 14-21)

"And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,¹³ came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him.

"And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth.'¹⁵ 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.'¹⁶ 'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'¹⁶ (Acts 22:12-16)

Not only was Paul convinced that he had seen the risen Lord and received a commission from the Lord, but that the doctrines that he proclaimed were not taught to him by any human. Christ Jesus had instructed Paul what he was to preach. The details of that event are not described in Scripture, but are vaguely referenced in Paul's letter to the Galatians

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ....

But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians 1:11-12, 15-19)

Paul knew that he had seen the risen Lord and for the rest of his life he lived according to the reality of that experience and the commissioning that accompanied it.

The Greek term, ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*), which we Anglicize as, *apostle*, means, *one sent with a commission*. The emphasis of the word is not that one is sent, but rather on the commission – what one is sent to do.¹⁰⁹

The next question, *Are you not my work in the Lord*, is an *ad hominem* argument. The question is answered with the evidence provided by the church's very existence, *for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord*.

The *seal* refers to the seal that was placed on a document to guarantee that it was written by the supposed author. After the letter or document was written, a glob of wax was placed on the document and the author pressed his personal metal logo into the wax. This was the seal that guaranteed the authenticity of the document.

The seal also was used to guarantee ownership, much as cattle are branded with a seal indicating ownership.

Thus, Paul presented the existence of the church, *in the Lord*, as evidence that he was an apostle. If he were not a true apostle, then they were not *in the Lord*, because they had come into existence through his ministry.

¹⁰⁹ Several individuals in Scripture are called apostles because they were commissioned to do something. For example, when Paul was in prison, the Philippian church sent money to Paul. Epaphroditus was the one who delivered the money. In his Philippian letter, Paul described Epaphroditus as their *apostle* (Philippians 2:25). His commission was to deliver the money. Most English versions render the term in this verse as *messenger*, even though the term is *apostle*.

**BASED ON HIS FREEDOM, PAUL DEFENDED HIS APOSTOLIC RIGHTS
(9:3-14)**

My defense to those who examine me is this:

⁴ *Do we not have a right to eat and drink?* ⁵ *Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?*

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

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

⁸ *I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?* ⁹ *For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?* ¹⁰ *Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.*

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

¹² *If others share the right over you, do we not more?*

Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³ *Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar?* ¹⁴ *So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*

In a series of cascading questions, Paul established two things:

- He asserted his right to receive financial support from the Corinthian Church
- He explained why he refused to accept financial support from the church

It seems that one of the challenges to his apostleship was that he did not allow himself to be supported by the Corinthian Church. This must have been an issue raised by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul, because he touched on this here and more forcefully in II Corinthians.

From the comments in II Corinthians (II Corinthians 11:4-13; 12:13), it becomes clear that some itinerant preachers had come to Corinth and had claimed to be apostles. They received financial support from the church and argued that since Paul did not allow the church to support him, then he was not a true apostle. Paul labeled them, *false apostles* (II Corinthians 11:13).

The principle clearly is presented here that those who invest the hours of their lives in Gospel ministry, should be supported by those to whom they minister, rather than being forced to hold a job and, thus not have the time to fulfill their ministry. However, for various reasons, a minister of the Gospel might find it advantageous to his ministry for him to have an income-producing job, outside of the church. If a minister is self-supporting, then he cannot be accused of just working for money.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

This concept is very important for the present-day church. Sadly, professional ministers often conduct their lives as if they are in a profession, rather than fulfilling a calling. They are professionals just as a doctor, a lawyer, an accountant, or any other professional. Such individuals attend the necessary school and obtain the degrees required by their denomination, then look for a ministry post, then expect to climb the professional ladder to a bigger church, with a bigger salary, then a bigger church with a bigger salary, etc.

This is not to imply that all ministers who are active in denominations are guilty of this attitude. We can think of many denominational ministers who are humble servants of Our King and who would fulfill their calling with or without financial pay. However, experience has shown that there are those, both in denominational churches and in non-denominational churches who are just functioning in a profitable and stable profession. Not only that, some do the work of ministry in order to get paid.

Any man or woman who ministers because he/she is paid to do so, has a mindset far from that of Paul and Barnabas, and far from the mindset that is appropriate for those who minister the Gospel of Christ. Paul and Barnabas demonstrated what, in their judgment (perhaps at the leading of the Lord), would be the course of action that would make their ministry most effective - *that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.*

PAUL ELABORATED ON HIS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT PAY FOR PREACHING (9:15-18)

*But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.*¹⁶ *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.*¹⁷ *For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*

The main thrust of this paragraph is Paul's assuring them that he has not written the previous paragraph in order to get them to begin supporting him.

The term, *boast*, occurs often in Paul's writings, usually in a negative sense (examples: 1:29; 5:6). When he uses it in a positive sense, his boasting was in contradiction to human boasting, i.e., Christ crucified, weakness, sufferings (I Corinthians 1:30-31; II Corinthians Chapters 10-12; Galatians 6:14).

In obedience to the commission of Christ, Paul was *under compulsion* to preach the Gospel, regardless of financial circumstances.

If Paul had received financial support from a human, he would have felt obligated to that human.¹¹⁰ It could have appeared that he was preaching because he was paid to do so. He made certain that no one owned him, other than Jesus Christ. As a slave of Christ, he was under compulsion to preach the Gospel and to do nothing that might hinder its proclamation.

¹¹⁰ In the 1200's, wealthy laymen, monasteries, or bishops owned many of the medieval church buildings. The owner of the building hired the priest, had him ordained, and supported him and the church. The priest and all who were involved in the ministry of the church were obligated to the owner. Christian History Magazine, issue 127, *Did You Know?* "Whose Church is it?" (inside front cover) 2018

**FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GOSPEL, PAUL USED HIS FREEDOM
TO ADAPT TO VARIOUS GROUPS**

(9:19-23)

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

²⁰ *And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews;*

to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law;

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

²² *To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak;*

I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. ²³ And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it

Since Paul was not under the patronage of anyone, he was free to use his freedom to submit himself to whatever conditions would further the Gospel – as long as the accommodation did not compromise the truth or God’s authority *though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.*

Paul set the example of acculturation of the messenger in order to advance the Gospel, but also not allowing such accommodation to hinder the accurate proclamation of the message.¹¹¹ Yet, in Galatia, when the Jewish custom of exclusiveness interfered with the message of Grace, Paul withstood Peter and the other Jewish believers.¹¹²

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Here is a lesson for the Church in every societal and racial setting. Even though it is wise to adapt to the culture, racial mores, and the society in which one is presenting the Gospel, one must not allow that adaptation to interfere with an accurate presentation of the Gospel and the truths attendant to it.

PAUL’S EXHORTATION AND EXAMPLE

(9:24-27)

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

These verses bring to a completion the long discussion of financial provision in Chapter 9, and serves as a return to the discussion about attending cultic meals.

As noted in the introductory section, the Isthmian games were conducted every two years, and were sponsored by Corinth. Statues and inscriptions to famous athletes existed in Corinth. Paul would have been in Corinth during the 51 AD games. The metaphor of athletics to illustrate the Christian life would have been an effective illustration for the Corinthians.

¹¹¹ An example of this is seen in Acts 21, when Paul participated in sponsoring four Jewish Christians in the ceremonies required for them to be released from a vow.

¹¹² Galatians 2:11ff

The point Paul sought to make was that diligence and focus are appropriate for those who are traveling toward heaven. Self-control,¹¹³ in order to avoid failing in the race, is presented as of utmost importance. Whatever sacrifice or other removal of impedance would benefit one's running of that race, should be undertaken. He closed by using himself as an example, indicating that he controlled any human desires that might cause him to stray from the path.

**THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL'S TRAGEDY AS A RESULT OF IDOLATRY
(10:1-6)**

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

⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.

Paul began this section by illustrating the danger of falling by calling attention to the Israelites' privileges. They had their form of baptism and the Lord's Supper which Paul used as a prefigure of that of the Christians. In spite of these blessings, and their participation in them, God was not pleased with most of them and their bodies were scattered across the wilderness.

Paul used the figure of the rock of Horeb in the same manner that Moses used it in his song of benediction recorded in Deuteronomy 32 (verses 4, 15, 18, 30, 31). Of striking significance, Paul identified that rock with Christ. By doing so, he achieved two things:

- Christ, Himself, was involved in nourishing Israel in the wilderness
- He stressed the continuity between Israel and the Christians and how Christians are in danger of repeating the failure of Israel.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

This example of what can happen to spiritually privileged people, stands as a warning to the people of God in every era. It is an abiding warning concerning how easily the Church can be drawn into paths that give homage and authority to forces and tantalizing experiences that draw God's people away from the pure Gospel of Christ. Church leaders must be diligent in making certain that false doctrines and faulty practices do not infect the local church. Church leaders who care about the pure Gospel of Christ and take a stand on these issues, often are criticized. Even so, they have no choice but to bear whatever attack comes their way, because they will answer to Christ for how they have stewarded their role in these matters.

¹¹³ In his Galatian letter, Paul listed self-control as one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23)

**APPLICATION OF THE ILLUSTRATION TO CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS
(10:6-13)**

Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.⁷ And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play."

⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

Little comment is needed on these verses. The message is clear, that the danger of falling always is present and *let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall* (verse 12). God's warning to Cain is a warning for every person of every generation, *If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.* (Genesis 4:7)

Looking at the examples cited by Paul, these are not situations in which a believer is overtaken by temptation. Paul is addressing deliberate acts, that are predicated on false security. Even though Israel had all of the credentials and had gone through the baptism unto Moses and eaten of God's miraculous provision, they still were destroyed because they chose sin. Paul assured the Corinthians that those who commit willful disobedience are destined for destruction (hell).

Then, what a wonderful promise!!! *God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.*¹¹⁴

We also rejoice in what the apostle, John, wrote to Christians of the First Century,

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin.

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 1:8-2)

¹¹⁴ The term rendered, *temptation*, *πειροσμός* (*peirosmos*), means *to test* in some manner. It is so used in Hebrews 13:8, man's putting God to the test and in I Peter 4:12, in which Peter uses the term to refer to the fiery trial that the Christians are experiencing. Thus, the term can be used for some testing, trial, or enticement to sin. The term rendered *to tempt*, *πειράζω* (*peiradzo*), is used to refer to testing something, enticing someone, or attempting something. Thus, the use of these two terms must be understood in the broad sense, that God will not allow us to face any test/temptation that is not common to man and will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to overcome the temptation. Furthermore, should the temptation be overbearing, there will be a way of escape.

Thus, even if we do fail in the testing and, in some manner sin, we can confess that sin, with a repentant heart, and receive forgiveness because of our trust in the blood of Christ and not in our righteousness.

**PAUL'S FINAL WORD ON EATING IN PAGAN TEMPLES
(10:14-22)**

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ *I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.* ¹⁶ *Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷ *Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.* ¹⁸ *Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?*

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

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

²¹ *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.* ²² *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?*

With these verses, Paul concluded his reasoning concerning eating in temples devoted to idols. One might ask, “Is Paul contradicting what he wrote in 8:1-13, in which he asserted that those who have correct knowledge, know that there is no god, other than the true God, and that, therefore, food offered to an idol is not contaminated?” He does state that truth in verse 19, *What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?* ²⁰ *No.*

He then proceeded to state that even if that is true (that there is only one God) there are demons associated with these sacrifices and that Christians should not be sharers in demons. The intimation is that demonic forces inhabit that which has been sacrificed to an idol. When Christians ate at the pagan temple, probably in some sort of a communal meal with neighbors, they were partaking of demons that were associated with – perhaps even inhabited – the food consumed.

The Lord’s Supper was the central item in the Sunday gathering of every church. In partaking of the cup and the loaf, Christians were in fellowship with one another and with Christ. To partake of the sacred cup and loaf, in spiritual fellowship with Christ and with fellow believers, then to partake of the cup of demons, was a form of blasphemy – something that would provoke the Lord to jealousy – a dreadful thought.

Converts in Third World settings often have to deal with situations similar to that which Paul addressed in these verses. These have to struggle with the religious intent of some meals, addressed to some god or, in some religious sense, to their ancestors.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Although western Christians, for the most part, do not face situations as obvious as eating a meal in a pagan temple, there are subtle applications to this principle. Perhaps participating in some forms of “entertainment,” such as a musical event, in which the lyrics, the lifestyle, and the message of the evening promotes sinful attitudes and behaviour – sometimes in such settings the demonic presence can be sensed. In the west, many consider demons to not be present in our culture, but the truth is, they probably are very prevalent and cleverly disguising themselves.

THE QUESTION OF EATING MARKETPLACE FOOD (10:23-11:1)

All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. ²⁴ *Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.*

²⁵ *Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience ' sake;* ²⁶ *for the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains.* ²⁷ *If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience ' sake.*

²⁸ *But if anyone should say to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience ' sake;* ²⁹ *I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?*

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

³¹ *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* ³² *Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;* ³³ *just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.*

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

Paul concluded this section, by covering just about every question that could be asked about eating food sacrificed to idols. The need for discussing this issue was the practice of the priests of the idolatrous temple. The priests would take excess food from their temples and present it for sale in the marketplace. Therefore, some of the food that was available in the market place was food that had been sacrificed to idols.

Paul took an interesting position. To eat such food in a temple, should be avoided. However, to eat that food, if it were sold in a marketplace, was acceptable. The only time that it would not be acceptable would be a situation in which a Christian was eating with an unbeliever who made it a point to let the Christian know that the food had been offered to an idol, then the believer should refuse to eat.

A knowledgeable Christian would not have any conscience problem with eating the food, he could eat it with thanksgiving, because God is the source of all. However, if one's host made a point that the food has been sacrificed to idols, and the believer then proceeded to eat the food, that action might send the wrong message to the unbeliever. So, it is better to forego the meal than to cause anyone to stumble.

Paul indicated that he had set the example in this matter and that he encouraged everyone to follow his example.

This very lengthy discussion, occupying several chapters, has taken many turns, probably because Paul was responding to different questions posed in their letter.

After all had been said and done....Paul presented five principles related to the question of eating food offered to idols:

- Food sacrificed to an idol is not impacted by the god to whom it is sacrificed. There is only one God and a Christian is not spiritually impacted one way or the other by eating this food.
- Food sacrificed to an idol should not be eaten in the temple of an idol. There are demons in that location and they, in some manner, are in fellowship with the food, and with those who eat in such a setting.

- For a strong Christian, who understood the neutrality of the food, to eat in a temple of a false god, might cause a weaker Christian who did not have that understanding to eat in the temple and then to have a guilty conscience. The weaker Christian considered such eating to be evil and by going ahead and eating, he would have chosen to do evil – thus he would have sinned.
- Food sacrificed to an idol that would be sold in the marketplace, is of neutral import to a Christian and could be eaten without any sense of doing wrong. However, if one's host makes a point of the fact that it had been offered to an idol, then the believer should not eat, because of the wrong message that might be communicated to the unbeliever.
- It is better to forego anything that is of neutral import if one's doing so would put in jeopardy the soul of someone else.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HEADCOVERING IN A WORSHIP SERVICE (11:2-16)

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

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

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

⁵ *But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.* ⁶ *For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.*

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

⁸ *For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;* ⁹ *for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.* ¹⁰ *Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.*

¹¹ *However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.* ¹² *For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.*

¹³ *Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?* ¹⁴ *Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,* ¹⁵ *but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.* ¹⁶ *But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.*

The theme of this section has to do with relationships and the manner in which those relationships are communicated and expressed.

Paul began with a compliment to them for keeping the traditions as he had delivered them. This is a rather strange statement, since much of the letter deals with issues on which they have deviated from his teachings. Some consider this to be a sarcastic statement. It seems best to assume that this is a polite introduction to what follows.

This section is somewhat of a battleground in contemporary culture. Paul's teaching is odious to those who argue that there is no difference between men and women. This especially has been a troublesome section for those who argue for women elders, women pastors, women priests, etc.

Some have argued that Paul was a product of his times and that he was somewhat of a misogynist.

Clearly, there are some cultural elements to this section, and we will acknowledge these. However, Paul does not base his argument on culture for the principle he is putting forth. He bases his argument on the creation account, *for man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.*

This is the same sort of argument that Paul puts forth in I Timothy 2:12-14,

*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*¹³ *For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression.*

Whatever else one might make of these statements, it is clear that Paul taught that there should be a distinction between the sexes and that each sex had its role. Also, that whatever visible evidence of that difference existed in one's culture, that practice should be honored.

The Greek term rendered, *head*, is κεφαλή (*kephalay*). The metaphorical use of this term implies authority.¹¹⁵ Thus, Paul contended that the place of authority in the church should be occupied by men.

However, there is a cultural aspect as to how this difference in roles is displayed.

¹³ *Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?* ¹⁴ *Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,* ¹⁵ *but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.*

In their culture, their very natural feelings would have reacted negatively to a woman with short hair or a man with long hair. In present-day America, nature does not teach us that a man with long hair is dishonored by his failure to get a haircut. Nor does a woman's long hair give glory to her.

Furthermore, in that culture and in that century, a covered head indicated submission. In our culture and in our era, it is the opposite. In our culture, removing one's hat in the presence of a superior being, is a sign of submission. A man removes his hat when the American flag goes by. When entering a church building, a man removes his hat. When an employee approaches his employer, in an attitude of submission, he approaches his employer, "hat in hand."

So, although the principle presented by Paul is abiding, being based on the creation account, how that principle is expressed differs from culture to culture. The manner of expressing the principle will be effected by cultural mores.

¹¹⁵ For a study establishing the basis for this statement, see, James Garrett, *An Analysis of the Arguments for Female Leadership in the New Testament Church*, <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/doulos-press.html> - papers.

THE ABUSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (11:17-34)

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

¹⁸ *For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it.* ¹⁹ *For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you.*

²⁰ *Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,* ²¹ *for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.* ²² *What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.*

²³ *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;* ²⁴ *and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."* ²⁵ *In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* ²⁶ *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*

²⁷ *Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.* ²⁸ *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* ²⁹ *For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.* ³⁰ *For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.* ³¹ *But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.* ³² *But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

³³ *So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.* ³⁴ *If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.*

Early in the history of the church, it became a custom, in some regions, to have an *Agape* – a love feast – as a part of their weekly gathering. Based on Paul's comments in this section, we conclude that at Corinth, the Lord's Supper was observed as a part of the *Agape*. As a result, the significance of the Lord's Supper was lost, as well as the appropriate reverence for the elements.

The purpose of the Sunday gathering should have been to partake of the Lord's Supper. Instead, the Corinthians were focusing on the *Agape*, and it had become a very self-indulgent meal. Paul chastised this practice in Corinth for three reasons:

- The sacred significance of the Lord's Supper been lost
- The *Agape* had gotten out of hand
- They were very insensitive to the poor among them, resulting in division in the church.

In order to understand the scene, we must pay attention to the place of their assembly. The Sunday meetings were held in the more spacious homes of prosperous Corinthian Christians. The New Testament records two and possibly three such homes among the converts of Corinth. The first is the home of Titius Justice, whose house was next to the synagogue. This is where the church gathered after being excluded from the synagogue.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Acts 18:7

The second house would be that of Gaius (I Corinthians 1:15), whom Paul described as *host to me and the whole church* (Romans 16:23, written from Corinth).¹¹⁷

A third possibility would be the home of Crispus, the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue (Acts 18:8). A person of this high status in society would have had a fine house.

