

## **Lesson 1**

### **United Under Christ's Banner**

#### **1 Corinthians 1:1-17**

##### **The Author**

The letter of 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus about a year after the establishment of the church at Corinth, or A.D. 55. Letter writers in the first century would introduce their own name at the very start. Then, they would address the readers and give a greeting. Paul introduced himself as one "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:1). It seems some had challenged Paul's apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 12:12). Paul did not qualify as an apostle according to Peter's list of requirements in Acts 1:20-22, but was specially chosen by God and called (Acts 9:15; Romans 15:15-16).

Sosthenes, who was with the apostle when the letter was written, is unknown to us, though he may be the man of Acts 18:17. As will be seen later, Paul's purpose in writing this letter was twofold. First, he wanted to direct the church away from the error and disorder that had evidenced itself. Second, he intended to answer specific questions submitted to him.

##### **The Addressees**

The letter is addressed "to the church of God at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Corinth was the capital and chief city of Achaia. Achaia is in the area we would now call Greece.

Corinth became such an important city because of its location just one and a half miles south of the Isthmus of Corinth. It was able to control that four mile wide neck of land. The city also commanded the eastern port of that isthmus, Cenchreae, which is mentioned in Acts 18:18. To save time and avoid the one hundred fifty miles of dangerous waters around the tip of Greece, ships would unload their goods on one side of isthmus and have them carried to the other side. Some smaller ships were even pulled across and placed in the water on the other side. Therefore, Corinth was a trading center by land and sea. Of course, it was also strategic militarily speaking.

The Roman minority was a strong force in the population, as this was one of the colonies established by Julius Caesar. The commercial prospects caused a large group of Jews to settle in this city. Greeks also played a great role. Because of the seaport and commerce, many other nationalities mixed with the above mentioned major groups.

Corinth was well known for its corruption. Charles Pfeiffer, in Baker's Bible Atlas, writes, "Greeks, Romans, Jews and adventurers from the entire Mediterranean world came to Corinth for trade and vice in all its forms. 'To live like a Corinthian,' became synonymous with a life of luxury and licentiousness." The immoral nature of the city was added to by the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, which was located in Corinth. A thousand priestesses of the goddess served as prostitutes who were available for the free use of temple visitors.

### **The Church in Corinth**

Luke reports in the book of Acts that Paul first came to Corinth on the second missionary journey. He stayed with Aquila and Priscilla and worked with them in the tentmaking trade. As was his custom, he entered the synagogue every Sabbath to reason with the Jews and Greeks who were present there. When Silas and Timothy came, he especially emphasized that Jesus is the Christ. Unfortunately, his listeners rejected the truth and spoke against Christ. Paul then shook the dust off his feet and went to the Gentiles to preach. The chief ruler of the synagogue and many other Corinthians believed and were baptized. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision urging him to preach without fear and assuring him no one would hurt him. So, Paul preached there for a year and a half (Acts 18:1-18).

In this letter, Paul addressed the members of the church located in Corinth by ascribing ownership to God. It is God's church in that the Father and the Son sacrificed to purchase the church, so it truly belongs to God (John 3:16-17; Acts 20:28). The New Testament church is referred to in a number of ways. These references can be to the church universally, locally or to the individual members of the church. Other designations include, the churches of Christ and the church of firstborn ones (Romans 16:16; Hebrews 12:22-23). In the Corinthian letter, Paul also refers to the members of the church as "sanctified," which means "set apart" or "separated to a sacred service." As Paul says, this separation takes place "in Christ Jesus" (compare John 17:17 and Ephesians 5:25-26). The word "saints" indicates they are "holy ones."

### **Words of Encouragement**

Paul used a Christian approach to the typical greetings in letters of that day. He wanted them to experience all of God's unmerited favor, or grace. Notice, Paul says that grace is given by Christ Jesus. He was thankful they had received God's grace when they obeyed the gospel. He also wanted them to be at peace in a way the world cannot understand (1 Corinthians 1:3-4; Philippians 4:6-7).

Additionally, the apostle said their obedience led to their being made rich in "everything," meaning "in every respect". In chapters 12 and 14, Paul mentions many of the gifts they had received. They were able to teach, preach, prophesy and speak in tongues (12:8-10; 2 Corinthians 8:7; 11:6). Too, God granted them "knowledge" of the gospel and what man must do to be saved. They were able to confirm truth through the gifts God gave them (1 Corinthians 1:5-6).