The architecture of these houses helps us to understand some of Paul's comments. The average Corinthian house contained a dining room, called the *triclinium*. The triclinium derived its name from a three-sided table at which the diners reclined while eating. The average size of a triclinium table was about 18 x 18 feet and it could accommodate 9 to 12 diners. Annexed to the triclinium was an *atrium* (a large entry courtyard), which would accommodate 30 to 50 guests.

The host and those whom he invited, would eat in the triclinium. Most members of the church would eat in the atrium.

Commenting on this practice, Gordon Fee states,

“In a class-conscious society such as Roman Corinth would have been, it would be sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat in the triclinium, while the others would eat in the atrium. Furthermore, it is probable that the language, "one's own supper," (v. 21) refers to the eating of private meals by the wealthy, in which at the common meal of the Lord's Supper they ate either their own portions or perhaps privileged portions that were not made available to the 'have-nots.'”¹¹⁸

Paul did not eliminate the social distinctions as such. They still would have their houses in which to eat their private meals (vv.22-23). What he did speak against was the insertion of these social distinctions into the meeting. Christ had made them one, signified by their eating *one loaf*.

1 Corinthians 10:17 *Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*¹¹⁹

They had divided the church by observing a distinction in social classes.

Instead of sharing in the meal as an expression of *koinonia*, the Agape in Corinth had become an occasion of self-display and self-indulgence. Each person satisfied his own hunger, even to the point of gluttony. The Agape had become the opposite of what its name implies (love).

The Lord's Supper, which should have been the focus of their meeting, had become just another element in a common meal. This blasphemy brought forth a stinging rebuke from Paul. He told them that if eating and drinking is why they got together, they should do it at home.

The Agape was a tradition that humans developed. The Lord's Supper, however, was another matter. It was sacred and should have been the focus of their gathering.

The verses before us in I *Corinthians* 11 constitute a key passage concerning the regular gathering of the local church. First is the language that Paul uses in verses 18 and 20.

¹¹⁷ Bruce suggests that Gaius and Titius Justice are the same person (Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible [London, 1971]. Thus, his full Roman name would have been Gaius Titius Justice. This is plausible, but there seems to be no reason to take this position.

¹¹⁸ Fee, Gordon, p. 534

¹¹⁹ The Greek term translated, 'bread,' in this passage is ἄρτος (*artos*), which mean's, *loaf*.

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it... Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

The phrase, *when you come together* in verse 18, and *meet together*, in verse 20, are renderings of the Greek term, συνέρχασθε (*sunerchesthe*). This term is repeated five times in verses 17-22 and 33-34. It is used the same way in 14:23 and 26. The word had become a semi-technical term for the "gathering together" of the people of God for worship (The Meeting).

The expression, *as a church*, is a rendering of ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (*en ekklesia*), which carries the idea of "in assembly." *Ekklesia* is a term that originated in the Greek city-states. Every citizen of the city had a right and responsibility to attend the meetings in which the decisions for the city were to be made. However, every city had more non-citizens than citizens in residency. Therefore, when it was time for a city meeting, a crier would go through the streets calling the citizens out of the populace to come to the meetings. *Ekklesia* literally means, *the called-out ones*. They were called out of the general populace to attend the meeting. Because of this, *ekklesia* came to mean, *The Assembly*.

The definition of *ekklesia* as, *assembly*, seems to have replaced the etymological meaning of the word (*called-out ones*), at least when speaking of a group. This background explains the language of the town clerk in Acts 19:39-41, and his anxiety over the illegal *ekklesia* [an illegal gathering]. Note that he used the term, *ekklesia*, for both the illegal assembly that had gathered and the legal assembly where the matters should have been dealt with (Acts 19: 39 & 41).

"But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly [ekklesia]. "For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's affair, since there is no real cause for it; and in this connection we shall be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." And after saying this he dismissed the assembly [ekklesia].

In the Septuagint, *ekklesia* was used to refer to Israel as a gathered people (Deuteronomy 4:10 and scores of other references).

Deuteronomy 4:10 *"Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble [ekklesia] the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'*

Even though the term came to be a generic designation for the people of God (i.e., *the Church*), the idea of being *gathered together* always was inherent in the term. Because of this underlying meaning (as well as Paul's use of the term, *en ekklesia* in the passage before us), it is not incorrect for us to say that we are "going to church," when we speak of attending the Sunday meeting (not the church building).

Informal gatherings in their homes or other impromptu meetings are not described in this passage. This passage refers to the set meeting of the church, what in our tradition is the Sunday morning worship service. It was the Church – the *Ekklesia*.

Paul scolds them that even though they should have been coming together to partake of the Lord's Supper, they were not doing so. Their irreverence toward the loaf and the cup of the Lord's Supper made their partaking an empty gesture. More than that, it made them *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27) – a very serious charge.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

This is a huge lesson for the contemporary Church. The focus of the Sunday gathering should be reverent observance of the Lord's Supper. Failure to partake in reverence has two consequences:

- *Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.*
- *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason, many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

One has to wonder what, on Judgment Day, will be pronounced upon those who have partaken in an unworthy manner and by so doing, have become *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (Note that the sin is partaking in an *unworthy manner*; the issue is not whether or not anyone is worthy to partake, but the manner in which one partakes – reverently or irreverently).

The implication of the second consequence is that sickness and weakness have come upon some as God's discipline because of their improper participation in the Lord's Supper. The Greek term rendered, *disciplined* (verse 32) is *παιδεύω* (*paideuo*). The idea behind this term is correcting by discipline (cf. II Corinthians 6:9; I Timothy 1:20).

Interestingly, Paul concluded by referring back to the *Agape* and instructs them in how to behave in a godly manner if they continue have such a meal. Note that he does not say that at the *Agape* the wealthier members are to see that the poor have the same food as the rich. A rich man can eat his own food at home.

So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment.

PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE OVERSIGHT OF SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS IN THE CORPORATE MEETING Chapters 12-14

The topic of these three chapters is the appropriate management of spiritual manifestations in the corporate meeting of the local church. Because of the somewhat spectacular nature of this subject matter, most readers tend to miss the central truth of the section.

CHAPTER 12 ADDRESSES THE APPROPRIATE VIEW OF THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

In I Corinthians 12 Paul presents the human body as an analogy to illustrate the role and function of spiritual gifts in the corporate meeting. There is diversity, interdependency, and unity in a body. Chapter 12 can be summarized as follows:

- The Holy Spirit imparts gifts to Christians
- These are gifts, not rewards
- The Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses to whom each gift is given
- Each gift is important
- No believer has all of the gifts
- No believer should feel that his gift has made him superior
- All gifts are given for the good of the body

Verse 1 *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.*

As noted earlier, the *now concerning* (περὶ δὲ), is the flag that indicates that Paul is responding to something that they had asked about in their letter.

A challenge presented by this verse is the definition of the term that most English versions render as, *spiritual gifts*.

- The Greek term *ton pneumatikon* (τῶν πνευματικῶν), is the genitive, plural form of the adjective, *pneumatikos* (πνευματικός). Literally, the term would be rendered, *spirituals*.
- Since the genitive plural of this adjective is spelled the same way for masculine, feminine, and neuter objects, the gender of the term has to be determined by the noun it modifies, and if there is no noun, then the gender must be sought in the context.
- If the term is masculine, then a proper rendering would be, *spiritual men*.
- If the term is neuter, the proper rendering would be, *spiritual things*.

In Chapter 14, Paul used this term both in the neuter and masculine genders (neuter in verse 1 and masculine in verse 37).

Some argue that the term should be rendered, *spiritual men*, since the Corinthian interlopers that challenged Paul said that he was deficient, but that they were *spiritual men*.

Furthermore, the repeated, *you*, of verses 2-3, and the fact that Paul wrote, *to each one*, as he lists manifestations of the Spirit in verses 7-10, points toward understating the term as meaning, *spiritual men* or *spiritual persons*.

Additional strength to this position is the point of I Corinthians 12-14, which is the management (not control) of these manifestations. This would require the obedience of those manifesting the *charismata*.

The immediate context, however, would allow for *spiritual things*. So, a decision concerning how to render the term is somewhat of a conundrum.

Howard M. Ervin suggests, *Now concerning supernatural endowments, brethren...*¹²⁰ as a means of encompassing both the *spiritual things* and the *spiritual men (and women)* who were manifesting the *spirituals*. This suggestion removes the challenge of deciding the gender of the term.

Verses 2-3 *You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led*¹²¹. *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

¹²⁰ Howard M. Ervin, *These are not Drunken as ye Suppose* (Plainfield, NJ, Logos International 1963) page 115

¹²¹ Verse 2 is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible, because it is an *anacoluthon* (it doesn't follow grammatically) since the "when" clause has no main verb. As Gordon Fee comments, "Either something dropped out in the transmission of the text, or else Paul himself intended his readers to supply a second 'you were' at some point in the sentence. Literally, the verse reads, *you know that when you were pagans, to mute idols whenever you would be led, being carried away*. The best solution is to repeat the verb 'you were' with the final participle 'carried away,' so that the sentence reads, *When you were pagans, you were carried away, as you were continually being led about to mute idols.*" Gordon Fee, pp. 576-77.

As pagans, they had worshipped inarticulate idols. However, these idols did represent evil spirits (10:20-21) who spoke through their devotees.¹²² Thus, inspired speech was not evidence of being led by the Holy Spirit. They already knew that from their pagan past. Because pagans spoke in tongues, some Corinthian Christians rejected tongues as being either of the devil or at least, inappropriate among Christians.¹²³

Many pages could be written wrestling with the various explanations of Paul's statement that only by the Holy Spirit could someone say, *Jesus is Lord*. Any hypocrite could make that statement. It is not profitable for us to get involved in this discussion here. It is important, however, that we not miss Paul's point. Assembly of God scholar, Gordon Fee, points out,

“...it continues to stand as a particularly important word for the church, in which many of these spiritual phenomena are recurring. The presence of the Spirit in power and gifts makes it easy for God's people to think of the power and gifts as the real evidence of the Spirit's presence. Not so for Paul. The ultimate criterion of the Spirit's activity is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself.”¹²⁴

LESSONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Fee's warning is very appropriate for the contemporary Church. Sadly, in our present era, many run to one meeting after another, seeking manifestations, wanting to be “on the cutting edge of what God is doing.” Clearly, these are seeking experience, rather than yearning to exalt Jesus as Lord.

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

The question has to be asked: “Are the members of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and God), individually mentioned in connection with one of the three terms, *gifts*, *ministries*, and *varieties of effects*, because each of them, individually, is the source of the element described - or is Paul using a rhetorical device for emphasizing unity in diversity?”

¹²² One clear difference between the inspired speech of idol worshippers and that of Christians was the ecstatic state of Corinthian idolaters. Idolatrous inspired speech occurred when the devotee was possessed by the spirit of the idol and spoke in an ecstatic state (not in control of himself). One of the prominent Greek gods was Eros. When people worshipped Eros, they became ecstatic and lost control of themselves. When someone was worshipping a god other than Eros, and they became ecstatic, onlookers often said that Eros was stealing worship from the God who the devotee assumed he was worshipping. Paul stated that the believer is responsible for his behavior, even when speaking in tongues or when prophesying (Chapter 14 assumes this to be true, or else the chapter makes no sense).

¹²³ Speaking in tongues is a phenomenon that occurs in many religions. The practice is quite evident in Mormonism. It is an important element in spiritist religions. For example, in Japan, on the Hokaido and Honshu islands, tongues are spoken during seances of the Ainu people. In Shinto and Buddhism tongues are a part of the ritual trance. Muslim dervishes, Indian fakirs, and many religions of African origin experience tongues as a part of an ecstatic state.

¹²⁴ Fee, *op. cit.*, p. 582

If Paul meant to delineate each Divine Being's activity in this arena, here is the delineation:

- The Holy Spirit bestows varieties of supernatural abilities on believers.
- The Lord Jesus determines when, where, and how these abilities are to be used.
- God the Father determines the results.

Whether or not Paul intended to make such a partitioning of roles can be debated. However, the main points of the paragraph are clear:

- The *charismata* are manifestations of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit ministers to the Church through human instruments.
- There is unity (the Divine source) in diversity (different believers manifest different *charismata*).
- The purpose of the *charismata* is to bless the corporate church.

Verses 8-10 *For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

Because the Corinthians were experiencing the nine manifestations listed, and probably even more than nine, Paul was not concerned with the question as whether or not the manifestations were valid. Paul was moving toward the conclusion that there should be unity in diversity. Because in our day there is confusion and controversy concerning the nine listed gifts, it is fitting for us to consider them individually.

- **The Word (λόγος -*logos*) of Wisdom (σοφία - *sophia*)**

The phrase means either, *an utterance conveying wisdom* or an *utterance originating in wisdom*.

It is significant that this *gift* does not occur in any other list or discussion. The reason seems rather clear. Earlier in the letter Paul addressed the Corinthian obsession with wisdom, as characterized by the Greek Gnostic understanding of the term. To the Greek Gnostics, secret wisdom was a mark of spiritual superiority. Because of this, many rejected Paul's Gospel (1:17-2:16). Paul defined true wisdom, not as some special understanding or deeper mystery (as the Greek Gnostics would define it), but the recognition that *Christ crucified* is the true wisdom of God (1:30-31; 2:6-9). Any spiritual utterance that declares what God has done in Christ fits Paul's description of an *utterance of wisdom*.

Can the term be limited to this or is Paul describing something more? The question is not easy to answer. Since the gift of wisdom occurs only here, and is not included in the spontaneous *charismata* described in Chapter 14, we are not compelled to consider it as something restricted to the occasional manifestations described in that chapter. Most of us have known individuals who have wisdom beyond their years. Because of their youth they could not have gained this wisdom from experience.

- **Word (λόγος - *logos*) of Knowledge (γνῶσις - *Gnosis*)**

In the opening paragraph of the epistle, Paul thanked God that the Corinthians *in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge* (1:5). Once again, as he had done in verse 5, Paul used terms that were a part of the vocabulary of the Greek Gnostics. It seems that this is another effort by Paul to rescue them from their Greek fascination with *wisdom*,

knowledge, and rhetoric (the point of 1:18-2:16), as well as confronting the pride that accompanied these obsessions.

We know that this gift is not the same as *revelation*, in that in 14:6, Paul listed this gift along with *revelation* and *prophecy*, so it is clear that the *word of knowledge* and *revelation* cannot be the same thing. How this gift differs from *revelation* is not clear. This also is one of the gifts that Paul stated will cease when the perfect comes (13:8).

Some have argued that since *gnosis* (knowledge) is in the descriptive genitive case, that this refers to the Holy Spirit's imparting of insight into Scripture. This could not be Paul's intent. If Paul were describing the gift of insight into Scripture, *logos* would be in the genitive, and not *gnosis* (i.e., knowledge of the Word). Furthermore, the New Testament did not exist when Paul wrote these words.

Most present-day students of the gifts consider a *word of knowledge* to refer to manifestations such as that demonstrated by Peter's knowledge of the misdeeds of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), or Jesus' knowledge of Nathaniel's whereabouts before they met (John 1:47-50). In other words, knowing about something, the knowledge of which could only have been given by the Spirit.

- **Faith**

In the opening chapters of the epistle, Paul described saving faith as a work of the Spirit.¹²⁵ Here, however, we encounter a different element of faith. This is the faith referred to in 13:2, i.e. the gift of faith *to move mountains*. Jesus spoke of mountain-moving faith on two occasions:

1. Matthew 17:20, after casting out a demon
2. Matthew 21:21, after cursing the fig tree (also reported in Mark 11:22).

This category of faith is a *gift* imparted by the Holy Spirit. This not something that can be worked up or chosen to possess. In Romans 12:3, as a prelude to a discussion of functional gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote of God's having *allotted to each a measure of faith*.

We readily think of men such as George Mueller, to whom God gave faith for providential provision for the care of thousands of orphans and the legendary Smith Wigglesworth who seemed to know in various situations what God was doing, and in that knowledge, ministered supernaturally.

¹²⁵ The Greek word, πίστις (*pistis*) is the word that we translate as, *faith*. Note that in each of the following passages, *faith* has a different meaning.

Galatians 1:23 *but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."* In this sentence, *faith* means the Gospel

Romans 14:23 *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.* In this context, *faith* refers to the conviction that this is what God wants me to do.

1 Timothy 5:11-12 *But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.* (KJV) In this passage, *faith* refers to a pledge or a promise made to the Lord. In both the NIV and the NAS, the "dynamic equivalency" style is used in this verse. Therefore, neither of these versions have the word, *faith*, in their translations. The NAS says, *pledge*; the NIV *first pledge*. In the Greek, however the word is *faith* (πίστις)

- **Gifts of Healings**

Often people pray for *The Gift of Healing*, as if they can become endowed with the ability to heal. Because the Greek terms for both *gifts* and *healings* are plural, many understand this *charisma* to be understood as a group of healing gifts that the Holy Spirit presents to a particular believer for him to distribute to others. God stays in control. He hands the person chosen to administer these gifts, a gift of healing to be given to this sick person, and another gift of healing to be given to another.

In a Sunday service, a sick person may come to a servant of God whom God is using to distribute these gifts, and even though the individual with the infirmity receives the laying on of hands he/she may walk away without being healed. The Sovereign God had not given His servant a *Gift of Healing* for that particular individual.

If someone, with all good intentions, approaches church leadership, asking for the laying on of hands in order to receive the *Gift of Healing*, the appropriate question should be, “Why, are you sick?”

- **The Effecting of Miracles (Literally: *operations of powers*¹²⁶)**

In II Corinthians 12:12, Paul wrote of himself, *The signs (semeia - σημεῖα) of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs (semeia - σημεῖα) and wonders (terata - τεράτια) and miracles (dunamis - δυνάμεις).*

In this self-description Paul made a distinction between *signs*, *wonders*, and *miracles*.

In the text before us (12:10), the term most English versions render as, *miracles*, is the common Greek word for *power* (δύναμις - *dunamis*). Once again we must note that both terms, *operations* (ἐνέργημα - *energayma*) and *powers*, are in the plural. This would imply that there are varying operations of powers. Certainly this would include supernatural healing, exorcism, and any of the broad range of events that we would call, *miraculous*. Jesus’ ministry was filled with such manifestations. In the post-Pentecostal apostolic ministry, most miracles were healing miracles.

One has to ask if the healings resulting from this power-gift are different manifestation than the *gifts of healings*. It would seem to be so. For example, cloths that had touched Paul’s body were distributed in Ephesus and everyone who touched the cloths were healed (Acts 19:11-12). Peter and the apostles had such a flamboyant and consistent healing season in Jerusalem, that sick people were placed beside the path, hoping that Peter’s shadow would fall on them (Acts 5:12-16).¹²⁷

Be that as it may, Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit gives to certain ones, *operations of powers*, obviously describing a ministry that is characterized by supernatural activity.

¹²⁶ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμενων (*energaymata dunamenon*)

¹²⁷ The Western Text of this verse 15 concludes with, “for they were being set free from every sickness, such as each of them had.”

- **Prophecy**

After the close of the Old Testament canon (Malachi), prophecy ceased in Israel.¹²⁸ On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that in fulfillment of Joel's prediction, prophecy was restored to Israel.

*... but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My male slaves and My female slaves, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.'*¹²⁹

The Greek term, *propheteia* (προφητεία), refers to speech that emanates from divine inspiration and declares the purposes of God.¹³⁰ This may be something that the Holy Spirit imparts impromptu in a meeting, or it can be something that the Holy Spirit has given to someone in the prayer closet (14:26).

Prophecy can include prediction, but that is not its essential nature. The essential nature of prophecy is speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Joel declared that when God's Spirit was poured out, prophecy would not be restricted to prophets but that it would become a widespread phenomenon among God's people.¹³¹ A preacher who preaches under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and at the direction of the Holy Spirit would be manifesting prophecy.

- **The Distinguishing of Spirits**

The Greek term rendered, *distinguishing* or *discerning*, is the term, *diakrisis* (διάκρισις), which has as its primary meaning, *a separation*, thus, *a judging*. Since the terms are plural, a better and more accurate rendering is *discernments of spirits*.

Interestingly, the term rendered *discernments* is the noun form of the verb used in 14:29, which speaks of judging whether or not prophecy is from God. Thus, *discernments of spirits* must include judging of prophecy. Here are some related passages:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21a *Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully.*

1 John 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

2 Thessalonians 2:2-3, 9 Paul declared the necessity of judging the spirit behind both doctrinal teaching and miracles: *that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of*

¹²⁸ Here are some quotes from I Maccabees, written during the inter-testamental period:

*4:46 and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill **until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them.***

*9:27 Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been **since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.***

*14:41 And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, **until a trustworthy prophet should arise...***

¹²⁹ (Acts 2:16-18).

¹³⁰ The literal etymological meaning of the term is, *to speak forth*

¹³¹ Joel 2:28-32

the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, ... that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders

Some believers will be given the ability to discern spirits, whether it be the spirit behind a prophecy, a teaching, or a miracle.

- **Various Kinds of Tongues**

The Greek terminology is important. *Gene glosson* (γέννη γλωσσῶν), translated literally, *families of tongues* (i.e. languages), fits the Acts 2 experience, in which the disciples *began to speak with other tongues* (languages that were not their native tongue) and were understood by visitors from various countries. The term, *families of tongues*, obviously refers to actual languages.¹³² The terminology forces us to conclude that the reference is to a language spoken somewhere in the world, or formerly was spoken somewhere in the world, or a language spoken by angels (13:1). It is neither gibberish, nor uncontrolled mutterings.¹³³

This manifestation never was used for preaching or proclamation of the Gospel. It always was manifested in praise or prayer. In the earliest days of the Pentecostal movement, the belief persisted that God would give earthly languages to believers so they could evangelize the world. Those who went to foreign fields with this expectation, always experienced failure, which caused many of them to become disillusioned and to reject Pentacostalism.¹³⁴

¹³² Many modern commentators have sought to demonstrate that the expression, *tongues*, refers to the ecstatic speech or unintelligible speech, found in the Greek religions. In a very detailed scholarly work, Christopher Forbes has demonstrated that this is not case: Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1997)

¹³³ The renowned scholar, A.T. Robertson makes the following comment: Acts 2:4 - **With other tongues** (ἑτέρας γλώσσας) Other than their native tongues. Each one began to speak in a language that he had not acquired and yet it was a real language and understood by those from various lands familiar with them. It was not jargon, but intelligible language. Jesus had said that the gospel was to go to all the nations and here the various tongues of earth were spoken. One might conclude that this was the way in which the message was to be carried to the nations, but future developments disprove it. This is a third miracle (the sound, the tongues like fire, the untaught languages). There is no blinking the fact that Luke so pictures them. One need not be surprised if this occasion marks the fulfillment of the Promise of the Father. But one is not to confound these miraculous signs with the Holy Spirit. They are merely proof that he has come to carry on the work of his dispensation. The gift of tongues came also on the house of Cornelius at Caesarea (Ac 10:44-47; 11:15-17), the disciples of John at Ephesus (Ac 19:6), the disciples at Corinth (1Co 14:1-33). It is possible that the gift appeared also at Samaria (Ac 8:18)... Paul explains in 1Co 14:22 that "tongues" were a sign to unbelievers and were not to be exercised unless one was present who understood them and could translate them. This restriction disposes at once of the modern so-called tongues which are nothing but jargon and hysteria. It so happened that here on this occasion at Pentecost there were Jews from all parts of the world, so that some one would understand one tongue and some another without an interpreter such as was needed at Corinth. The experience is identical in all four instances and they are not for edification or instruction, but for adoration and wonder and worship. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 Volumes, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932) III Page 22

¹³⁴ Charles Parham, first advocated this view. The leaders of the Azusa Street revival also had

Even so, there are many credible reports of the Holy Spirit's bestowing a "foreign" language upon a believer, which was understood by an auditor. Dr. Howard Ervin, a man of unquestioned character, has written of his own experience in this realm. Here is Ervin's description of his experience:

"In our own day, there is an increasing number of testimonies by Christians who have spoken known languages 'in the Spirit.' On one occasion the present author [Ervin] was participating in a healing service in a church on the West Coast of the United States. As he prayed in tongues, an Armenian Baptist woman listened to his 'tongue,' and identified it as prayer in Russian.

Again while praying with a small group for the healing of a missionary who speaks Spanish fluently, the missionary identified his "tongue" as a Spanish dialect. The vocabulary was clearly identified, but the inflections were strange to her.

On another occasion, while praying for the healing of the little daughter of a Japanese Buddhist woman, he spoke a "tongue" she later identified to mutual friends as Japanese.

Still more recently, in a ministry service in his own church, an Armenian man, for whom he prayed, identified two foreign languages spoken in prayer. The one was a dialect spoken by the Indian colonial troops of the British Empire which he had heard as a young man in the seaport cities of the Orient. The second language he described as Kurdish, a language he himself speaks.

Most recently of all, in fact just a few weeks ago, the phenomenon repeated again. While praying with a young man, acquainted with both Spanish and Portuguese, the writer prayed in a language identified by the young man as Portuguese. When asked what was said, he replied: "You told God my need in high Portuguese." Needless to say all of these languages are unknown to the writer, and consequently were spoken "as the Spirit Himself gave utterance.

The same author [Ervin] identified the last sentence of a song sung 'in the Spirit' as Biblical Greek, although the man who was singing knows no Greek. A Norwegian woman received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at a service in the present writer's church. The next day she prayed in tongues in the presence of some Italian friends who identified the "tongue" speaking as Italian, a language with which she is not conversant. In charismatic services in the author's church, other languages have been identified on several occasions. It is also significant to note that each participant in these services prays in a distinctive and clearly recognizable tongue. Vocabulary, inflections, intonations are all distinctive and clearly distinguishable."¹³⁵

We have to disagree with those who speak of a "prayer language" as something other than the same manifestation as was experienced on Pentecost (see footnote 118). All evidence, both in the

this expectation. These sent out missionaries based on this premise. However, they found difficulties when putting the belief into practice. For example, A.G. Carr, the first white man to speak in tongues at Azusa, went to India, expecting the Spirit to enable him to speak Hindi. When this didn't happen, Garr and his wife moved to China and studied Chinese. The consistent experience of the early Pentecostal missionaries was that if foreigners did understand them, it was a rare exception, rather than the rule.

¹³⁵ Ervin, *op. cit.* pages 127-128

Greek terms used (γένη γλωσσῶν), and reported experiences, cause us to define this gift as a genuine language, spoken somewhere, at some time.

- **The Interpretation of Tongues**

Those who claim that *tongues* are ecstatic utterances, rather than genuine languages, argue that *tongues* require *interpretation*, rather than, *translation*.¹³⁶ This is a faulty argument. The Greek term, *ermeneia* (ἑρμηνεία), can mean either *interpretation* or *translation*. It is much the same in idiomatic English. When a missionary travels among people whose language he does not know, he works with an *interpreter*, whom the missionary trusts to *translate*.¹³⁷

Thus, we have to conclude that this manifestation is an Holy Spirit given ability to translate/interpret the languages being spoken by the tongues speakers. This becomes more evident and crucial in Chapter 14.

Verse 11

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (this echoes 4:7 *what do you have that you did not receive*).

The three truths of this verse are foundational to our understanding of this section:

- The Holy Spirit is the source of the *charismata*
- The Holy Spirit gives *charismata* to individual Christians
- The choice of the *charisma* that is given and the choice of the individual to whom it is given rests solely in the will of the Holy Spirit.

This verse is a verse of great hope. As Gordon Fee has written, “The hope, of course, lies with verse 11, that the one and the same Spirit will do as He pleases, despite the boxes provided for Him ...”¹³⁸

Verses 12-13

In these two verses, Paul emphasized the unity of the Body on the basis of the role of the Holy Spirit

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The terminology of most English versions, *by one Spirit we were all immersed*, is misleading. A better rendering would be *in* or *with*, rather than, *by*. The English, *by*, could be understood to mean that the Holy Spirit is the immerser. There is no declaration elsewhere in Scripture that the Holy Spirit immerses anyone. Jesus is the immerser, *in* or *with* the Holy Spirit. If Paul declared

¹³⁶ Paul’s statements in Chapter 14, which instruct tongues speakers and those prophesying to regulate their activity, clearly speak against an ecstatic state.

¹³⁷ Kittel cites all of the possible understandings of ἑρμηνεία. He then concludes that in this passage, it must mean *interpretation* rather than *translation*, since tongues speakers are in an ecstatic trance when manifesting a *tongue*. He argues that tongues are “non-speech.” We have to disagree, strongly, with Kittel’s assumption that the tongue-speakers were in an ecstatic state. Kittel’s assumption violates Paul’s description of the phenomenon as argued above. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) Volume 1, pages 661-665

¹³⁸ Fee, p. 600

the Holy Spirit to be the immerser, he would contradict every other statement in Scripture that comments on this subject.

Not only is the concept of the Holy Spirit's being the immerser a contradiction of all other scriptural statements made concerning this subject, but Greek grammar also opposes that idea. The Greek terms in this phrase, (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι *-en eni pneumati*), are the preposition (ἐν) with a dative noun. In classical Greek, one encounters the dative of agency, in which the noun in the dative is the one doing the acting. However, in the New Testament *Koine* Greek, one is hard-pressed to find a clear example of such usage. Many grammarians contend that such usage cannot be found. Blass and Debrunner state,

“Dative of agency is perhaps represented by only one genuine example in the New Testament and this with the perfect [verb tense]: Luke 23:15”¹³⁹

Eminent grammarian, Daniel B. Wallace, writes,

“In summary, we can say that there are no clear examples of the dative of agency in the NT, and even if the category does exist, it is, by all counts, exceedingly rare.”¹⁴⁰

Thus, we must conclude that Paul used the dative of means or dative of sphere in this verse, which would render the preposition as, *in* or *with*. The Holy Spirit is not the one who did the immersing, but, rather, He is the element in which the immersion took place. This is consistent with all of the other Scriptural statements on the subject of *immersion in the Holy Spirit*.

John the Immerser predicted that Jesus would immerse with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). Paul's unambiguous statement, that every Christian is immersed in the Holy Spirit is the strongest argument against *immersion in the Holy Spirit's* being something in addition to the reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of immersion in water (Acts 2:38-39).

If immersion in the Holy Spirit is a post-conversion event, which is experienced by laying on of hands at some point, resulting in speaking in tongues -something which some converts never receive (verses 29-30), then something is wrong with Paul's statement in this verse. Furthermore, his argument that this is the unifying factor in the Church is a failed argument.

The early church understood immersion in water to be the moment in which the convert encountered the Holy Spirit. Immersion in water and immersion in the Holy Spirit were understood to be concurrent events.¹⁴¹

Note that when Paul encountered some disciples in which he sensed that something was missing in their lives. He asked them,

*"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*³ *And he said, "Into what then were you immersed?" And they said, "Into John's immersion."*¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Friedrich Blass and Albet Debrunner, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press) 1979, page 102 P. 191

¹⁴⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1996, page 373

¹⁴¹ See ADDENDUM F: Water and Spirit

¹⁴² Acts 19:1-3

It is obvious from this query that Paul assumed that the reception of the Holy Spirit accompanied a convert's being immersed into Jesus Christ.

Paul then explained to them the difference between the immersion of John and the immersion of Christ.

And Paul said, "John immersed with the immersion of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."⁵ And when they heard this, they were immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus.¹⁴³

Following their immersion, Paul laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them and they began to speak in tongues and prophesy.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.¹⁴⁴

This is one of only two instances in Scripture in which hands were laid on someone, resulting in a manifestation that validated the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The other instance in which a human agent was involved in laying on of hands, resulting in a Holy Spirit manifestation is in Acts 8 when the Gospel was first preached in Samaria. When Saul of Tarsus was ravaging the church in Jerusalem, Christians left the city and went elsewhere. Everywhere they went they proclaimed the Gospel. Phillip, a deacon in the Jerusalem Church, went to Samaria. When he arrived in Samaria, he encountered a sorcerer, named Simon, who had controlled the people by his sorcery. Philip boldly preached the Gospel to the Samaritans, causing them to turn from Simon and to accept Christ.

But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being immersed, men and women alike.¹³ And even Simon himself believed; and after being immersed, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.¹⁴ Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus.¹⁷ Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,¹⁹ saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."¹⁴⁵

Given these two events described in Acts 8 and Acts 19, we encounter one of the puzzles of spiritual ministry. Clearly, the events in Samaria and the episode involving disciples of John the Baptist, describe an obvious manifestation of the Spirit which occurred through human agents' being used to impart the Spirit.

Anyone who has been involved in ministry, in the last 100 years, knows of many responsible individuals who have experienced an unusual manifestation of the Spirit, when a believer laid hands on them. The evidence has been unmistakable. However, based on the terms used in Scripture, there is no Scriptural authority for calling these instances, *baptism in the Holy Spirit*.

Only two events in Scripture are given that label and in neither of them was a human agent involved:

¹⁴³ Acts 19:4-5

¹⁴⁴ Acts 19:6

¹⁴⁵ Acts 8:12-19

- Acts 2: After His resurrection, just prior to His ascension, Jesus told the apostles to not do anything until they were immersed in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2-8). This was fulfilled on Pentecost (Acts 2:4, 33). When the apostles received the immersion in the Holy Spirit, they *spoke in tongues, as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance*. The crowd that heard them speak came from a variety of geographical regions – from Libya and Cyrene on the north coast of Africa, to Phrygia and Pamphylia, northwest of Palestine, to Arab countries in the distant east of Palestine, to Rome which was to the west.
- Acts 10: The only other event that is labeled, immersed in the Holy Spirit, is the event that took place in the home of Cornelius. As Peter was reciting elements of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit fell on his hearers and they began to speak in tongues and glorify God. Peter and the Jews who were with him were amazed, because it was evident that God had given the gift of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles. Since the falling of the Holy Spirit credentialled the reception of Gentiles into the Kingdom, those manifesting the gift of the Holy Spirit were immersed in water. After he returned to Jerusalem, Peter had to defend his going to Gentiles and preaching the Gospel. In conclusion, he said, *And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning.*¹⁶ *And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, “John immersed with water, but you shall be immersed with the Holy Spirit.” If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?”* (Acts 11:15-17).

As stated above, of significance is the fact that in neither of these two events was there a human agent “laying on hands.” It was a sovereign act of God, without a human agent’s being involved. The two events in which human agents were involved are not given the label, *immersion in the Holy Spirit* (Acts 8:15-17; 19:2-6).

One can speculate as to why manifestations occurred in the instances where such exceptional manifestations did take place.

- On Pentecost, to validate the first preaching of the Gospel and as evidence to the apostles that the empowerment predicted by Jesus had been received (Acts 1:8), freeing them to begin to be His witnesses;
- In Samaria, to validate the reception of half-breed Jews into the Kingdom – previously only Jews had received the Gospel; the fact that Peter, to whom had been given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven¹⁴⁶ was an agent in imparting the Holy Spirit, further validated their reception;
- In the household of Cornelius to validate the reception of Gentiles into the Kingdom; this was Peter’s defense when he returned to Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18). Again, the fact that Peter, to whom had been given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven¹⁴⁷ was the spokesman, further validated their reception;
- In Ephesus, to demonstrate to the disciples of John the Baptist that there was an Holy Spirit whose presence was experienced, not just something they believed to be a reality.

¹⁴⁶ Matthew 16:18-19

¹⁴⁷ Matthew 16:18-19

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

A lesson to be learned from these episodes – which do not follow the pattern of all of the other salvation events described in the New Testament - is that we must not formulatize the Holy Spirit. The only thing certain, is that under normal circumstances, the Holy Spirit is given to each person at the time of his immersion, and from that time onward, the indwelling Holy Spirit is a guarantee that heaven is the eternal destiny of that convert (Romans 8:16; II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14).

Even so, for reasons known only to God, there are situations and seasons of the Church, when the activity of the Holy Spirit is manifested in a variety of non-predictable manners and impartations. To deny this is to deny reality. We are reminded of Jesus' statement to Nicodemus,

The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

Our responsibility is to follow the clearly commanded and demonstrated pattern, but recognize that God is God and He, from time to time, breaks the pattern for reasons that rest in Him.

For by one Spirit we were all immersed into one body...and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

These two parallel statements emphasize the essential role of the Holy Spirit in initiating us into one Body, Jew or Greek, bond or free, and then sustaining life in the Body.

Thus, regardless of what gifts the Holy Spirit has given to any individual, or how the Holy Spirit manifests Himself through any individual, Christians are united in the origin and the ongoing existence of our spiritual life – which is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 14-26

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The point of these verses is quite apparent. Paul is arguing for unity in diversity and in this section, he emphasizes diversity.

- The Holy Spirit has given diverse manifestations to diverse individuals.
- Each of these manifestations has been given for the good of the church.
- No one "has it all." Each one is deficient without the others.
- This is by Divine design.

Realizing our common origin, the common possession of the Holy Spirit which makes us one, and the common source of our gifts, there should be no division among us. When we care for one another and rejoice when one of our members is honored, either by God or man, we really are caring for and rejoicing for ourselves – for all of us constitute the body. This paragraph and Romans 12 present the same truth.

Verse 27

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

- *You* (ὅμοις plural, *you* – the local church at Corinth) *are Christ's body*;
- *Individually* (focusing on each individual Christian) *are members of it*

Verse 28

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

Paul continued to emphasize diversity:

- Paul ranked apostles, prophets, and teachers, as, one, two, three. He probably considered this to be the order of precedence in founding and building up the church. He displayed this view in Ephesians 2:20
having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone
- *Miracles and gifts of healings* in this list are in the reverse order of Paul's previous list of *charismata* (verses 8-10), which suggests the irrelevancy of rank in the list from this point on.
- *Helps and administrations* are not mentioned in the earlier list of *charismata*, nor are they mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament.¹⁴⁸ This is one of the reasons that we conclude that none of the lists is an exhaustive list.
- It is not surprising that *various kinds of tongues*, is last in the list, since this *charisma*, and the pride associated with it, was the main source of controversy in Corinth.