The Corinthian brethren were equal to other churches in the miraculous power they received (2 Corinthians 12:13). Because of the things they had received, they anxiously awaited the Lord's return to reclaim his own. God and Jesus had caused them to be forgiven (Colossians 1:21-23). Thus, they were without spot and no one could call them into account in the day of judgment (1 Corinthians 1:7-8). The apostle said they were called into fellowship, which Lipscomb calls an eternal partnership between Christ and those joined to him (1 Corinthians 1:9; Galatians 3:26-27). They could count on that partnership because God is faithful. He always keeps his promises (2 Peter 3:9).

## **A Plea to End Divisions**

Christ's name was used nine times by Paul in the first nine verses of 1 Corinthians 1. He was shown to be good and important to the Christian. In the tenth verse, his name is used for its authority (Matthew 28:18). The speech of all Christians should be completely in agreement with that revealed through the Holy Spirit. Paul did not want any "divisions," which would be splits, gaps, or tears. Instead, he wanted them to be "perfectly joined together," which means to repair as one might a broken instrument or set a bone like a doctor. Christians should have the same purpose, or mind, and be of the same opinion, or judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:20-23). Assuming everyone is guided by Christ's authority, such an end should easily be achieved.

Reports had come to the apostle of "contentions," or strife, quarreling, rivalry and wrangling, going on among the Corinthian brethren. They had gone so far as to form different groups claiming to follow Paul, Apollos, Peter and Christ. Apollos had worked with these people after Aquila and Priscilla showed him "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:24-19:1). Ordinarily, all Christians should follow Christ. However, some may have formed a sect following Christ. These would not hear messengers sent from Christ (1 Corinthians 1:11-12; Luke 10:6).

The church is Christ's body (12:12-13, 27; Ephesians 1:22-23). Christ bought that body with his blood (Acts 20:28). Paul asked if that body could be cut into pieces and given to various men to lead. Jesus became the author of salvation by his death on the cross (Hebrews 2:9-10; Philippians 2:5-11). Paul was saying they should only follow Jesus who was their redeemer. The one into whose

name one is baptized is recognized as the one in whose power he resides. Also, the baptizing would be done by his authority (1 Corinthians 1:13).

### **Personal Thoughts From Paul**

Because of the division and strife, Paul was glad he had only baptized a few of them. Crispus was ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:8). Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from Gaius' house (Romans 16:23). Those who had seen these men obey the gospel knew he neither baptized in his own name, nor made disciples for himself (Acts 9:15; 2 Corinthians 4:5-7). Paul thought of himself as a vessel to carry the message (1 Corinthians 1:14-15).

The apostle did also baptize the household of Stephanas, who were the first baptized in Achaia (16:15). He did not recall any others he baptized. This may have been for one of two reasons. First, he did not try to recall how many he had baptized because God gives the increase. Two, he may not have baptized any others. In either case, Paul saw his primary work was preaching. Others did the baptizing for him. He preached all of Christ's gospel without using vain human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:16-17; Acts 20:26-27).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Describe the city of Corinth taking special note of some of its unique features.

2. Give some biblical names for the church and tell why each is appropriate.

3. What encouraging instruction do you find in Paul's greeting?

4. Why do you think Paul was so concerned about unity?

5. Why do you think Paul was glad he had only baptized a few of the Corinthians?

## **Lesson 2**

### **Real Wisdom,**

## **From Man or God?**

### **1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

#### **The Foolishness of Preaching**

To those who are worldly minded, the preaching of the gospel is silly and absurd. To those who "are being saved" (footnote ASV) the gospel is mighty, like dynamite. The Greek word used here is *dunamis* as is also the case in Romans 1:16. To further show man must learn to rely upon God for knowledge which is valuable, Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14. It simply is not within the scope of man's ability to save himself (1 Corinthians 1:18-19; Jeremiah 10:23).

While men became big headed over human knowledge, it was nothing compared with God's wisdom. By his wisdom, man was unable to know God, that is, his mind and character. Though man used everything at his disposal, he was unable to discover God without divine revelation. As Paul said on Mars Hill, "So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:22-31; especially 27). Though it seemed silly to man, God revealed his will for him in the preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:20-21).

#### **The Crucified Christ Displays God's Wisdom**

Instead of gospel preaching, the Jews wanted a sign Jesus was the Messiah. McGarvey and Pendleton mention



several examples of the Jews' demands for signs (Matthew 12:38; 16:1; John 1:18; 4:48). They looked for a messiah to conquer Rome. So, Jesus' teaching and the cross was a stumbling block. They did not want to hear his kingdom was not of this world. Certainly, they did not want their messiah to die on a cross.

The Greeks rejected Christ as God's spokesman for a different reason. They wanted a greater wise man than the world had known. In their wisdom, they considered flesh, in and of itself, to be sinful. So, they could not believe God would take on human form, since that did not match up with their wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22-23).

God does his calling in the message of the gospel. In his second letter to the brethren at Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:13-14). Those who accepted the gospel call saw Christ as a great sign and the Messiah. They saw the great knowledge needed to plan such a means of salvation (1 Corinthians 1:24).

While the death of Christ on Calvary may have seemed foolish to the Greeks, it turned out to be above man's wisdom. In that death, all men have a means of overcoming the grave. Similarly, Christ's death on the cross seemed to be a clear sign of weakness to the Jews. "Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save, If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from

the cross, and we will believe Him" (Matthew 27:41-42). In fact, his death and resurrection from the tomb was the only way to crush the head of Satan and render the grave powerless over his followers (1 Corinthians 1:25; Hebrews 2:14-18).

### **Jesus Christ, Wisdom from God**

So, Paul said, not many of those who would be called wise, or powerful or noblemen followed Jesus. Most uprisings are successful because the upper crust leaders join and the lowly commoners follow. Christianity appealed to the lowly and spread to those wrapped up in self. Remember, the disciples were common fisherman (1Corinthians 1:26).

God, as in the case of Gideon, used means man would not use to accomplish his purposes. Thus, man finds it harder to credit the means and seeks the power behind the means (see Psalm 8:2; James 2:5). "God has chosen" those of lowly birth. God also chose things which are not. As Pulpit Commentary points out, the word "not" means things that men did not even think of as existing. Men thought of the cross as "base" or lowly. They thought of Christ as dead, or nonexistent, but he was chosen as the one to display God to the world instead of any other fleshly messenger. McGarvey and Pendleton say "flesh" represents ministers and instruments God uses. They further suggest that "glory" means to "take pride in himself, and aspire to be head of a faction." All the glory should go to God (1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 4:7).

We get into Christ's body by obeying God. If we listen to Jesus, great wisdom will be ours (Matthew 12:42).

"Righteousness" is the right relation to God brought about by believing and obeying Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). Vine says "sanctification" is "separation to God." Vine says "redemption" is "the deliverance of the believer from the presence and power of sin, and of his body from bondage to corruption." So, as McGarvey and Pendleton point out, we should not glory in the preacher who brought the message, but in the One who planned our salvation (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Jeremiah 9:23-24).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Paul describe preaching as foolish? To whom was it foolish?

2. What did Paul preach? Why?

3. Why did the Jews think such preaching was foolish?  
Why did the Greeks?

4. Why did Paul say God chose the foolish, weak and base things?

5. What things does Paul say Jesus becomes to the Christian?

### **Lesson 3**

#### **Preaching God's Wisdom**

#### **1 Corinthians 2:1-16**

### **Preaching the Crucified Christ**

Paul did not go to Corinth as an orator or philosopher. Instead, he preached Jesus as the Anointed, or Christ, who was crucified. The apostle admitted his appearance and speech did not impress others (2 Corinthians 10:10). This would not have mattered to Paul as he put Christ first (Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Philippians 3:8) and called for others to do likewise (Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:17). Paul only wanted to preach the good news, or gospel (1 Corinthians 2:1-2; Romans 1:16).

After his failure at Athens (Acts 17:22-34), Paul showed concern that he may not have been getting his important message across. He refused to use man's wisdom and relied totally on God's power and message. Then, he had the assurance his hearers' faith was based solely on God's power (1 Corinthians 1:3-5).

### **The Spirit Reveals God's Wisdom**

Paul indicated he was ready to speak with wisdom from God if his listeners were ready to hear it. However, he would not speak with a worldly wisdom, which would have resulted in giving them nothing. Instead, he was prepared to speak with the wisdom which was from God. McGarvey shows that Paul on several occasions spoke of the gospel as a mystery (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:4-9; Colossians 1:26; 1 Timothy 3:16). It took wisdom from above to make known God's plan of salvation which had long been hidden, but was revealed in Christ. McGarvey goes on to show that it continued to be a mystery to those who, out of their wickedness, refused to hear (1 Corinthians 2:6-7; Matthew

11:25; 13:10-13).