The manner in which Paul constructed this list, mixing *charismata* with ascension gifts (Ephesians 4:11), listing things not listed elsewhere, and listing them in a different order from the other lists in this section, emphasizes the point that he is making – diversity, not hierarchy.

Verses 29-30

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

The rhetorical questions in verses 29-30 are questions to which Paul anticipated a negative answer. As noted earlier (the discussion of 9:1-2), in Greek, one asks rhetorical questions in a manner that indicates whether the questioner anticipates a “yes” or a “no.” If a “yes” is

¹⁴⁸ Κυβέρνησις, here translated as *helps*, means to govern, or to offer wise counsel. A related word from the same root, κυβερνήτης, means *helmsman* or *sailing-master*. This is a different term from the one used in Romans 12:8, προϊστάμενος which means, *the one taking the lead*.

Ἀντίληψις, here translated, *administrations*, does not occur in any other New Testament passage. However, it is found in the Septuagint with the meaning of *aid* or *help*. Romans 12 has a different term, διακονία, which conveys a similar idea. Because Romans 12:7 uses the term, διακονία some argue that this is referring to the work of deacons. Although this may include the work of deacons, it certainly cannot be limited to deacons.

anticipated, the question begins with *ou* (οὐ) If a “no,” the question begins with *me* (μή). Each of these questions begins with *me* (μή). By using this technique, Paul thus stated that

- not everyone is an apostle,
- not everyone is a prophet,
- not everyone is a teacher,
- not everyone works miracles,
- not everyone has gifts of healings,
- not everyone speaks in tongues,
- not everyone interprets tongues.
- God determined that it should be so.

Paul made these statements for one purpose – to emphasize the diversity in God’s design and the mutual dependency of believers. Paul declared that this distribution was determined by the will of the Holy Spirit.

The contemporary assertion, made by some Pentecostals and Charismatics, that everyone can and should speak in tongues flies in the face of Paul’s argument. If everyone could or should, then Paul’s argument that God willed this diversity, would be a failed argument.

To repeat what we noted earlier, there is inconsistency in the lists found in Chapter 12.

- Paul lists nine *charismata* in verses 8-10
- He presents a mixed list of eight, in verse 28, including two that are not found elsewhere and not including three that are listed in verses 8-10
- In the rhetorical questions in verses 29-30, the list is different from the previous two lists.

Because of this, we should not assume that any of the lists exhausts the manner in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the Church.

Verse 31

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

What are the greater gifts? Dr. Ervin, argues that the greater gifts are those enumerated in verse 28, *God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, etc.*

“It intimates that when he said, ‘*first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers,*’ he was expressing a value judgment upon this specific category of gifts. The apostles therefore are possessors of the most important spiritual gift...”¹⁴⁹

Dr. Ervin’s position doesn’t fit the context of Paul’s discussion in Chapters 12-14. Paul is correcting and instructing the church concerning the manifestation of gifts in the public service. Exhorting all of them to have an earnest desire to become apostles would be totally irrelevant and even contradictory to the point that he is making. An ascending spirit seems to have been one of the problems at Corinth. An exhortation to earnestly desire the role of an apostle is contrary to the heart attitude of any true apostle.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ervin, p. 141

¹⁵⁰ Paul consistently made the point that he did not choose to function as an apostle, but that such was God’s sovereign choice:

2 Corinthians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...*

Galatians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),*

Ephesians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...*

Colossians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...*

Much more appropriate is the traditional understanding of *the greater gifts*, i.e., those mentioned in Chapter 14 as being more beneficial to the church in its public meeting, which we will consider in that section.

Chapter 13 reveals when the charismata will cease

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

⁴ *Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,*⁵ *does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,*⁶ *does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;*⁷ *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

⁸ *Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*⁹ *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;*¹⁰ *but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.*

¹¹ *When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*¹² *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.*

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

This chapter is one of the most beloved sections of Scripture. Many people who know nothing of the Bible can quote the first six verses of I Corinthians 13, usually with a sentimental understanding of love.

To isolate these verses from the context, misses the essential point of the chapter. The point of the chapter is that unless love is the motivation and the atmosphere in which one ministers a gift, the ministry is of no benefit to anyone, including the minister himself.

The comments made concerning the cessation of the gifts (verses 8-13) are at the very heart of any study of the gifts. As noted in the *Preface*, Cessationists cite statements made in Chapter 13 as evidence for their position.

The next few pages will evaluate the Cessationist argument that is based on statements made in I Corinthians 13 (see ADDENDUM E for an evaluation of the Cessationist argument from Church History).

1 Timothy 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,*

2 Timothy 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,*

Cessationist argument from I Corinthians 13

I Corinthians 13:8-12 states that the miraculous manifestations are temporary and will pass away

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Based on these verses, Cessationists conclude that prophecy, tongues, and supernatural knowledge will cease when God's full revelation is given. They also conclude that the full revelation described in this passage is the Bible.

Here is how one Cessationist, Robert B. Blazek, presents this argument. His presentation summarizes the most common Cessationist argument with respect to I Corinthians Chapter 13.

“Verse 9 speaks about that which is partial, but in contrast, verse 10 speaks about that which is complete. In showing this contrast, the best way to translate *teleios* in verse 10 is ‘complete.’ Since revelation, at the time Paul wrote I Corinthians, was only partial, through the miraculous gifts of knowledge and prophecy, the perfect must refer to the finished and complete revelation of God.

In other words, at that time the Christians had pieces and parts of God's revelation, but Paul was saying that there was a time coming when they would have the total and at that time the parts would be absorbed into the whole. Prophecies, tongues, knowledge – and all the rest of the gifts - shall pass away when the ‘perfect’ is come, namely, the gospel fully revealed and the church fully instructed. The gifts came in with the apostles and went out with them...

Every other time this word [*teleios*] appears in the New Testament in the neuter gender, it refers to the will of God or the law of God (Romans 12:2; James 1:25). Thus, it is not unusual for God's revelation to be called perfect (*teleion*).

What do we learn then from these verses? First, that love will never end. Second, that tongues will come to an end. Third, that miraculous knowledge and prophecy were only partial. Fourth, that miraculous knowledge and prophecy would be done away when the ‘perfect’ came. Fifth, that the ‘perfect’ is the complete revelation, which we have today in the Bible. My conclusion is that this passage teaches that miraculous gifts would pass away when the completed canon of the New Testament was written. And history bears this out.”¹⁵¹

In summary, here is the Cessationist argument:

- Miraculous knowledge, prophecy, tongues, etc., will be done away when *the perfect* comes.
- The Greek term translated, *the perfect*, is in the neuter gender.
- This term is used in the neuter only two other times in Scripture, and in both instances it refers to the will of God or the law of God (Romans 12:2; James 1:25).
- Thus, the term refers to the Gospel fully revealed and the Church fully instructed (i.e., the completion of the canon).

The first flaw in the Cessationist argument

The first quite obvious flaw in the Cessationist argument from I Corinthians 13 is the allegation made concerning the neuter gender of *teleios* (τέλειος). *Teleios* is an adjective. An adjective must agree in gender and number with the noun that it modifies. *Teleios* occurs nineteen times in the New Testament, describing various things as being *perfect* or *complete*, in each instance agreeing in gender and number with the noun that it describes or replaces. When an adjective is used in place of a noun (technically called, “substantive use of the adjective”) it is in the gender of the implied noun.¹⁵² Thus, *teleios* is found:

- thirteen times in the masculine gender
- twice in the feminine
- four times in the neuter

Here are the four New Testament instances of *teleios* in the neuter gender:

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect*

In this verse, *teleios* describes *will*, which in the Greek language is a neuter noun. Therefore, *teleios* must appear in the neuter gender.

1 Corinthians 13:10 *but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.*

This the verse under debate.

James 1:4 *And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Here, *teleios* describes *result* (the Greek term, ἔργον *ergon* - literally, *work*) a neuter noun, therefore, *teleios* must appear in the neuter gender.

James 1:17 *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

In this verse, *teleios* describes *gift* (the Greek term, δῶρημα *dorema*), which is a neuter noun, therefore, *teleios* must appear in the neuter gender.

It is obvious that the Cessationist assertion is faulty. Instead of two neuter uses of *teleios*, in addition to I Corinthians 13, there are three. One of the examples cited by the Cessationist (James 1:25), does not contain a neuter, but rather a masculine gender *teleios*.¹⁵³ Looking at the three examples of a neuter *teleios*, listed above, one would be hard pressed to find any sort of commonality in what the neuter *teleios* modifies or describes:

¹⁵¹ Robert B. Blazek, “The Perfect Has Come,” *The Christian Standard*, July 17, 1977, page 9-10

¹⁵² For example, the adjective, *good*, can be used in place of *good things* (as in, “let us always seek the good”) or in the place of *good men* (as in, “the good die young.”).

¹⁵³ The form of *teleios* found in James 1:25 is, *teleion* (τέλειον). This is the spelling of the adjective in both the neuter and masculine, singular, accusative. The reason that *teleion* in this verse must be understood as masculine, is because it modifies *nomon* (νόμον), the accusative singular form of the masculine noun *nomos* (νόμος).

- In one instance it refers to the will of God which is discerned through a renewed mind
- In one instance, the term refers to the result of living through trials, i.e. a mature character
- In one instance it refers to gifts that God bestows – all perfect gifts come from Him.

We can only conclude that the neuter use of *teleios* in I Corinthians 13 is of no help in determining the identity of the *perfect*.

The second flaw in the Cessationist argument

The second flaw in the Cessationist argument from I Corinthians 13 is that it diminishes Paul's statement concerning our total knowledge, when the *perfect* comes. Paul described a time in which we will know everything clearly, rather than having to be content with our present state in which all that we see is but a reflection of heavenly truth. When *the perfect* comes, we will know all things fully, even as God now knows us fully.

Today we have the Bible, the canon is complete. Today, untold hours are spent meditating on Scripture as well as detailed and reverent study of the Scripture. Yet, can anyone honestly say that he has no questions, that we know all things clearly, that we know everything as fully as God knows us? Certainly, not. *The perfect* must refer to something other than the completed canon.

When will this perfect, complete knowledge come? We can reach but one conclusion. It will come when we die and face Our Lord, or when Jesus comes for His Church. In either of these cases, we no longer will need spiritual gifts because we will be experiencing full knowledge. No other option can measure up to Paul's statement concerning full clarity of knowledge and understanding.

A third flaw in the Cessationist argument

There is no evidence that the concept of a completed New Testament canon ever occurred to New Testament Christians. The writers of the four Gospels wrote their documents for particular audiences. Paul and the other authors of epistles wrote to specific audiences, usually dealing with particular issues. Each document was written as an individual document, without any thought on the part of the author that he was creating a piece of a corpus that someday would be known as "the Bible." It is true that Peter labeled Paul's writings as Scripture (II Peter 3:15-16),¹⁵⁴ but it is quite a stretch to say that Paul wrote his letters with the understanding that he was contributing to a canon that would provide the full revelation that he referenced I Corinthians 13.

Chapter 14 gives guidelines for management of the *charismata* in the corporate meeting

The statements made in Chapter 14 bring us to the heart of the matter. From Paul's statements in this section it becomes apparent that the Sunday meeting must have been some sort of a vocal melee.

- Tongues speakers were exercising this gift in the meeting without interpretation
- Given Paul's statements at the close of Chapter 12 and the entire argument of Chapter 13, we can only conclude that there was controversy over the hierarchy of gifts. Pride was rampant.

¹⁵⁴ Of interest is the fact that there is no Greek word for *scripture*. The term is γραφή (*graphay*) which means, literally, *writings*.

- There was general disorder in the meeting. More than one person was speaking at the same time: prophets prophesying, tongues speakers praying out loud, a general noise without any edification of the general body taking place.
- Some were trying to silence the tongues speakers, fearing that they might be blaspheming God

Two overriding themes flow through this chapter:

1. The importance of order in the corporate meeting;
2. All manifestation of *charismata* in the corporate meeting must be for the edification of the saints, not for the edification or elevation of the individual exercising his gift.

Verse 1

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

The imperatives in this verse serve as a transition from the previous arguments to the matter at hand, which is the abuse of tongues. Those who manifest the gifts should seek to be vessels of love and as such, they should function in a manner that benefits the body. For that reason they are exhorted to *desire, earnestly, spiritual gifts*.

The term translated, *spiritual gifts*, is the same word that Paul used in the beginning of this section in 12:1, *pneumatikos*. Here, since it clearly is referring to the topic of *gifts*, as is seen in the following verses, it is *neuter* in gender. Given the context, *spiritual gifts* is the best rendering.

Upon reading this verse, we immediately face the question, “is the exhortation distributive or collective?” How should we understand the plural, *you*.

- If it is distributive, Paul urged each individual believer to earnestly desire to prophesy.
- If it is collective, he is urging the Church to desire that prophesy be fluent in their gathering.

Nothing in the Greek terminology leans one way or the other. However, since the balance of the chapter addresses the performance of individuals, it is best to understand this as an exhortation to individual believers to desire to receive gifts that bless the gathered church, of which prophesy is the prime example.

The truth of Chapter 12 always must be accepted: regardless of their desire, the Holy Spirit will distribute manifestations as He wills.

Verses 2-5

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

These verses set forth the basic contrasts and the central themes of what follows.

- The concern is for edification (vv. 3-5)
- The issue is intelligibility.

Uninterpreted tongues (v. 2, 5) is not understandable; hence it cannot edify the church (v. 4).

Prophecy is addressed to people for their edification (v. 3) and in that sense it is the greater gift.

Notice the contrast displayed in these verses:

- The one who speaks in tongues speaks *not* to people, but to **God**
He speaks *mysteries* by the Spirit
- The one who prophesies speaks to **people**
(he speaks) *edification*
(he speaks) *encouragement*
(he speaks) *comfort*
- The one who speaks in tongues *edifies himself* (because he is praying)
- The one who prophesies *edifies the church* (because he brings the word of God)¹⁵⁵

Even though Paul seeks to decrease their zeal for congregational tongues speaking/praying, he is not demeaning the gift itself. He states three positive things about tongues:

- The tongues speaker is communing with God. Paul understood the phenomena to be a form of prayer and/or praise
- The content of the tongues can be *mysteries*. As noted earlier the Greek term translated, *mysteries*, is the term, *musterion* (μυστήριον). This term refers to something that God has revealed and it could only be known by revelation. So, the one praying in tongues may be speaking truths that could only be revealed by the Spirit.
- Tongues speech (prayer) is edifying to the one manifesting the tongue. This is not a negative thing, but rather emphasizes that the purpose of tongues is not just to display some manifestation in the public meeting. Uninterpreted tongues is appropriate for one's private devotions, but not for a public gathering.

The edifying benefit of prophecy passes the test of Chapter 13. Love is expressed by our serving one another through those things that build each other up.

The two words translated *exhortation and comfort* (verse 3), are quite synonymous.

- The first of the two, *paraklesis* (παράκλησις) can be rendered, *encouragement, comfort, exhortation, or appeal*.
- The second term, *paramuthia* (παραμυθία) may be rendered, *comfort or consolation*.

So, by using these terms in this fashion (*edification, encouragement, comfort*), Paul described prophecy as a rather full-orbed love-gift from God.

When Paul stated that *the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues*, he does so because of the intelligibility of prophecy in the language of the audience.

When one prays in a tongue and it is interpreted, then the congregation can say, "Amen."¹⁵⁶ So, it would seem that this would refer to a public prayer in tongues that is a prayer on behalf of the congregation (much as the public prayer offered in a traditional service today), and it then is interpreted so that the congregation can affirm what has been spoken in the prayer. The next paragraph expands this thought.

¹⁵⁵ Adaptation of Fee, page 655

¹⁵⁶ I Corinthians 14:16 *Amen*, i.e., *so be it, verily*

Verses 6-12

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

Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

Much could be noted here concerning how this paragraph relates to the Corinthians' attitude toward Paul. However, the most important truth here is Paul's emphasizing the importance of intelligibility in verbal elements of a meeting. We could involve ourselves in seeking to determine the meaning of *revelation* and how it differs from *prophecy*, but whatever conclusion we reached would be mere speculation.

Since Paul continually presented tongues-speaking as communication between the believer and God, we must conclude that his comment about coming to them with revelation, prophecy, or teaching in tongues is an hypothetical statement, an argument by analogy. He used this common debating technique to advance his point concerning intelligibility. To decide otherwise would force us to go against everything else he has said in this section concerning the use of tongues. The point of the paragraph is that unintelligible speech/prayer is of no profit to the Church.

Throughout this section Paul keeps emphasizing the purpose of a gathering of believers. It is to edify one another. This emphasis is presented strongly in Hebrews 10:23-26

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...

The meeting is not convened so that people can exercise their gifts, but rather so that saints can edify one another. Exercise of the gifts is one way that this is done, but it is a means, rather than an end in itself.

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Functioning in any gift or talent is not for the fulfillment of the one who is doing the functioning. The purpose of a Sunday meeting is not to provide an arena for people to feel fulfilled in some activity – music, speaking, etc. The motivation for all manifestations/functions in a church service should be to bless the congregation and to communicate to the congregation the word of God. It is not to be an arena for performance – a place where gifted and talented people can be fulfilled by exercising that talent or gift. Certainly, if one has the proper motivation, the congregation may be blessed by the exercise of the gift or talent, but that underlying motivation must be the determining factor when deciding whether or not a gift or talent should be displayed in a meeting of the Body.

Verse 13-19

Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

¹⁶Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.

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

NOTE ON VERSE 16

The Greek text does not contain the definite article *the*, i.e. *the spirit*, except in the textual family on which the KJV is based.

Also, the preposition *in* (ἐν) is missing in many manuscripts. It is found in only three Fourth Century Uncials, one Sixth Century Uncial, one Sixth Century papyri, and one Coptic document that could be dated as early as the Third Century. Therefore, the evidence for the inclusion of the preposition is very questionable. Most of the current Greek New Testaments that do include the preposition, put it in square brackets ([ἐν]), indicating its questionable status.

The English versions that have chosen to render the phrase as, *in the spirit*, acknowledge that the text does not allow this to refer to praying in the Holy Spirit. They indicate this by not capitalizing the word, *spirit*, in this clause. The ESV and the NIV make a point of this fact by adding the word, *your*, (ESV *give thanks with your spirit*; NIV *praising God with your spirit*).

This paragraph continues the argument of the previous one. Here, Paul became more specific concerning corporate worship. Several things catch our attention.

- This is the first time that we are informed of the possibility that one who speaks/prays in a tongue also may interpret – should the Holy Spirit grant that *charisma*. The reason for a tongues speaker to pray for the ability to interpret is so that he can bless his fellow believers in the corporate meeting. Otherwise, he is out of the loop as far as public ministry is concerned.
- The particular faculties that are in operation when one is praying in a tongue or in one's known language are:
 1. When praying in tongues, one is praying with his human spirit;
 2. When praying in the person's known language one is praying with his human mind.

Thus, it is clear that praying *with* the spirit is not the same thing as saying that one is praying *in* the Holy Spirit. The difference between these concepts is seen in verses 14-16:

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

- When he prays in a tongue, his human spirit is praying.
- When he prays in a language that his mind understands, his mind is praying.
- He made the same statement about singing.
- He made the same statement about pronouncing a blessing.

NOTE: There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in these three verses.

Contrast this with Jude 17-21

... "In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

After reminding the believers that there is a world full of those who are devoid of the Holy Spirit, Jude highlighted the blessing of praying *in* the Holy Spirit; he states that this is one of the activities related to our remaining strong and faithful in the faith. This reminder clearly refers to "praying *in* the Holy Spirit." NOTE: In contrast with I Corinthians 14:14-16, the human spirit is not referenced by Jude.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul gave the same exhortation as that given by Jude.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:18)

Paul stated that all prayer and petition (all kinds of prayer) are to be prayed *in* the Spirit. This clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, because of the use of the definite article and the preposition, *in*, which is consistent with the exhortation of Jude.

Thus, we conclude that all prayer at all times is to be prayed *in* the Holy Spirit, whether it is with the human spirit (tongues) or with the human mind (known language). It also is possible to pray with the human spirit or to pray with the human mind and not be, "*in* the Spirit." When the Corinthians were praying in tongues, in a prideful and contentious manner, they certainly were not praying *in the Spirit*.

Whether one is praying with his mind or his spirit, all prayer should be in the Holy Spirit. Failure to recognize this has resulted in an inappropriate elevation of tongues. Paul does not present such an hierarchy.

Let it be noted that Paul indicated that tongues can be used in almost any devotional act: singing and blessing and giving of thanks. Yet, he restricts his use of tongues to a private activity, not something to be done in a gathering of the Church – unless interpreted.

Verse 20-25

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written,

"By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord.

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

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

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

This paragraph is one of the most misunderstood sections of Scripture. There seems to be a contradiction between the statement *tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers* and the following warning on the impact on unbelievers who enter a meeting in which uninterpreted tongues are being manifested, *will they not say that you are mad?*

How can tongues on one hand be a sign to unbelievers and on the other hand be something that will drive unbelievers away? The question is answered clearly and easily when we take note of the passage that Paul quotes in his argument.

The passage is Isaiah 28:11-12. These verses are in a section of Isaiah in which there are many Messianic promises and glowing words about the future remnant. However, woven among these glorious promises are gloomy scenes of judgment. In Chapter 28:1-13, Yahweh condemned the drunken excesses of the rulers and religious leaders of Judah. They reeled and staggered about like men at their wits end. They befouled the tables of Yahweh with their vomit and then wallowed in their filth. They made sport of the prophet whom God had sent to rebuke their sin. In the Hebrew, their drunken song has an insulting lilt.

Jehovah pled with Judah through prophetic words, but Judah would not listen. Therefore, God declared that he would send different words to them. These new words would be spoken in languages that they did not understand. These words would be spoken by the nations that would conquer them. When they heard these tongues, they would know that they were under judgment.

As a part of his argument for the restriction of uninterpreted tongues, Paul employed this judgmental promise to Israel - the only time that God would send messages in a language that could not be understood was when He was judging those among whom He sent these tongues.

If God Himself sent a flurry of tongues activity into the Corinthians' midst and withheld interpretation, that would be a sign that He considered the Corinthians to be unbelievers. It would be a sign of judgment. To conclude anything other than this is to ignore the meaning of his quote from Isaiah 28. Intelligible prophecy, on the other hand, is something that God sends to believers (following the figure of Isaiah 28).

Based on Paul's argument in these verses, we must conclude that if uninterpreted tongues are taking place in the meeting, one of two options must be true:

1. God is judging the church
2. The tongues are not motivated by the Holy Spirit

Thus, there is no contradiction between this declaration and Paul's reason for banning uninterpreted tongues from the meeting, i.e., the impact of uninterpreted tongues on strangers who might enter their meeting. Those uninformed about manifestations of the Holy Spirit, or unbelievers, would be repulsed by uninterpreted tongues – they will say that you are insane.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, prophecy understood by the hearers might bring them under conviction.

¹⁵⁷ The term Paul employed in verse 23, *will they not say that you are insane*, is the verb, *mainomai* (μαίνομαι). This term was used to describe the ecstatic state of various pagan oracles when they delivered their sayings, as well as the ecstatic state of worshippers of various pagan gods. That being true, Paul seems to be urging them to avoid behavior that was the same as worshippers of pagan gods. For comment on this term, see H. Preisker, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Paul's warning in this passage definitely stands as a rebuke to the behaviour that has been manifested in some contemporary "revivals." Clucking like chickens, writhing like snakes, growling like lions, etc., would impress unbelievers with the insanity of the actors, even more than uninterpreted tongues.

Verse 26-33

²⁶ *What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.*

Let all things be done for edification.

²⁷ *If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret;*²⁸ *but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.*

²⁹ *And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.*³⁰ *But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.*³¹ *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;*³² *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;*³³ *for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

What is the outcome then, indicates that Paul is tying up all that has been said thus far. The emphasis of this paragraph are two:

- Everything should be done in a manner that edifies the church
- A God approved meeting will be one that reflects God's orderly character

There is the implication that some may come to the meeting with a song, a prophecy, etc., already received or prepared, planning to present it in the meeting.

Paul did not instruct them to speak in a tongue and then wait to see if someone could interpret (a common practice among Pentecostals and Charismatics today). His instruction was that if a known interpreter were not present in the meeting, then tongues speakers/prayers should remain silent ... *and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church.*

Some contend that the guideline is that two or three prophets should be allowed to speak in a meeting, then some discernment should be pronounced on what has been spoken thus far, then two or more can speak, etc. Most exegetes understand Paul to indicate that only two or three should speak in a meeting.

Although Paul used the term, *prophets*, in the expression, *let the prophets speak* (verse 29), he probably wasn't referring to the Ephesian 4:11 category of prophet. He probably was referring to those members of the church through whom prophecy was manifested in a given meeting. This seems apparent from the fact that throughout this section he continually uses the term, *all*, referring to the entire church.

There should be a careful weighing of what has been said prophetically. Note that this is not required of interpreted tongues, because tongues normally are used for prayer and not prophetic

messages. The verb rendered, *pass judgment* (verse 29) is the verbal form¹⁵⁸ of the noun¹⁵⁹ used in 12:10, in reference to *distinguishing of spirits*.

There are scant guidelines as to how this to be done. To whom does the term, *others* (verse 29) refer?

- A view that has become quite popular in some Charismatic circles is that other prophets are to be the one's doing this discerning- they are *the others*.
- In other circles, the view is that those who have the gift of *discerning of spirits* are to be the ones judging prophecy.
- Some hold the view that Ephesians 4:11 prophets should do the discerning.
- Some argue that neither of these is the case, but that someone other than the prophets (possibly elders) should be the ones judging prophecy.

Honesty requires us to say that the identity of *the others* is not clear, and each congregation must decide this issue for itself, and not judge one another in what view is taken by that congregation.

The phrase, *for you can all prophesy one by one*, in the context of the rest of the chapter and the points made in Chapter 12, could not mean that all will or do prophesy. It refers to Paul's focus on the church as a whole, not just on a group of prophets, and that an orderly conduct of the meeting will allow members to move in the manifestation of the gift, in their proper turn. The sense is that all who have a prophetic word, if they conduct themselves in an orderly fashion, will have opportunity to deliver their word. There is no need for many to be speaking at once.

Three other points stand out in this paragraph:

- Those who receive a manifestation are not possessed by it and unable to restrain themselves, i.e., they are not in an ecstatic state, they have their wits about them.
- Just because a prophecy is received, doesn't mean that it has to be delivered.
- God is a God of order and a meeting of the Church should reflect that order. Corinthian disorder was an aberration, since order characterized the meetings of all other churches.

Verses 34-35

The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

Throughout the letter, there are hints that there were women in the church who, because of their assumed spiritual gifts, had been disruptive in the church. Both egalitarians (those who argue for equality of the sexes) and complimentarians (those who argue that the sexes compliment one another) consider these two verses to forbid women's asking questions in the public meeting. One egalitarian, Craig Keener, makes a strong argument for this position.¹⁶⁰

These verses cannot mean that women cannot ever speak in the public meeting. Otherwise, Paul's comments on female attire when prophesying would be meaningless (I Corinthians 11:5).

¹⁵⁸ διακρίνω – *diakrinoh*

¹⁵⁹ διάκρισις - *diakrasis*

¹⁶⁰ Keener, Craig, S. *Paul, Women, & Wives* (Peabody, Mass, Hendrickson)1992, pages 80-86

LESSON FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Once again, we must admit that we do not know what was going on in the Sunday meetings at Corinth that prompted Paul to give this strong prohibition. Therefore, we must not judge one another as to how a particular contemporary church chooses to comply with this restriction.

Verses 36-40

Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

Paul's long response to their inquiry concerning spiritual things, draws to a close. The basic issue was the view held by some Corinthians that to be *spiritual* was to speak in tongues. For this reason, they had great zeal for this gift. They insisted that it be practiced in the assembly.

Paul informed them that he was a frequent tongues speaker, so he was not opposed to tongues because there were benefits attached to the exercise of this gift. The chief benefit was to the tongues speaker. Paul was opposed to prayer and praise in tongues in a congregational setting, unless the tongues were accompanied by interpretation.

Here is a flow of the central points made in these chapters:

- In Chapter 12 he had urged them to realize that being spiritual recognized a great variety of gifts and ministries in the church.
- In Chapter 14 he pointed out that the purpose of having church gatherings is for the edification of the congregation.
- In Chapter 13, he stated that doing this is an expression of love.

In the verses before us (36-40), Paul used some very strong language.

- First, he hit them with a verbal put-down, a bit of sarcasm, *Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?* In other words, "Who are you to tell the rest of us how it should be done? Is Corinth an exception to the rules that govern all of the other churches?"
- Then, he declared that the instructions that he gave were not his, but that they were God's command, given through Paul.
- This is followed by a prophetic sentence of judgment, *But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized* (the thought is very close to his statement in 8:2-3). Paul is not going to try to convince them, or waste time arguing the point. He is going to ignore them. If they don't recognize his commandment as being from God, they will deal with God, not Paul.

The closing exhortation is to conduct an orderly service, and to not forbid spiritual manifestations. These two verses (39-40) hit both the groups that want no spiritual manifestations in their midst and those who want nothing but these manifestations without guidelines.

So, we return to our two unaddressed questions:

1. Is I Corinthians 14 a description of a normal church service in the First Century, or was this just a “Corinthian” service and not the norm for all First Century churches?

This question cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. The only scriptural description that we have of such a service is in the Corinthian letter, and the Corinthian Church certainly was not a model church.

A very telling item is the fact that the rather complete description of a church service given by Justin Martyr (c140 AD) makes no mention of such manifestations.¹⁶¹ For that matter, there is no mention of anything that could be understood as *charismata* until Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies*, composed in 185 AD, and his writings do not describe that activity as taking place in a Sunday meeting, but something experienced as a part of the normal Christian life.

Tertullian, writing early in the Third Century describes a Montanist service,¹⁶² but the prophetic words received were not spoken during the meeting. Tertullian wrote, “After the people are dismissed, at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in a vision.”¹⁶³

Paul clearly stated that all of the other churches practiced order in their services. To some degree, we should be thankful that the Corinthian Church failed to manifest that order. If the Corinthian Church had been handling things properly, we would not have Paul’s extensive discussion of the *charismata* in I Corinthians.

¹⁶¹ See ADDENDUM H for Justin’s description of a Sunday service.

¹⁶² The Montanists were a sect that became heretical in many ways. Montanus believed that the Church was overly reliant on Scripture. Montanus contended that inspiration was immediate and continuous and that he was the Paraclete through whom the Holy Spirit spoke, even as the Holy Spirit had spoken through Paul and the other apostles. When he did refer to Scripture, it was with a fanatical misinterpretation. He and his two prophetess associates, Prisca and Maximilla, went about prophesying in the name of the Holy Spirit. The Montanists prophesied in a state of ecstasy, as though their personalities were suspended while the Holy Spirit spoke through them. Montanus quoted the Holy Spirit as saying, “Behold, man is like a lyre and I fly over it like the plectrum” (Today, we would call a plectrum a “guitar pick”).

Montanus and his two associates declared that any opposition to their new prophecy was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Montanus developed an elaborate eschatology, prophesying the speedy Second Coming of Christ. He taught that the Kingdom of Christ soon would be set up at Pepuza in Phrygia and that he would have a prominent place in that kingdom. In order to be prepared and qualified for this coming kingdom, Montanus and his followers practiced strict asceticism (much fasting, eating only dry foods, and no remarriage for widows or widowers, etc.). His doctrine of a new age of the Spirit suggested that the Christian period, centering on Jesus, had ended. He claimed the right to push Christ and the apostolic message into the background. In the name of the Holy Spirit, Montanus denied that God’s decisive and normative revelation had occurred in Jesus Christ. The movement was strongest around Carthage and the eastern lands. Montanism was regarded as heresy in most churches. Finally, in 381, the Council at Constantinople officially declared that Montanists were pagans.

¹⁶³ See ADDENDUM E

This is similar to the benefit we receive from the early church's dealing with a number of aberrant doctrines in the earliest years – the result is a collection of documents that reveal important data concerning the view of orthodox theology in those early years.

We are led to ask, “Why did the Holy Spirit and the early Church choose to preserve Paul's comments on the *charismata*?” The most obvious answer is because the churches of that age needed, and the Church in all ages will need, these guidelines.

2. If the manifestations are for every age, should church leaders seek to do what they can to promote the type of meeting described in I Corinthians 14, or are Paul's instructions more in the vein of, “if you do have these things, here is how to manage them in a God-honoring manner”?

Frequently, we hear leaders in Charismatic churches stating something to the effect that we need to, “stir up the gifts.” There is no exhortation anywhere in the New Testament to that effect. Timothy was urged to *kindle afresh* (KJV – *stir up*) the gift that was in him (II Timothy 1:6) and to *not neglect* the spiritual gift that was in him (I Timothy 4:14). However, the context of these exhortations makes it clear that Paul is referring to the gifts (and calling) that were given to Timothy for the special ministry to which he had been called, especially that of preaching and teaching. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is closer to the functional gifts referred to in Romans 12, where Paul urges diligence in the fulfilling of these spiritual enablements. This is not the same thing as stirring up the *charismata* in a corporate gathering of the Church.

Two extremes are possible, neither of which fits Paul's guidelines:

- a meeting that is so ordered and controlled that there is no opportunity for the *charismata* to function, should the Holy Spirit desire to manifest Himself. This certainly is far from the picture that Paul paints of a meeting in which the Holy Spirit is present and active.
- a meeting in which there is little of substantive value, but a weekly parade of folks popping up and speaking whatever comes to their mind, and calling it prophecy, or “a word.” This cheapens the entire concept of prophecy, etc.

Ten conclusions drawn from these three chapters

Conclusion #1

The Holy Spirit will manifest Himself throughout the Church Age. He may manifest Himself in one way here, and in another manner there, but manifestations always will be present in the Church. When God rings down the curtain on the present age, these things no longer will be taking place, because the need for them will be gone.

Conclusion #2

Individual Christians on the one hand and the corporate meeting on the other, are unlike anything else in the world. The living presence of God dwells within. Prior to His departure, Jesus did not dictate a host of rules and religious ceremonies which His followers had to obey in their own strength and discipline. Instead, He promised an ongoing living relationship, to be experienced through the presence of the Holy Spirit within each believer, producing a changed life and fruit. These gifts and His Presence also may be manifested through the *charismata* in the corporate meeting. A church meeting is not just a group of people with a common faith and purpose. It is a time in which believers encourage and edify one another, but it is even more than that. It is a time when Our Lord, through the Holy Spirit, ministers to His people. Jesus said, *Where two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be in the midst of them* (Matthew 18:20).

Conclusion #3

The Holy Spirit imparts various abilities to various individuals, enabling them to be instruments of edification to the church. These abilities are freely given gifts, which the Holy Spirit dispenses according to reasons within himself. Not everyone will manifest every gift. Some may manifest more than one. The Bible does not contain a single exhaustive list of the ways in which the Holy Spirit will manifest Himself.

Conclusion #4

It is appropriate for believers to have a passion for blessing the corporate gathering. One way that this is done is through prophecy. Therefore, if the motivation is to be a blessing to the body, a desire for the gift of prophecy is appropriate.

Conclusion #5

Church leaders should not control a service to the point that there is no liberty for the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself through various members of the congregation. A service constructed in a manner that forces everyone to be a spectator is not the New Testament model. This does not mean that the meeting cannot be planned or organized, but flexibility is important.

Elders should realize that they are responsible for overseeing the service, but that the service does not belong to them. It belongs to Our Lord. Statements such as, “Holy Spirit, we invite your presence here,” and “Jesus we invite you to move among us,” imply that the meeting is ours and we are inviting Him to attend. He clearly said that when we meet in His name, He will be in our midst (Matthew 18:20). A better perspective is that this is God’s meeting, and we thank Him for allowing us to come into His presence.

Conclusion #6

Regardless of what the elements of a service might be, all things should be done in an orderly manner. God is a God of order; disorder neither represents Him nor glorifies Him. A meeting that is a disordered cacophony is exactly what Paul proscribes in I Corinthians 14.

Conclusion #7

Prayer in tongues is praying in a legitimate language, spoken somewhere on the globe, either in the past or in the present, or a language spoken by angels. Tongues truly are, “prayer language.”

Conclusion #8

Tongues are given for the purpose of communicating with God. Tongues are not for communicating with the church. One should not pray out loud in tongues in the corporate gathering unless a known interpreter is present. Only one person at a time should pray in tongues and then be interpreted, so that the congregation can “amen” the prayer.

Conclusion #9

Praying *in the Spirit*, and *praying with the spirit* do not mean the same thing. Praying in the Spirit means praying at the impulse and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Praying with the spirit is praying in tongues. All prayer at all times is to be prayed *in* the Holy Spirit, whether it is with the human spirit (tongues) or with the human mind (known language).

Conclusion #10

Tongues, and perhaps all *charismata*, may function apart from the Holy Spirit. This is seen from the following:

1. *Charismata* should be ministered in a manner that edifies the body, as an expression of love.
2. Paul's corrective statements make it obvious that some of the Corinthians were seeking to elevate themselves through the public display of tongues, which was neither edifying to the body, nor an expression of love
3. The Holy Spirit would not motivate anyone to exercise a *charisma* in order to build someone's fleshly pride or to display an attitude of competition.
4. If the Holy Spirit did motivate a plethora of tongues speakers to display uninterpreted tongues in the corporate meeting, this would be a sign of judgment on the church.
5. Since God was not pronouncing judgment on the Corinthian Church, and the Holy Spirit was not motivating those who were displaying the gift of tongues in a divisive manner, then those who were speaking/praying in uninterpreted tongues were functioning apart from the Holy Spirit (they were not praying *in the Spirit*).