The "rulers of this world" had proven they were ignorant, in respect to this mystery, when they crucified our Lord. Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Paul cited Isaiah 64:4 to show man did not understand God's plan of salvation. It took the revealing work of the Holy Spirit for men to come to an understanding of God's mystery. Man, through his wisdom, could not have discovered the truth. Specifically, God's inspired spokesmen were the ones through whom the Spirit made the mystery known. Through them, for the first time, God perfectly made known the plans he had kept in his heart since before creation (1 Corinthians 2:8-10).

### **Only the Spirit Knows**

No one can know the inner secrets of a man without the spirit (inner man) of that man revealing them. In a similar manner, only the Spirit of God can reveal God's mysteries. That is why those with worldly wisdom did not know God. An inspired spokesman could not speak about God simply through worldly wisdom. Rather, they spoke through the Holy Spirit's inspiration (1 Corinthians 2:11-12; John 16:13-14; 14:26.)

Paul went on to explain the workings of inspiration. Those who were inspired taught spiritual truths using spiritual words. All Christians would do well to follow this pattern and use only the Bible to show what God desires of man. A man who has lived a sensuous, worldly life is unable to understand those spiritual thoughts Spirit guided men deliver. Due to lack of use, his ability to discern spiritual ideas is dead, or at least weak. A carnal mind can cause a

man to be lost eternally (1 Corinthians 2:13-14; Romans 8:6-7; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

A spiritual man is able to examine and understand God's revelation. He is able to judge both the higher things of God and lower things of this earth. In contrast, no earthly man can know whether one claiming to be God's spokesman speaks the truth. Certainly, no one could so know God's mind that he could teach him. Therefore, no man could know the inspired man's mind enough to teach him. Lipscomb and Shepherd suggest that "instruct" should be translated "joined together with him." Carnal cannot be joined, but the spiritual man thinks like his Lord (1 Corinthians 2:15-16).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Give at least 3 expressions describing Paul's preaching and attitude in Corinth.

2. What things does this chapter indicate should not be part of preaching?

3. In what ways might a man learn of God's existence?

4. How has God revealed himself and caused man to learn of his nature?

5. What is the natural man Paul speaks about? What problem does he have with learning God's will?

#### **Lesson 4**

#### **Testing a Minister's Work**

#### **1 Corinthians 3:1-15**



### **Division Is Carnal**

The Corinthians had grown slowly in spiritual things. They still clung to carnal things like envy and strife (1 Corinthians 3:1). Like those at Ephesus, they needed not to be "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-14).

In working with them, Paul had concentrated on first principles. He could not go further in teaching them because they were not ready to go on. The Hebrews' writer said, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12-6:3; 1 Peter 2:2). Those at Corinth were still ruled by worldly thoughts and desires, as is evidenced in the divisions mentioned in 1:11-12. They could not argue with his statement that they were carnal since their division stood as proof against them (1 Corinthians 3:2-4; Galatians 5:19-21).

### **Increase Comes From God**

Paul wanted to know what it was about Apollos and himself that could cause division. They were both "ministers," which is the same word translated "deacons" in Acts 6:2 and means they were servants. They were both God's servants and worked as God gave them the ability, thus deserved no special credit for the things they did.

Paul had planted the seed, which is the word of God (Luke

8:11), at Corinth. Apollos had, through giving further instruction, watered. However, God should be recognized as the one who caused growth. Just as in the physical realm, those that plant and water can get no results without God's power. Both Paul and Apollos worked toward the same goal. They did as God commanded and would be rewarded according to their faithfulness in carrying out his instructions (1 Corinthians 3:5-8).

### **The Church is God's Building**

Then, Paul and Apollos were workers together under God. The field they worked in, which literally could be translated "tilled land," was God's. To further illustrate, Paul called the church God's building (1 Corinthians 3:9). So, the glory belonged to God, as the Psalmist said, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, and because of Your truth" (115:1).

Paul had used his spiritual gifts to lay the foundation God wanted laid. He warned those building on that foundation to be careful how they built upon it because it was God's foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10). In the Galatian letter he wrote, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

Christ is the rock foundation of the church. He told his disciples he would build his church on the foundation fact that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-20). Peter told the members of the Sanhedrin, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name

under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12; Ephesians 2:20). Controversy over whether Peter is the "rock" of Matthew 16 ends in Paul's statement in (1 Corinthians 3:11).

### **Testing the Building Materials**

McGarvey suggests the building materials Paul mentioned were very familiar to the brethren at Corinth. The first three building materials, gold, silver and precious stones, were used to make idolatrous temples fireproof. The last three materials were used in building the very combustible huts in which the Corinthians lived. The illustration is used to say the best should go into the church. The quality of materials, or individual Christians, making up the church will be tested in judgment. Weak, combustible material will not be acceptable. Trials are used by God to test the quality of material in each of us (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

Those ministers who have helped build faithful Christians will be rewarded in seeing their faithfulness (1 Corinthians 3:14). For that reason, Paul wrote the Thessalonian brethren, saying, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; Philippians 2:12-16).

If the Corinthian church, for example, were lost in the day of judgment, Paul would suffer loss because they were part of his work. Yet, the apostle would still be saved if he was able to endure the test of fire that they had failed (1 Corinthians 3:15).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What does carnal mean? What results from this in one's life?

2. What does "spiritual" mean? How can we be of such a nature?

3. What is expected of ministers today? How did Paul describe their work?

4. What is the foundation? Who laid it? How was it laid?

5. How will each man's work be tested? What does this mean? How is it possible for one's work to be burned up but him be saved?

## **Lesson 5**

### **The Church Is God's Temple**

**1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5**

**Beware of Defiling God's Temple**

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul described the church at Corinth as God's building (Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5). The church is God's temple and the Spirit's dwelling place on earth. "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Those dividing into sects (1:12) needed to see the greatness of their sin. By breaking the church into pieces, they were defiling God's dwelling place. Those who did such things made themselves subject to swift judgment from God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Peter 2:1).

### **True Wisdom**

True wisdom, according to the apostle Paul, comes in learning to be a fool in the eyes of this world's wise (Acts 2:24). Pride in one's own intellectual abilities can keep him from learning the truth. It is important to humble oneself before God to learn (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:6). God uses man's own wisdom to trap him, as Paul's quotation from Job 5:13 would indicate. Whenever man attempts to add worldly wisdom and opinion to God's word, he will find himself lost because of the very instrument by which he tried to save himself.

Paul went on to quote Psalm 97:11 to show man's plans are empty. Only God's plans can bring a true reward. So, Paul warned the Corinthian brethren against following man and his wisdom. They had already tried it and found it wanting. Christians have all they need in God's revelation and

teachings. All things work to the good of God's people (Romans 8:28). Life is a good gift to be used to the Christian's advantage in God's service. Even death is something to which one can look forward (Philippians 1:21.) Since the Christian is Christ's and finds so many blessings in him, he should not join a party or faction (1 Corinthians 3:19-23; John 17:12-23.)

### **Stewards of God's Mysteries**

Paul next said that inspired spokesmen should simply be thought of as servants and stewards. Vine says the word servant should be thought of as "an under rower." Further, he says it "came to denote any subordinate acting under another's direction." The idea included in the word "steward" is that of a servant in charge of food distribution in God's household. He is not responsible for providing the food, but is held accountable for it being properly dispensed to all in the household. They were given the food and were simply expected to do a good job distributing such. They did not have to discover truth, simply teach what was revealed to them (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 16:1-12).

A man of God can only be judged by God. He does not have to please other men, the courts of men or even himself. Paul did not know of any wrong he had committed, but that did not make him right (Psalm 19:12; 1 John 3:19-21). God is the only just judge. As Paul told the Romans, "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). God's judgment is fair because all facts are known to him. Paul would urge Christians, therefore, not to pass judgment on motives and hidden thoughts, but leave it to the Lord (1

Corinthians 4:3-5). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What does Paul call the temple of God?
2. Give reasons you believe the temple is so important.



3. Give some reasons from 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 that we should not glory in men.

4. In what sense are we stewards of God? What should we do because of this?

5. List various ones we do not have to please and the one we do have to please. In each instance, why do we, or do we not, have to please?