THE CERTAINTY OF THE PHYSICAL RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS (Chapter 15)

Denial of the resurrection of the dead had become a serious issue in the faith of the Corinthian believers. There is some speculation that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was not something immediately taught, when the early evangelistic endeavors were being undertaken.

The initial evangelistic message focused on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The manner in which Paul introduced the subject of the resurrection of believers in I Thessalonians (*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren*) could be understood as implying that Paul had not taught the resurrection of the dead when he was in Thessalonica.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.* ¹⁵ *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.* ¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

If, indeed, Paul had not taught the Thessalonians about the future resurrection of the dead, it is not far fetched to conclude that the same was true of his Gospel preaching Corinth.

The Basis for The Doctrine of the Resurrection of Believers: The Resurrection of Christ (15:1-11)

Verses 1-3

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

The Greek term, γνωρίζω (*gnoridzo*), literally means, *to make known*. Paul began this section by writing that he was making known to them what they already knew. The NIV, therefore, using the dynamic equivalency style of translation, renders the term, *I want to remind you*.

This summary of the Gospel message, *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*, obviously had been the central content of Paul's preaching in Corinth.

These facts are described by Paul as being of *first importance* – nothing exceeds the importance of these truths. The declaration of the resurrection of Christ, not only was central to Paul's preaching, but was the reason his Gospel message was sometimes rejected.¹⁶⁴

The tenses of the Greek verbs that Paul uses in this sentence is of importance:

- *Died for our sins* – the term, *died*, is in the aorist tense, ἀπέθανεν (*apethanen*) – a past action, a single event
- *He was buried* – the term, *was buried*, is in the aorist tense, ἐτάφη (*etafay*) – a past action, single event
- *He was raised* – the term, *was raised*, is in the perfect tense, ἐγήγερται (*egaygertai*) - a present condition resulting from a past action.

Paul warned them that if they did not hold fast to the word that he had delivered to them, and which they had accepted, then their belief had been in vain - *by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain*. Faithfulness until death is required of those who will be accepted into the Kingdom. This is asserted in several other passages of Scripture. Here are some examples:

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22) yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--²³ if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister., . (Colossians 1:22-23)

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,⁶ and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

¹⁶⁴ Acts 17:18, 32

⁷ For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸ but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (Hebrews 6:4-8)

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27)

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

It is important that we take into account the entire New Testament teaching concerning the believer and post-conversion sin.

The manner in which the KJV and the ASV have rendered I John 3:9, has caused some confusion concerning the believer and sin. These two versions have resulted in the doctrine of sinless perfection i.e, that a born-again believer reaches a state in which he lives a sinless life.

Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. (1 John 3:9 ASV)

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9 KJV)

The Greek verbs in this verse that refer to committing sin, are present tense, indicating an ongoing sinful lifestyle, not just committing a single act of sin. What John wrote is that one who is born of God does not continue to live a sinful lifestyle. The NAS, NIV, and NLT, render the Greek more accurately.

NAS: *No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

NIV: *No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.*

NLT: *Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God.*

Earlier in his epistle, John wrote some of the most realistic and encouraging verses in the Bible.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

Paul even had to struggle with his human failures.

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

²¹ *I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.* ²² *For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,* ²³ *but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.* ²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.* (Romans 7:15-25)

Verses 5-8

⁵ *and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.* ⁶ *After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;* ⁷ *then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;* ⁸ *and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.*

Paul is not giving a comprehensive list of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, but a summary. For example, in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, the first appearances are to women.¹⁶⁵

Paul's summary of Christ's post-resurrection appearances is helpful, especially his mention of Christ's appearance to five-hundred people at one time – most of whom were still living when Paul wrote I Corinthians. This statement is of abiding evidentiary importance. If someone challenged Paul, he could have referred the doubter to those who were present at that event.

Paul's reference to Christ's appearance on the Damascus road,¹⁶⁶ indicates that he did not consider the experience to have been a mere vision. He had seen the physically resurrected Lord, just as all of the others had seen the physically resurrected Lord. From that moment on, Paul's life was governed by the reality of that appearance.

Verses 9-11

⁹ *For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* ¹⁰ *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.* ¹¹ *Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

In a very self-deprecating manner, Paul affirms that he is an apostle – one who had seen the risen Lord. This was important, in that some in Corinth were challenging his authority.

God's grace was a major message of Paul's teaching¹⁶⁷ because he was so aware of God's grace toward him. He, who had been a persecutor of the Church, Our Lord chose to become the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul realized that it was all the result of God's sovereign grace.

In a rather cryptic manner, he reflects back to their divisive attitude displayed in Chapter One: *"I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ - Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

¹⁶⁵ Matthew 28:1ff; Mark 16:9; John 20:11ff

¹⁶⁶ Acts 9:1ff

¹⁶⁷ Grace is the major theme of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS
(15:12-34)

Having asserted that the resurrection of Christ is foundational to the Gospel, Paul proceeded to argue for the resurrection of believers – first appealing to one form of logic, then to another logical process, an *ad hominem* argument.

Verses 12–19 If Christ is not raised

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

¹³ *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.*

¹⁵ *Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*

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

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

Paul, for the sake of argument, says, *lets take your position and see where it leads us* (verse 13). The conclusion is that if their position is correct, that there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead, then Christ was not raised from the dead. If that is true, they had neither a past nor a future. Their entire faith system was defunct.

Furthermore, the preachers through whom they had become believers, were liars.

Then, reflecting all of the persecution and difficulty that Paul and the believers had faced because of their faith in Christ, Paul concluded his argument with a truth that they could not deny, *If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*

Verses 20-28 But Christ is raised

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

²¹ *For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,*

²⁴ *then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death.*

²⁷ *For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.*

These nine verses are a treasury of information, some of which is not revealed anywhere else in Scripture. This passage contains one of the strongest statements concerning the affirmation of Christ's manhood. He was, and is, fully God and fully man.

Through the first human, Adam, sin and death became the lot of the human race. By another human who was resurrected, never to die again, resurrection life has become available to the human race. Christ was/is the first fruit, then, at His second coming, all believers will experience a resurrection like that of Christ's.

Another striking truth in this passage is a revelation concerning the relationship between the Father and the Son.

- The Father has put all things under the authority of the Son.
- The Son will be in charge until He achieves complete victory over his enemies.
- Death is described as an enemy. This victory will be achieved when Our Lord returns, and all believers are resurrected, and death will be no more.
- When that has taken place, the Son will hand to the Father, the kingdom that He has established, and the Son will become subject to the Father.

As stated above, no other section of Scripture gives such detail concerning the present relationship of the Son to the Father and the ultimate relationship of the Son to the Father. These verses describe an hierarchy that was evident while Jesus was involved in his earthly ministry. He prayed to the Father and taught his followers to pray to the Father. However, after He ascended, such a clear picture of the relationship between the Father and the Son is obscured. These verses remove that obscurity.

Verses 29-34 An *ad hominem* argument

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

³⁰ *Why are we also in danger every hour?* ³¹ *I protest, brethren, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.* ³² *If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?*

If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

³³ *Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."* ³⁴ *Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.*

This being an *ad hominem* argument, it does not imply approval of the elements used in the arguments. In an *ad hominem* argument, the line of reasoning proceeds along the line of, "*if this is being done, then why....*" This is important, as we wrestle with the reference to *baptizing for the dead*.

When exploring the various views on what this means, we encounter at least 40 different solutions that have been suggested. Since baptizing for the dead has absolutely no Scriptural basis for this action, and since no more information is given concerning this practice, we must admit that it is impossible to determine exactly what was done and why it was done.

Since Paul is using an *ad hominem* argument, we do not need to resolve the question. Paul simply is arguing, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, why are you even doing this?"

Then, he asks, why should he or anyone else experience the vicissitudes of life if there is no more than just this life.¹⁶⁸ If this life is all that there is, why not go ahead and indulge in all of the fleshly pleasures and fleshly comforts available and then, just die.

¹⁶⁸ His reference to *fighting wild beasts at Ephesus* has to be understood metaphorically. He wrote this from Ephesus, and later (16:9) he wrote that many opposed him, Since he was in physical danger from that opposition, we can only conclude that this statement is metaphorical.

Then, assuming the outcome of his argument, he urges them to live lives that reflect a certain future. They should avoid those who would influence them otherwise. What one believes about the future influences how one lives in this present life.

Verses 35-44 The nature of resurrection bodies: the analogy of seeds and bodies

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

³⁶ *You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;³⁷ and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.*

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

³⁹ *All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.*

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

⁴² *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

Paul used some strong language here – *You fool!* He then used analogies from their everyday experience.

He pointed out that placing a seed in the ground is necessary for the production of a plant, and the resulting plant has a different form from the seed planted.

Then, to illustrate the difference between the bodies that the Corinthians had in this present life and the bodies that they will have in the future life, he wrote of the different types of flesh that they encountered in beasts, birds, and fish.

Then looking to the celestial heavens, he illustrated the fact that there are different types and levels of glory.

Thus, Paul concluded, the resurrected body will not be the same as the fleshly bodies that believers possess prior to the resurrection. Their resurrection bodies will be different from anything that they had experienced in this life. This brings to mind John's statement,

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (1 John 3:2)

Verses 45-49 Paul contrasted the life of Adam and the life produced by Christ's resurrection

So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

⁴⁶ *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.*

⁴⁸ *As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

The Greek terms that are rendered, *a living soul* and *life-giving spirit*, catch our attention.

- The term rendered, *soul*, is ψυχή (*pseuche*). This is the term that is used for all animal life – i.e. that which breathes. This is the term used in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Genesis 1, describing the creation of all living creatures, and in 2:7, the physical creation of man (each of these, man and animal, became living *souls*).
- The term rendered, *spirit*, is πνεῦμα (*pneuma*). This refers to the spirit that is possessed by God and those made in the image of God.

Paul further contrasted the nature of the two Adams and their relationship to life:

- The first Adam was a recipient of life – he became a living soul
- The last Adam (Christ), as a result of His resurrection, is a giver of life

In verse 46, other forms of these same two terms are used by Paul, to describe the *spiritual* and the *natural*.

An interesting sequence is stated here as a principle:

- *first the natural* (ψυχικός - *pseuchikos*)
- then the *spiritual* (πνευματικός - *pneumatikos*).

We see this principle displayed in human life. A child is born, ψυχικός, then, at some point in life, he/she hears and responds to the Gospel and becomes, πνευματικός (*spiritual*). Even though the child, being in the image of God, has a spirit, he/she does not become πνευματικός until, through the positive response to the Gospel, he/she receives the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and that indwelling becomes the governing force of a believer's spiritual life. Sadly, even after this spiritual birth, one can fall away and face eternal condemnation.

This danger is what prompted Paul to write verses 33-34,

³³ *Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."* ³⁴ *Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.*

It is important that we keep in mind the comments made in discussing 15:1-3 and God's provision for redemption of Christians who fail in their moral lives. An illustration of this is seen in the case of the man guilty of fornication with his father's wife and Paul's exhortation to receive the repentant man back into fellowship (I Corinthians 5:1-5; II Corinthians 2:5-11)

Paul's concluding statement proclaims a wonderful promise concerning the believer's future: *And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

Verses 50-58 The glorious resurrection awaiting believers.

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

⁵¹ *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*

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

⁵⁴ *But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.*

⁵⁵ *"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;* ⁵⁷ *but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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

This wonderful climax to the subject of the resurrection has been repeated uncountable times over the centuries, as the body of a believer is lowered into the grave.

Once again, we encounter the word rendered in the English versions as, *mystery*. As noted earlier (2:7), the term refers to something known for certain, but it could only be known because it has been supernaturally revealed (see footnote 54).

We see how the term applies here. The fact of Jesus' resurrection was known by all, because it was well-attested history (15:5-8). However, the resurrection of believers was in the future. Even though the specific time was unknown, the certainty that it would happen was beyond question – only because God had declared that it would happen.

Paul's statements here are in perfect harmony with what he wrote to the Thessalonians, as noted earlier (see introductory comments to this chapter).

Because this is true, Paul urged the Corinthians, and by extension, all Christians, to live lives that reflect the end-times attitude. It's not all about this life, but rather, the life to come.

THE COLLECTION FOR THE JERUSALEM CHURCH (16:1-4)

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

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

³ *And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;* ⁴ *and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.*

Paul and Barnabas had taken an offering to the Jerusalem Church before they began their extensive ministry among the Gentiles.¹⁶⁹ While Paul was Barnabas' understudy in Antioch, the prophet Agabus brought a prophetic word that a great famine was about to be experienced throughout the Roman Empire.

Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ *And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.* ²⁹ *And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.* ³⁰ *And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. (Acts 11:27-30)*

Although Christians throughout the Roman Empire were going to be impacted by the predicted world-wide famine, the Christians in Judea not only would have to cope with the famine, but also deal with the economic consequences of their living in Jerusalem. Jerusalem did not have much commercial wealth, but rather, the city subsisted mainly on the income received from visitors to the Temple and the throngs who attended the religious feasts associated with Judaism. Jerusalem Christians would have been excluded from participating in any of the religious events and income associated with these events. Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 2:14¹⁷⁰ intimates that the Judean church recently had undergone severe persecution.

¹⁶⁹ Acts 13:1ff

¹⁷⁰ *For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, (1 Thessalonians 2:14)*

In response to Agabus prophetic word, the Christians in Antioch collected funds which they sent to the Jerusalem Church – before the famine began. Barnabas and Saul were selected to be the couriers to take the funds to the elders of the Jerusalem Church.¹⁷¹

In three of his letters, Paul referred to his collecting of funds for the Jerusalem Church:

- the passage before us (I Corinthians 16:1-4)
- Romans 15:25-32,
- II Corinthians Chapters 8-9.

He also wrote to the Galatians, that one of the elements in the agreement between the “pillars” in Jerusalem and himself (that he would go the Gentiles and they to the circumcised) was that Paul and Barnabas would remember the poor.

*and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.*¹⁰ *They only asked us to remember the poor-- the very thing I also was eager to do.* (Galatians 2:9-10)

Thus, it was Paul’s custom to encourage the Gentile churches to provide funds for an offering that could be sent to Jerusalem, for the poor in that church.

Of note is Paul’s language, *first day of the week*. This the same language that Luke used in Acts 20:7, describing the day on which the church at Troas gathered for the Lord’s Supper. In Revelation 1:10, John speaks of the *Lord’s Day*. In one of the earliest post-New Testament documents,¹⁷² Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*, Chapter 67, he states that the Christians met on the “day called, Sunday.”¹⁷³ From these quotes and others, it is apparent that Christians early-on met on the first day of the week, rather than the seventh day. i.e., the Sabbath.

Of further note is Paul’s instructions concerning the accumulation of the money for the Jerusalem offering. The Christians are not instructed to take up an offering in the church service for this purpose. He instructed each individual Christian to put aside the money and save it until Paul came to Corinth, from whence he and those whom the church appointed would convey the money to Jerusalem.

In each place where Paul collected the offering for Jerusalem, he asked that representatives of that church accompany the offering. Paul’s integrity is demonstrated in this practice – no one could accuse him of collecting money for himself. The representatives of the churches who accompanied the offering would see that it was delivered to the intended parties.¹⁷⁴

Paul’s statement in verse, 4 *and if it is fitting for me to go also*, is puzzling. No one can state for certain why it would be or not be appropriate for Paul to carry the offering. We can only speculate.

Even though the Corinthians had intended to contribute to the Jerusalem saints, they were slow in carrying out their intention. About one year later, in II Corinthians 8:1-11, Paul cited the

¹⁷¹ Acts 11:30 is the first mention of elders in the Jerusalem Church. From this time forward the presence of elders in the Jerusalem Church is abundantly recorded – for example, see Acts 15.

¹⁷² Written c.140 AD

¹⁷³ See ADDENDUM H

¹⁷⁴ Acts 20:4, although it is not a complete list, here is a summary of those who were accompanying the offering.

churches of Macedonia and the example of Jesus, as motivations for the Corinthians to complete what they had intended to do.

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

³ *For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord,⁴ begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,⁵ and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*

⁶ *Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.⁷ But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.*

⁸ *I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.*

⁹ *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

¹⁰ *And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.¹¹ But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.*

(II Corinthians 8:1-11)

In II Corinthians 9:1-5, Paul further sought to encourage the Corinthians to fulfill their intention to support the offering for Jerusalem, by telling them that he had used their example as a motivation to the churches in Macedonia.

For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

³ *But I have sent the brethren, that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;⁴ lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence.*

⁵ *So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness.(II Corinthians 9:1-5)*

Titus was dispatched to Corinth twice, to help bring to completion the offering from that church.

Romans 15:26-27 indicates that after a long delay, the collection finally was received, and that the Corinthians had been pleased to do it.

For Macedonia and Achaia (Corinth) have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.²⁷ Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. (Romans 15:26-27)

TRAVEL PLANS (16:5-11)

But I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia;⁶ and perhaps I shall stay with you, or even spend the winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.

⁷ *For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.* ⁸ *But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost;* ⁹ *for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

¹⁰ *Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.* ¹¹ *Let no one therefore despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.*

Paul was in Ephesus, when he wrote this letter and he planned to remain in Ephesus through Pentecost, which meant that he probably wrote this letter in the spring of 54 AD. Paul wrote that he wanted to spend an extended time with them. The most direct route from Ephesus to Corinth was by sea – Corinth being due west of Ephesus, across the Aegean Sea. Rather than take that short route, Paul outlined his plans to first go to Macedonia where he would visit the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He apparently planned to spend the better part of the summer and early fall with the churches of Macedonia, then proceed south to Corinth and spend the winter with them.

In the midst of his earlier heated words concerning their attitude toward his authority, he stated that he was sending Timothy as his spokesman (4:17-21). At this present point in the letter, he expressed concern for how Timothy would be received at Corinth.

As to Paul's travel plans, although the description of the trip in Acts 20:1-3 can fit this itinerary, II Corinthians 1:15-2:4 indicates that Paul did just the opposite. Instead of first going to Macedonia, he began this tour by first going to Corinth.

- He paid them a quick visit by sea, planning to leave there and travel north into Macedonia – then, to return from Macedonia to Corinth.
- From Corinth, he planned to proceed to Jerusalem.

None of this worked out the way that Paul had planned. His brief visit developed into a major crisis in Paul's relationship with the church. In II Corinthians, Paul responded to the tragedy that occurred on his brief visit – which was the second time that he had visited Corinth.

And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you, that you might twice receive a blessing;¹⁶ that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. (II Corinthians 1:15-16)

²³ *But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.* ²⁴ *Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.*

But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. ² *For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?* ³ *And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy would be the joy of you all.* ⁴ *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you. (II Corinthians 1:23-2:4)*

It took two visits from Titus and at least one more letter (possibly two) to straighten out the relationship between Paul and the Corinthian Church.

APOLLOS' PLANNED VISIT TO CORINTH

(16:12)

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

The expression, *But concerning*, is another flag, indicating that Paul is responding to something in their letter. They had asked that Apollos to return to Corinth for further ministry. As noted in the comments on 1:12 and the Excursus, *Who Was Apollos*, Paul and Apollos did not consider themselves to be rivals, but rather, yokefellows in the apostolic ministry.