## **Lesson 6**

### **A Plea To End Division**

#### **1 Corinthians 4:6-21**

#### **Thoughts on the Corinthians' Boasting**

No one man, even Paul or Apollos, should be followed in things not revealed by God. Paul used his and Apollos'

name to avoid hurting the real leaders of the divisions (1 Corinthians 4:6). In Galatians 1:6-9, the apostle warned against those who would draw Christians away from Christ's gospel to a different gospel. Of course, it was not really a different gospel, since there is only one message which can truly be called good news. "But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

No one has room to boast of his abilities since all abilities came from God (Romans 12:3-8). Yet, the Corinthians were full of self satisfaction and "rich" with pride in their own wisdom, as McGarvey suggests. They thought themselves mighty in the church without need of the apostles, who they seemingly looked down on. Paul really wished they were as great as they thought, since he rejoiced in their growth and gloried in it (1 Corinthians 4:7-8).

### **Paul's View of the Apostles' Position**

In contrast to the Corinthians' lofty thoughts of themselves, Paul gives his thoughts on the apostles' state. They suffered persecution and would continue to suffer till they died. The comparison is made between the apostles' state and those condemned criminals the Romans brought into the amphitheater, after the contests were over, to be stared at. Both men and angels gazed at them in their plight (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Once again, Paul used satire to drive home the ridiculous position in which the brethren had placed themselves. He contrasted their high opinion of themselves with the real

status of the apostles. They went without food and water on some occasions for the sake of the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:27). They also had insufficient clothing. They were slapped out of contempt (Acts 23:2). Not having permanent homes, they wandered, or were driven, from one place to another (1 Corinthians 4:10-11; Matthew 8:20).

Paul made tents rather than require the Corinthians to support him. He never asked money of them, but received it from other places (2 Corinthians 11:7-9). The apostles responded to ill treatment as Christians should (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-30; 1 Peter 2:21-23). Like the Lord, they did not revile those who reviled them but blessed them instead. They endured persecution rather than lashing out in retaliation. People treated the apostles with contempt and acted like their houses would need a complete cleaning after they were gone. Filth means scum or rubbish of humanity, that which would be wiped or scraped off (1 Corinthians 4:12-13).

### **Paul Loved the Church in Corinth Like a Father**

Paul did not try to make the brethren feel bad because they added to his problems. Rather, he wanted to warn them so they would change. He wrote to them much as a loving father would write to one of his children who had begun participating in things which would hurt him. Paul also warned them against their strong desire for teachers. One wonders if he was thinking about the same thing he would later tell Timothy. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers" (2 Timothy 4:3).

Christians are, of course, born of God's will (John 1:13; James 1:18). In a lesser sense, they are begotten by the teacher who brings them the gospel. First, Christians should follow God the Father. "Therefore be followers of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). Second, Paul told the Corinthians they could do well, as could we, to imitate Paul's sacrificing his life for the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

Paul sent Timothy to remind the church at Corinth of his teaching and uncompromising stand on the gospel. Some were proud of themselves and apparently thought Paul was afraid to face them himself. But, Paul promised to come. He did not plan to test the word of those vain speakers, but their power (to work miracles). That, he said, would show whether God was with them. God's kingdom did not, and does not, stand on man's wisdom, but a Spirit supported word. Paul said he would come and gave the brethren the choice as to the nature of his coming. They could choose whether he was to come with a rod to punish or with love, as a father receiving a penitent child (1 Corinthians 4:17-21).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Paul use himself and Apollos for an example?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. List some of the Corinthians' thoughts about themselves.

3. List Paul's thinking about the position of the apostles.

4. Why did Paul think of himself as the father of the Corinthian church? What did such thinking cause him to do and say?

5. Under what circumstances in the church today might a rod be required?

## **Lesson 7**

### **Purging the Leaven of Sin**

#### **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

#### **Tolerating Sin in the Church**

Fornication was a part of the worship of Aphrodite. A thousand priestesses of the goddess served as prostitutes who were available for the free use of temple visitors. Yet,

a variety of fornication considered detestable by the heathens of this wicked city had been reported among the Christians. Apparently Paul learned of the sin in the church at Corinth through public gossip. This outrage came because a man committed fornication either with his step-mother, or else his mother (1 Corinthians 5:1; Leviticus 18:8; 20:11; Deuteronomy 22:30; 27:20).

Despite this terrible sin, the church still took pride in man's wisdom and remained divided. Because of the pride, and division caused by it, no disciplinary action had been taken. Such sin should have caused great sorrow in the church. It should have called for immediate action. Paul's quick judgment and action stood in sharp contrast to their lack of shame (1 Corinthians 5:2-3).

### **Deliver the Sinner to Satan**

The apostle directed that the whole congregation should act on the basis of Christ's authority. When the church acts on the basis of Christ's word, as delivered by inspiration, the action is taken by his authority (1 Corinthians 5:4; Matthew 18:15-20).

McGarvey writes, "The offender, being excluded from the kingdom of God, is to be thrust back into the kingdom of Satan, that the sense of his loneliness, shame and lost condition may cause him to repent, and mortify or subdue his flesh, i.e, his lust, after which his spirit, being thus delivered, might be saved." Lipscomb says, "When one has been excluded from the fellowship of the church, Christians should make him feel that he forfeits the esteem and association of all the members of the church, yet he should be warned and admonished as a brother" (1 Corinthians

5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:15).

### **Warning Against the Leaven of Sin**

They had been proud of their tolerance of sin, as if that was a badge of true righteousness. However, Paul warned them that such pride was not good. He also reminded them that even a small amount of leaven would spread through an entire lump of dough. Leaven, in this case, represents evil "illustrating the hidden constant way in which it spreads," according to McGarvey.

The apostle said the leaven of sin must be taken away. The Jews had to put away leaven at Passover time. Jesus, as our Passover lamb, was sacrificed for us once for all, so sin must be put away once for all (Hebrews 9:28). So, Paul urged them to keep the Christian's Passover feast without the old leaven of sin.

He further urged them to lay aside the new leaven of malice and wickedness. Malice would be ill will in mind, while wickedness would be ill will expressed in action. Those who are in Christ's body should strive to be pure. The church and its members should work to be completely free of flaws. "Sincerity" carries the idea of purity. It has been well depicted as a test accomplished by holding up a piece of cloth between the eye and the sun. When no flaws were found, it was said to be pure. "Truth" is simply the word of God, or the ultimate standard of judgment for Christians (1 Corinthians 5:6-8; John 12:48; Romans 2:16).

### **Disciplining Sinners in the Church**

Christ's apostle to the Gentiles had warned them in some

previous epistle not to "keep company with sexually immoral people." Those included in such a description could have been involved in any type of sexual immorality. Those Christians who would keep out the leaven of sin were instructed not to keep company with such. Thayer says the word for company means "to mix together," "to keep company with, be intimate." Lipscomb says, "To have company with is to associate with and treat one as worthy of companionship and association...The object, no doubt, is to make the fornicator feel the disgrace and shame of his course and bring him to repentance" (1 Corinthians 5:9).

Paul went on to explain that his instructions did not include those in the world involved in sexual immorality, covetousness, extortioners or idolaters. The word "covetous" would describe those seeking to obtain what is another's in an unlawful way, while an extortioner uses power or threats to take what is not his, or more than is right. An idolater would be anyone who set something above God, especially the false gods served by some in Corinth, like Aphrodite. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14, Paul wrote adding another type of Christian other Christians should not associate with in a social way. "And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed."

To avoid associating with these types of people generally would have required a Christian to live somewhere outside the world. Obviously, normal daily activities necessitate Christians associating with sinners in the world, so the rule could not apply to them. Instead, the rule was intended to cause Christians to avoid those who were evil within the church (1 Corinthians 5:10).



### **Christians Must Judge Those Within the Church**

It was specifically those Christians in sin that Paul warned the brethren not to keep company with. McGarvey says, "Have no interchange of hospitality which would imply brotherly recognition, lest the church should thereby not only be disgraced, but corrupted---1 Corinthians 15:33." In fact, they were not even to eat, or "take food together" as Thayer says, with brethren living in sin. Christians involved in such sins as those Paul has already listed should have been well aware that those participating in them would not gain entrance into heaven (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5).

Paul went on to say that he could only deal with those in the church. Discipline for those outside the church is in God's hands alone. His immediate concern was with any Christian living in sin and the way tolerating their sin would impact the effectiveness of the church. Of course, he knew those in the world would be judged one day (John 5:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul completed his discussion by commanding the Corinthian brethren to disfellowship the sinful brother (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Peter practiced withdrawal of fellowship for the wrong reason and had to be withstood to the face by Paul. He refused to eat, or take food together with, the Gentiles when some came from James in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:12). Interestingly, it was Peter who had first defended the Christian's right to eat with Gentiles because the gospel is for all (Acts 11:1-18).