Most English versions have presented the reason for Apollos' not going to Corinth at that time as being Apollos' will. The Greek reads literally, *And not at all was the will that now he come*. The question must be asked, "Whose will was it, that he not come?" Was it God's will, or Apollos' will, or some other will. Most English versions have taken the liberty to render the phrase as being Apollos' will. Honesty requires us to leave the question unanswered.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

(16:13-18)

*Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*¹⁴ *Let all that you do be done in love.*

¹⁵ *Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),*¹⁶ *that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.*

¹⁷ *And I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; because they have supplied what was lacking on your part.*¹⁸ *For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, acknowledge such men.*

Paul's exhortation to stand firm in the faith, reflects back on some of the challenges to the true faith that had been influencing the church.

His exhortation to make certain that all be done in love harks back to his exhortation in Chapter 13, in which all ministry should have this element at its center.

His mention of being subject to the household of Stephanus and others of his stature is the only hint of church leadership found in the epistle. On the other hand, the comment is so vague that no clear conclusion can be drawn as whether or not this comment has relevance to the subject of church leadership in Corinth.

As noted earlier, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus would have been the bearers of the letter from Corinth, of which I Corinthians is a response. These three men seem to have been of a spirit compatible with that of Paul.

FINAL GREETINGS

(16:19-24)

*The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*²⁰ *All the brethren greet you.*

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

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

²² *If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha.*

²³ *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.*

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

Paul always sought to keep the churches in a relationship with one another. Thus, he began these final greetings with those from the churches of Asia and the church in the house of Aquila and Prisca.

In Justin Martyr's description of their Sunday observation of the Lord's Supper, a kiss was a part of the Lord's Supper celebration.¹⁷⁵ As noted earlier, Justin Martyr wrote c.140 AD, less than 50 years after the death of the Apostle John.

The practice of kissing as a part of the church service is very prominent in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Here is a description from an Eastern Orthodox website:

“In the Eastern Catholic churches, the congregation does a lot of kissing: when they enter the church, they greet one another with the Kiss of Peace (a sign of mystical unity within the Body of Christ, reverence (kiss) the icons (Jesus on His feet, Saints on their hands), they kiss the chalice after they receive Holy Communion, at the end of the Holy Liturgy, the congregation approaches the priest and kiss the blessing cross and his right hand. The usual greeting during the Kiss of Peace is “Christ is in our midst!” And the response is “He is shall always be us!” The usual custom is to kiss on both cheeks; (two kisses) Slavic people kiss three times (right cheek, left cheek, right cheek).”¹⁷⁶

The Eastern Orthodox service is very expressive, but also, very reverent.

This practice is not seen in most Protestant Churches, nor in most Roman Catholic Churches.

Paul must have used an amanuensis in writing this epistle, since he notes that the closing greeting is in his own handwriting. Then, immediately after his signature, so to speak, he takes one last shot at his Corinthian opponents, *If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.*

The term *maranatha*, is of Aramaic origin. Two possibilities are possible as to its meaning:¹⁷⁷

- *Marana tha* – Our Lord Come
- *Maran atha* – Our Lord has come

What is the sense of the expression here? Some see this as Paul's declaration that the Lord has come and that He is a witness of the proclamation of anathema – that in spite of those who might reject the Lord, He has come.

More likely is the evidence from the Didache 10:6 in which *Maranatha* closes the eucharistic prayers, the idea being a plea for the coming of the Lord – i.e. *Come, Lord Jesus*.¹⁷⁸ The same expression is in Revelation 22:20, *Come, Lord Jesus*, although different Greek terms are used ἔρχου κύριε ἰησοῦ (*erchou kurie hiesou*).

¹⁷⁵ See ADDENDUM H

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.easterncatholicchurch.org/worship.html>

¹⁷⁷ The challenge in knowing how to render this term comes from the fact that it is an Aramaic term, which Paul alliterated into Greek. The Greek of Paul's era was written entirely in *uncials* (equivalent to our capital letters). Writing in cursive did not begin until several centuries later. In the uncial manuscripts, there is no space between words, so the reader has to discern where one word ends, and another begins. This is illustrated by GODISNOWHERE. These letters can be divided so as to say, *God is now here*, or *God is nowhere*. Such is the challenge faced when reading the Greek manuscripts. Here is how verse 22b, *let him be accursed; Maranatha*, was written in Greek uncials, ΗΤΩΑΝΑΘΕΜΑΡΑΝΑΘΑ.

¹⁷⁸ The NKJV, NIV, and NLT take the liberty of rendering the term with this wording.

Paul ended the letter with the tenderest of expressions, a grace benediction.

Thus, the letter begins with *Grace to you*, and ends with the same blessing, *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you*.

Grace is the single word that expresses most fully what God has done and will do for His people in Christ Jesus.

In keeping with that shared experience of God's grace, Paul concluded by assuring them that he does not love them less, as a result of their conflicts, but his love for this church and its members was abiding. The harsh things that he wrote in the letter were in keeping with his exhortation in Chapter 13 – they were motivated by his love for them.

II Corinthians 11:1-3 expresses Paul's motivation for the things that he wrote in I Corinthians. It is a fitting description of the motivation of anyone who is a true leader in the Church of Jesus Christ.

I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.² For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.³ But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

ADDENDUM A



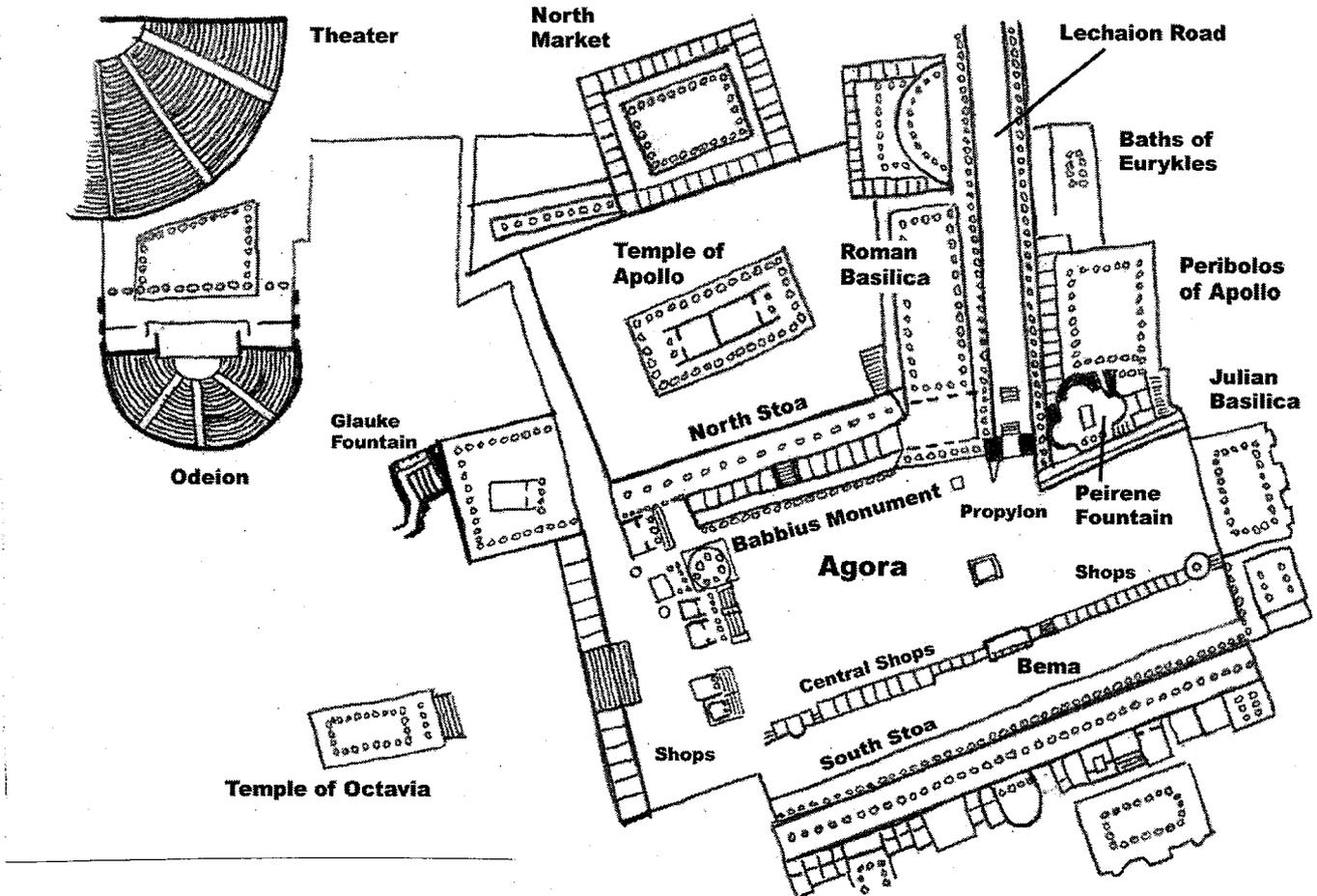
ADDENDUM B

Corinth Peninsula



ADDENDUM C

Central Corinth, as Reconstructed by the Romans



The judgment seat of Gallio would have been at the *Bema* (βῆμα), located on the south side of the Agora, in the above diagram). The *Bema* was an elaborate podium where Gallio sat to hear cases brought before him. This is the term Paul used in Romans 14:10, which most versions render as, *judgment seat*

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat (Greek: βῆμα) - of God. (Romans 14:10NAS)

ADDENDUM D

Jesus' Response to Peter's Good Confession

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"¹⁴

And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶*And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷*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."¹⁸ "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. (Matthew 16:13-18)*

Protestants have argued that rock to which Jesus referred as the foundation of the Church was Peter's confession, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Roman Catholics argue that the rock to which Jesus referred as the foundation of the Church was Peter.

Which is it? Paul clearly stated, *For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Paul also wrote, *having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,* (Ephesians 2:20)

Is there a contradiction between what Paul wrote to the Corinthians and what he wrote to the Ephesians? How can we explain this and what is relationship of these statements to Jesus' response to Peter's good confession?

One of the primary questions that an exegete asks of any texts is, "Why was this written?" In other words, what was the issue the author was addressing when he wrote the statement?

The Corinthian statement was made in response to the Corinthians' turning to human wisdom (*Sophia*), rather than to the cross (I Corinthians 1:17-18).

The Ephesian statement was made to Gentiles, whom Paul declared had been grafted into the promises that had been given to the Jews (Ephesians 2:12-20). Thus, he wrote that the Gentiles had become fellow citizens with the Jews and all were now one household, that is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.* The truth being asserted here is that the Old Testament no longer is the criteria (Ephesians 2:15) but the doctrines presented by the apostles and the prophets is the basis of the faith and the resulting unity of the saints – consisting of Jew and Gentile. He is careful to assert that Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone. In all ancient buildings, the cornerstone determined the lines of construction to which the building had to adhere.

The case of the Greek expression rendered, *the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, also must be considered. The terms are in the genitive case. Most Greek exegetes understand this to be the genitive of *originating cause* i.e. *the foundation laid by the apostles.*¹

¹ See S. D. F. Salmond, D.D., *The Expositors Greek New Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A. LL.D editor; Volume III, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1976, page 299.

This understanding is consistent with what is implied in Paul's statement to the Romans, i.e. that the Gospel which he preached was the foundation that he laid,

And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; (Romans 15:20)

So, the difference between Paul's statement in I Corinthians 3:11 and Ephesians 2:20 is the contextual truth being addressed.

With this in mind, we once again turn to Jesus' response to Peter's good confession. Jesus spoke Aramaic, and Matthew's quote in 16:18 is his Greek interpretation of Jesus' Aramaic statement. Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, he would have used the same word twice, *kepha*. To Simon, he said, *you are kepha*, then He said, *and upon this kepha I will build my church*. The Aramaic word for rock is *kepha*. So, from that time forward, Simon was known as *Kepha*, which is Hellenized as *Κηφᾶς* (*Kephas*) and Anglicized as, Cephias. This became the name whereby Simon usually was known. Paul, for example, refers to Simon 10 times. In eight of these instances, he calls him, *Kephas*.² In two instances he uses the Greek translation, *Petros*.³

Matthew was present when Peter gave the good confession and Matthew heard Jesus' response. No doubt wanting to be precise in conveying what Jesus said, Matthew brought out something in his translation that is not obvious if one only has the Aramaic to read without comment. In Matthew's translation of Jesus' Aramaic, Matthew used two different words to translate *kepha*. When he translated Jesus' statement to Peter, he used the word *πέτρος* (*petros*) which is the nominative case of the masculine noun, *πέτρος*. When Matthew translated Jesus statement concerning the foundation of the Church, he used the word *πέτρα*⁴ (*petra*), which is the dative case of the feminine noun, *πέτρα*.⁵

Most Greek lexicographers point out that the two terms are used to describe different "rocks."⁶

- *πέτρος*, which is the name that Jesus gave to Peter is commonly used to describe a stone or a piece of rock. This is the term that is used, for example, when one is describing the stone or rock that one puts into a sling to use as a weapon.
- *πέτρα*, the term used for the foundation upon which the Church will be built refers to a cliff, a rocky ledge, or a mountain of rock (for example, into which a tomb is excavated).

Why did Matthew use two different Greek nouns to render *kepha* in this exchange between Jesus and Peter? The obvious answer is that when Matthew heard Jesus make this statement, Jesus

² Galatians 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14; I Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5;

³ Galatians 2:7, 8. The KJV has Peter in Galatians 1:18; 2:11, 14, but the Greek text has, *Kepha*, in these three verses.

⁴ Note the iota subscript beneath the final *α*, indicating the dative case, whereas there is no iota subscript beneath the final *α*, in the nominative case.

⁵ The reason that the dative of the noun is used here is because it is preceded by the preposition, *ἐπί*, which requires the genitive, dative, or accusative case. When used with the dative, this preposition, as used here, can mean, *on the basis of*, or, *on*.

⁶ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated by William F. Arndt & F Wilbur Gingrich, augmented by Frederick W. Danker – Fifth Edition (Chicago, University of Chicago Press) 1958 Edition, pages 654-655; Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 2000, page 507

made it in a manner that indicated a difference. Perhaps in his inflection, or perhaps He pointed to Peter and said to him, *you are Kepha*, then pointed to Himself and said, *on this Kepha I will build my Church*. Regardless of what mannerism Jesus used to make the distinction, Matthew recognized it and sought to convey that distinction in his translation of the Aramaic into Greek.

ADDENDUM E

The Cessationist argument from Church History

Cessationists argue that the absence of the mention of the *charismata* in all of the immediate post-biblical literature is evidence that such phenomena ceased after the apostolic era. In many ways, the argument from Church History is the Cessationist's strongest argument. Mention of the *charismata*, as well as the miraculous, is very scanty in the earliest records of the Second Century Church. The fact that Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, Barnabas, Hermas, the documents written to Diognetus, and the Didache, make no mention of the phenomena, is considerable evidence in favor of the Cessationist view. The strongest evidence for the Cessationist argument is the writing of Justin Martyr (c.140 AD). Justin penned a detailed description of a Second Century Church service and he made no mention of *charismata* in the meeting.

Several responses can be made to the Cessationist argument. First is the evidence of the longer ending of Mark 16 (verse 9 and following). If this ending were written by Mark as a part of his Gospel, then clearly the early believers did experience the phenomena described. However, convincing evidence indicates that these verses were not in the original autograph; they were added a century later. Obviously, those who added them considered tongues and other manifestations to be a part of the missionary activity of the Church. Irenaeus alludes to these verses in *Adversus Haeresus*, Book 3, Chapter 10, section 6, which was penned around 185 AD.

Although there is no reference to *charismata* in the earliest post-biblical writings, beginning in the latter quarter of the Second Century, there is documentary evidence for the existence of functioning *charismata*.

Irenaeus, cited above, is the earliest writer that mentions *charismata* as a normal part of the life of the Church. In Book 2, of *Adversus Haeresus*. Irenaeus contrasted the magicians that were rampant in his day, with those who by the power of God performed true miracles.

“...For they can neither confer sight on the blind, nor hearing on the deaf, nor chase away all sorts of demons — [none, indeed,] except those that are sent into others by themselves, if they can even do so much as this. Nor can they cure the weak, or the lame, or the paralytic, or those who are distressed in any other part of the body, as has often been done in regard to bodily infirmity. Nor can they furnish effective remedies for those external accidents which may occur. And so far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them, and the apostles did by means of prayer, and as has been frequently done in the brotherhood on account of some necessity — the entire Church in that particular locality entreating [the boon] with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned, and he has been bestowed in answer to the prayers of the saints...and inasmuch as those who are cured very frequently [i.e. cured by the miraculous ministry of the Church] do not possess the things which they require, they receive them from us.”¹

“...Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out

¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 2, Chapter 31, excerpts from sections 2 & 3 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, The Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ... directing her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit, and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind...the name of our Lord Jesus Christ even now confers benefits [upon men], and cures thoroughly and effectively all who anywhere believe on Him.’²

As can be seen in the above quote, without any ambiguity, Irenaeus stated that in 185 AD, miraculous activity continued to the degree that the Church *has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind*. In addition to raising the dead and casting out demons, *gifts of miracles, gifts of healings, and prophecy* are mentioned. The term, *accustomed*, gets our attention, implying that this was a longstanding practice. Noticeably absent from this record is any mention of *tongues*.

In Book 5, Chapter 6, section 1, of *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus does mention tongues as phenomena experienced in his day:

“For this reason does the apostle declare, ‘We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,’ terming those persons ‘perfect’ who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare...”

Tertullian (c. 200 AD) describes prophetic activity in the local church of which he was a member.

For, seeing that we acknowledge spiritual *charismata*, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift, although coming after John (the Baptist). We have now amongst us a sister whose lot it has been to be favored with sundry gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord’s day in the church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men’s hearts she understands, and to them who are in need she distributes remedies. Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. It may possibly have happened to us, whilst this sister

² Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Book 2 Chapter 32, excerpts from sections 4 &5. Irenaeus also commented on the phenomena in Book 5, Chapter 6, section 1: *For this reason does the apostle declare, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,” terming those persons “perfect” who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare ...*

of ours was rapt in the Spirit, that we had discoursed in some ineffable way about the soul. After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision (for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed). “Amongst other things,” says she, “there has been shown to me a soul in bodily shape, and a spirit has been in the habit of appearing to me; not, however, a void and empty illusion, but such as would offer itself to be even grasped by the hand, soft and transparent and of an ethereal color, and in form resembling that of a human being in every respect.” This was her vision, and for her witness there was God; and the apostle most assuredly foretold that there were to be “spiritual gifts” in the church.³

Cessationists point out that when Tertullian wrote this, he was a member of an heretical group, the Montanists. Therefore, they conclude that his description cannot be understood as indicating that the church at large experienced any phenomena.

In reply to the statement that Tertullian’s evidence is not valid because he was a Montanist, we cite the following quote and its origin. Prior to his becoming a follower of Montanus, when he was a staunch defender of Orthodoxy, Tertullian used the contemporary existence of tongues as evidence in his argument against the heretic, Marcion.

“Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his God, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer — only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him; let him show to me also, that any woman of boastful tongue in his community has ever prophesied from amongst those specially holy sisters of his. Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty...”⁴

To quote Christopher Forbes,

“Clearly ‘all these signs’ which Tertullian claims he can produce with ease from the assemblies of ‘his side’ include the ‘interpretation of tongues’; it is hard to see how this could be the case if glossolalia itself were not also present.”⁵

Forbes also notes the geographical distribution of the documents that mention the *charismata*.

- The longer ending of Mark is testimony from the region of Jerusalem;
- the statements of Irenaeus are evidence from western Europe (Lyons);
- Tertullian’s work is evidence from North Africa.⁶

Moving forward into the Third Century, Novatian, a Roman elder, wrote a treatise on the Trinity (257 AD). In Book 29, he described the Holy Spirit and the *charismata*.

“And because the Lord was about to depart to the heavens, He gave the Paraclete out of necessity to the disciples; so as not to leave them in any degree orphans, which was little desirable, and forsake them without an advocate and some kind of protector. For this is

³ *Antenicean Fathers* Volume III Latin Christianity – It’s Founder Tertullian “A treatise on the Soul” Chapter 9 Page 336-337 (The Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

⁴ Tertullian, *Contra Marcionem*, Book 5, Chapter 8

⁵ Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1997) page 80

⁶ Forbes, page 80

He who strengthened their hearts and minds, who marked out the Gospel sacraments, who was in them the enlightener of divine things; and they being strengthened, feared, for the sake of the Lord's name, neither dungeons nor chains, nay, even trod under foot the very powers of the world and its tortures, since they were henceforth armed and strengthened by the same Spirit, having in themselves the gifts which this same Spirit distributes, and appropriates to the Church, the spouse of Christ, as her ornaments. This is He who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, often discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts..."⁷

Several other early writers refer to the experience of Pentecost and the cloven tongues of fire on that occasion. However, they describe the phenomena as something that occurred on Pentecost (Acts 2), rather than something that they were experiencing in their own era. In an allegorical and poetic description of the creation, Augustine, writing near 400 AD, implied that tongues did exist in his day (born c354, died 430). Yet his statements are so veiled that not much can be made of it.⁸ Elsewhere, Augustine declared in unmistakable terms that Pentecostal phenomena did not exist in his day.

"In the earliest times, 'the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues,' which they had not learned, 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away."⁹

Since, therefore, the Holy Ghost is even now received by men, some one may say, Why is it that no man speaks in the tongues of all nations? Because the Church itself now speaks in the tongues of all nations. Before, the Church was in one nation, where it spoke in the tongues of all. By speaking then in the tongues of all, it signified what was to come to pass; that by growing among the nations, it would speak in the tongues of all."¹⁰

⁷ Novatian, *de Trinitate*, Chapter 29 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, The Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

⁸"For indeed, to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, as if the greater light, on account of those who are delighted with the light of manifest truth, as in the beginning of the day; but to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, as if the lesser light; to another faith; to another the gift of healing; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues. And all these as stars. For all these worketh the one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every man his own as He willeth; and making stars appear manifestly, to profit withal. But the word of knowledge, wherein are contained all sacraments, which are varied in their periods like the moon and the other conceptions of gifts, which are successively reckoned up as stars, in as much as they come short of that splendor of wisdom in which the fore-mentioned day rejoices, are only for the beginning of the night." Augustine, *The Thirteen Books of Confession of St. Augustine*, Book 13, Chapter 18, section 23 (The Master Christian Library, Albany, Oregon, AGES Software, 1997)

⁹Augustine, *Ten Homilies on I John*, Homily 6, Part 10, (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series One, as contained in Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

¹⁰ Augustine, *Tractates on St. John*, Tractate 32, Part 7 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Master Christian Library)

Augustine was a bishop in the Western Church. He knew the condition of the church, both in its Western and Eastern branches. We must accept as authoritative his statements that in his lifetime Pentecostal manifestations were unknown

Chrysostom, one of the greatest expositors in all of Church History, was a contemporary of Augustine (born 347, died 407). He was a prelate in the Eastern Church. He wrote a series of homilies on I Corinthians. In his introduction to I Corinthians 12, he wrote,

“This whole place (I Corinthians 12) is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity hath produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more? This however let us defer to another time, but for the present let us state what things were occurring then.”¹¹

Augustine and Chrysostom, representing both the Western and Eastern Churches, make clear statements that in their era, the *charismata* no longer were functioning in the Church. It would be a great help to us if Chrysostom had pursued the answer to the question he raised, i.e., as to why the *charismata* were absent. Augustine argued the tongues of apostolic times were a sign that the Gospel would be preached in every language. He declared that since the Church in his day existed in many nations, and that in each of those nations a different language was spoken, that the Gift of Tongues no longer was needed as a sign that the Gospel would reach all nations. It already had done so.

There are many reports of the *charisma* in the Middle Ages, even though one might debate the reliability of the data. Several were canonized as saints, on the basis of their speaking in tongues. However, the Roman Catholic Church during this era generally regarded speaking in tongues and interpretation as a mark of demon possession. The difference between demonization and sainthood-qualifying *charismata* seemed to turn on the reputation of the individual involved.¹²

There are general reports of tongues among the medieval mendicants, the Waldensians, and Albigensians, but when one seeks to identify the specific individuals among these groups about whom these claims are made, no information can be found. Concerning his pursuit of this information, Stanley Burgess wrote, “...we are frustrated time and again by teasing generalities, inadequate information, and unanswered questions.”¹³

A popular report repeated in some Charismatic writings states that Luther spoke in tongues. However, a study of the primary Luther documents proves this to be untrue. As a matter of record, Luther seemed to be confused by the Pentecostal phenomena.¹⁴ In his Commentary on

¹¹ Chrysostom, *First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* Homily 29, I Corinthians 12:1,2 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series One, Master Christian Library)

¹² Stanley M. Burgess, *Medieval Examples of Charismatic Piety in the Roman Catholic Church*, in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (born 347, died 407)ism Russell P. Spittler, Editor (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1976) pages 14-26

¹³ Stanley M. Burgess, *Medieval Examples of Charismatic Piety*, Part One, Chapter One, *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. Russell P. Spittler, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1976) page 17

¹⁴ Martin Luther, *Works*, ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (St. Louis: Concordia 1955) XL , 142

Galatians, he made clear that he considered all physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit to be obsolete.

“In the early Church the Holy Spirit was sent forth in visible form. He descended upon Christ in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16) and in the likeness of fire upon the apostles and other believers (Acts 2:3). This visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the establishment of the early Church, as were miracles that accompanied the gift of the Holy Ghost. Paul explained the purpose of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 14:22, ‘Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.’ Once the Church had been established and properly advertised by these miracles, the visible appearance of the Holy Ghost ceased.”¹⁵

How do the declarations of Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther relate to our question concerning the permanence or non-permanence of the *charismata*? All that they tell us is that in 400 AD (Augustine and Chrysostom) and in the Fifteenth Century (Luther) the Church did not experience this manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Prior to the 20th Century, most American Church leaders would have said the same thing and would have found virtually no one to disagree with them.¹⁶ If such a statement were made today, however, the disagreement would be huge. Since we do not know why the *charismata* were absent from the Fifth Century Church and the Fifteenth Century Church, we cannot draw any conclusion other than that they were absent.

However, because of the sources cited earlier (the longer ending of Mark, the statements of Irenaeus, and the writings of Tertullian), it is evident that the *charismata* did not end with the close of the apostolic era. They were present in the Second and Third Centuries.

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, comments on Chapter 4, Verse 6, translated by Theodore Graebner (Concordance of Great Books; <http://www.concordance.com/cgi-bin/1wdr.pl>)

¹⁶ There would have been some who would have disagreed. See Stanley Howard Frodsham, *With Signs Following* (Springfield, Mo., Gospel Publishing House, 1946 [a revision of earlier versions published in 1926 and 1928]), for substantiated reports of tongues in the last half of the 19th Century.

ADDENDUM F

Water and Spirit

Because of the modern practice of having converts “pray the sinner’s prayer,” as the signal event of conversion, we must pause and comment on Jesus’ statement, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*¹ Every document from the early Church that comments on this passage understands the water in John 3:5 to refer to immersion. Given the consistent practice displayed in Acts,² it is obvious that the apostles considered immersion to be an essential element in the conversion package. It was not something optional. No one was considered to be “born again” without having been immersed and immersion took place immediately. Popular evangelists over the past 150 years have ignored the biblical pattern and declared the deed done, as soon as one “prays the sinner’s prayer.” As an aside, converts sometimes are advised to find a church and “be immersed at their earliest convenience,” but the impression given is that the process of salvation already has been completed. Such an approach ignores:

- the authority of Jesus’ clear command in the Great Commission,
- the consistent pattern displayed by the apostles,
- and the understanding put forth by the earliest writings of the Church.³

In recent days, because some denominations deny the importance of immersion in the salvation process, an attempt has been made to interpret the water of John 3:5 as physical birth – i.e., the mother’s water breaks before the baby is born. According to this interpretation, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Unless a man is physically born of an earthly mother and then spiritually born of the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” The fact that one must be physically born in order to exist is so obvious that this strained effort to avoid the role of immersion seems rather absurd. Why not accept the understanding displayed by the apostles, the New Testament Church, and the post-New Testament Church, rather than trying to find some interpretation that fits denominational theology or modern evangelical practice?

An opposite error is displayed by those who consider a ritual dunking to be sufficient for being born into the Kingdom. Those who hold this view consider baptism to be a sacrament, i.e., the water has power. Thus, whether water is administered through pouring, sprinkling, or immersion, is not important. Theodore of Mopsuestia addresses this error.

“Since Nicodemus had asked, ‘Can one enter again into the mother’s womb and be born,’ Our Lord explained that this occurs through both water and Spirit. He said water because the action takes place in water, Spirit because the Spirit exercises His power through the water. This is called the Spirit of adoption, not water, because we receive new birth through His power. For this reason, in immersion we name the Spirit together with the Father and the Son, but we do not mention the water, so that

¹ John 3:5

² Acts 2:38-41; 8:4-24; 8:26-40; 9:1-8; 22:1-16; 26:12-18; 10:44-48; 16:12-15; 16:25-31; 18:8; 19:1-5

³ Justin Martyr (c.140 AD) is one of the earliest writers to comment on this passage (*First Apology* 61). Athanasius, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, Tertullian, Basil the Great, Ambrose, and other early prominent church leaders consistently present the views expressed here.

it may be clear that water is employed as a symbol and for a [visible] use. But we invoke the Spirit as the effective agent together with the Father and Son. That is why, in reply to Nicodemus question... Our Lord answers, 'Through both water and Spirit.' Just as in the instance of natural birth, where the womb is the place in which the child is formed and then perfected by the divine virtue that forms it from the beginning, so also in this place. The water is referred to in place of the womb and the Spirit in place of the Lord as the effective agent...⁴

Theodore's explanation is an important response to those who assume that the water has sacramental power. The water has no power but, as Theodore says, is the "place" where the Spirit does His work. Unless some spiritual transaction takes place, – which assumes repentance and faith as prerequisites on the part of the convert - one could be immersed and come out of the water without experiencing the new birth. All he did was to get wet.

VERY IMPORTANT CAUTIONARY NOTE

Given the great number of sincere believers who have prayed the sinner's prayer but have not been immersed – some even having been martyred for the Name of Christ - we must be very cautious about making any judgments on their spiritual status.

When these believers sincerely came to Christ, they did what they were told to do by their church leaders. The onus was on the evangelist to instruct the new converts as what their response to the Gospel should be – not on the convert who, with an obedient heart, did what he was told to do.

Those who lead the Church would do well to respect the clear command of Christ, as well as follow the example set by the apostles and the early church.

⁴ *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* New Testament IVa, John 1-10, (Downers Grove, IL, IVP) 2006, page 111-112 [quoting from *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* Louvain, Belgium, 4 3:67-68]. Theodore of Mopsuestia, an ardent opponent of the heresies of his day, wrote a commentary on John c. 400 AD, from which this quote is taken.

ADDENDUM G

TCF CHURCH DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

When the elders become aware of the persistent practice of a sin (acts that Scripture clearly prohibits and/or labels as sin) by a member of the congregation, they shall take the following steps in an effort to motivate the member to forsake his sinful behavior. The purpose of this action is to insure the salvation of the member and to preserve the holiness of the congregation.

SECTION I

Elders' efforts to obtain repentance

1. The first action by the elders shall be as follows:
 - A. If the sinning member is a male, one of the elder shall go to him and reason with him concerning his sin, calling him to repent and to forsake his sinful practice.
 - B. If the sinning member is a female, an elder and his wife shall go to the woman and reason with her concerning her sin, calling her to repent and to forsake her sinful practice.

The purpose of this first step is to deliver the straying member from his sinful practice without causing public embarrassment. The attitude of the elder making this contact must be one of humility and gentleness, as expressed in Galatians 6:1-2. The elder shall report to the council of elders the results of his efforts in behalf of the sinning member. If the result is repentance and the forsaking of sin, then the matter shall be dropped. However, the elder who made the contact shall continue to aid the repentant member in rehabilitation through accountability, encouragement, and support.

Should this first action by the elders fail to produce repentance and the forsaking of the sinful practice, step two shall be initiated.

2. The second effort by the elders shall consist of two or three elders going to the sinning member (male or female) and reasoning with him, urging him to repent and to forsake his sinful action. The purpose of this second effort by the elders is to follow the Scriptural pattern in Matthew 18:15-17 and to deliver the straying member from his sinful practice without causing public embarrassment.

During this second effort, the elders will provide a copy of this church discipline document to the member as a reminder of the church procedures. They will remind the member of what subsequent steps will be followed should the member fail to repent.

During this meeting, if the member is not willing to repent, the elders shall read or recite Hebrews 13:17 to him, explaining that they must give account to God for his soul. Then they shall recite or read Acts 20:28, explaining that they are responsible for the local congregation and must answer to God for this body of believers. They will remind him that Matthew 18:17 instructs that the next step will be to notify the church of the member's sin if the member does not repent. They will inform him that he will have seven days to think this over before the elders notify the church.

Additionally, they will remind him of the disfellowshipping procedure if he fails to repent after the church has been notified of his sin.

The elders making this second contact shall report to the council of elders the results of their efforts in behalf of the sinning member. If the result is repentance and forsaking of sin, then the matter shall be dropped. However, at least one of the elders who makes the contact shall continue to aid the repentant member in rehabilitation through accountability, encouragement, and support. Should the second effort by the elders fail to produce repentance and the forsaking of the sinful practice, step three shall be initiated.

3. If during the seven-day period referred to in SECTION I, 2, above, the sinner does not contact the elders and express repentance, the elders shall proceed as follows:

On the first Sunday following the above mentioned seven-day period, a letter shall be read to the congregation, stating that the member has been engaged in a persistent practice of sin, and that the member has been unwilling to repent. A brief description will be given of the steps that have been taken thus far to encourage repentance. Unless the elders deem necessary, the sin shall not be specified, in an effort to protect the privacy of the individual, especially where the elders have privileged information. The congregation will be asked to pray for the member. They will be reminded of the Scriptural pattern being followed in Matthew 18:15-17, in the attitude of Galatians 6:1-2. The sinning member will be given an additional week to repent prior to the disfellowshipping step specified in Matthew 18:17 and I Corinthians 5:9-13.

SECTION II

The act of disfellowshipping an unrepentant sinning member

If during the seven-day period following initial notification of the church, the sinner does not contact the elders and express repentance, the elders shall proceed as follows:

On the first Sunday following the above mentioned seven-day period, a letter shall be read to the congregation, stating that the sinning member is disfellowshipped. Unless the elders deem necessary, the sin shall not be specified in an effort to protect the privacy of the individual, especially where the elders have privileged information. Should the sinning member repent and forsake his sinful practice prior to the reading of the letter to the congregation, the elders shall go to him, expressing their acceptance and at least one elder shall continue to aid him in rehabilitation through accountability, encouragement, and support.

SECTION III

A false statement of repentance

If during procedures 1, 2, or 3, the sinning member expresses repentance but continues to practice sin, the elders shall contact him and notify him that the next step shall be taken unless he can convince the elders that he has forsaken his sin.

SECTION IV
Non-publication of disciplinary action

The action of disfellowshipping a member shall not be published outside of the local congregation unless another church requests transfer of membership. Should another church request transfer of membership for a disfellowshipped member, the following letter shall be sent to the requesting church:

_____ *did not leave our church in good standing. We cannot recommend him for membership in your church.*

SECTION V
Withdrawal of membership during the disciplinary process

Should a sinning member inform the elders that he wishes to withdraw from membership while steps 1, 2, or 3, are in process, the elders shall take no further action, except to advise the sinning member that they will respond to any requests for transfer of membership by sending the requesting church the following letter:

_____ *did not leave our church in good standing. We cannot recommend him for membership in your church.*

SECTION VI
Restoration of a disfellowshipped member

Should a disfellowshipped member contact the elders, expressing repentance, he shall be asked to appear before the council of the elders where he will be asked to confess his sin and to confirm his forsaking of it. When this is done, the elders immediately shall extend to him the hand of fellowship and shall on the next Sunday announce to the congregation the reinstatement of the formerly disfellowshipped member.

SECTION VII
Restoration of a sinning member who has withdrawn from fellowship

Should a sinning member who has withdrawn fellowship request reinstatement in the congregation, the elders shall deal with him on the basis of a disfellowshipped member who has contacted them, expressing repentance (SECTION VI).

CHURCH DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE, Scriptures

Heb 12:11 (NASB)

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Gal 6:1-2 (NASB)

¹ Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Matt 18:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.¹⁶ "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. ¹⁷ "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Heb 13:17 (NASB)

Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

Acts 20:28 (NASB)

Paul, speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus:

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

1 Cor 5:9-13 (NASB)

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;¹⁰ I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*?¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

ADDENDUM H

Justin Martyr's, *Apology* describes a Sunday service in the early/mid Second Century

Justin Martyr was born in Flavia Neapolis circa 100 A.D., and converted to Christianity sometime around 130 A.D. A Christian apologist, he taught and defended Christianity in Asia Minor and at Rome. He suffered martyrdom in Rome about 165 A.D.

Justin Martyr's "First Apology" is the oldest (non-New Testament) record we have of how early Christian worship was conducted. The following is a portion of Chapter 67.

In Chapter 65 Justin describes the administration of the Lord's Supper.

In Chapter 67, he further described the Sunday service and where the Lord's Supper fit into the service.

Chapter 65

Administration of the Lord's Supper

“Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the presider¹ of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he, taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands.

And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to γενοίτο (*genoito* – *i.e. so be it* – JWG)

And when the one presiding has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.”

Chapter 67

A description of a Sunday service

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

¹ Many render this term, προεστῶτι, as, *president*. The term is the perfect participle, active, masculine/neuter, dative, singular of the verb, πρόιτημι, which means *to stand before, to put before*, and similar terms. Because the term, *president*, carries the idea of a position of primary authority in English, it is my opinion that terms should be used indicating that this was the person presiding over the meeting – probably one of the elders.

And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”