One might ask why or how Jesus could receive sinners and eat with them as the Pharisees and scribes said in Luke

15:2. The answer appears in the series of parables he told. The sinners he ate with needed and were willing to hear the gospel. In contrast, when he sent the twelve out under a limited commission in Matthew 10:5-15, he told them to shake the dust off their feet when they departed from a house or city which would not receive them. The reason for the contrast seems to come from an opportunity to teach the lost in the one case and the appearance of giving tacit approval to the sinful actions of others unwilling to change in the other case.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What sin was in the church? How would Jews have responded to such? How would Gentiles respond? What response had the church made?
  
2. What directions did the inspired apostle give for taking care of the problem?

3. How is Christ our passover? What leaven should we cast out? What should take its place?

4. Who did Paul instruct Christians not to "company"? Why?

5. How should Christians respond to sinners in and out of the church?

## **Lesson 8**

### **Glorifying God**

#### **1 Corinthians 6**

##### **Judging Matters Between Brethren**

Jesus instructed his followers to go to the brother who sinned against them and tell him privately in the hope he would be restored. "But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses

even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17). The Corinthian brethren were ignoring the Lord's instruction. They had thereby placed the church in a bad light before unbelievers (1 Corinthians 6:1).

Christians will judge the world representatively through Christ, their head. Since they were already joined together with the Lord's mind (2:16), Paul reasoned, they should have been able to handle small problems among themselves. Paul even said Christians will judge angels representatively through Christ. Through Christ's instruction, therefore, brethren ought to be able to settle differences between themselves (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

### **The Shame of Brother Going To Law Against Brother**

If they had been called upon as a congregation to judge a matter concerning this life, the Christians having the least sense and experience would not have been left to make the decisions. Yet, they did much worse by calling on those outside the church to judge matters that should have been handled within the church (1 Corinthians 6:4).

The Corinthians were very proud of their knowledge. When Paul asked if there was not even one wise man among them, it was a stinging rebuke. By brother going to law with brother, they showed they had no respect for those who were in the church. Paul said their actions meant they had to go outside the church to find someone wise enough to resolve their problems (1 Corinthians 6:5-6).

Even before they went to court with one another, they were in the wrong. Christians ought never to reach such a stage

in their problems. It takes bigger men to say they are sorry. Instead of enduring wrong, Paul said they were actually committing wrongs against one another. They should have been more concerned about others and less concerned about themselves (1 Corinthians 6:7-8; Philippians 2:4).

### **Becoming A Christian Means Changing Relationships**

Those in the church at Corinth needed to remember that those wronging others would not see heaven. Sin will be punished (Galatians 6:7-8). Paul then went on to list some of the sins he had in mind. A fornicator is one who indulges in illicit sex and is involved in one of the sins that Paul said would keep one out of heaven. Idolators worship false gods. An adulterer is one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another. Perhaps adultery is specified because it breaks up families and hurts a third party. The word translated "homosexuals" literally means "soft to touch." Vine says, "metaphorically, in a bad sense,....persons in general, who are guilty of addiction to sins of the flesh." The sin of sodomy is best described in Romans 1:26-27.

A thief takes what belongs to someone else, while those who are covetous desire "to have more...,i.e., to have what belongs to others; hence, greedy of gain," according to Vine. Those who become intoxicated are drunkards. Revilers are abusive and profane. Those who are excessively grasping or covetous could be described as extortioners.

Paul next said the Christians at Corinth had previously been involved in some of those very sins he had listed (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Lipscomb says, "The threefold 'but' in

the clause which follows emphasizes strongly the contrast between their present state and their past, and the consequent demand which their changed position makes upon them." The apostle said they had been washed, or baptized (Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5). They had also been sanctified, or set apart to do God's will. Further, Paul said they had been justified, or considered righteous because their sins had been remitted.

### **Christians Are A Part of Christ's Body**

Christians are free to do anything that is not sinful. The Corinthians had misapplied their freedom to sinful activities. As God's inspired spokesman, Paul said even some things which were lawful were not to be done because they would not profit others. Lipscomb says, "There is a lawful use of all appetites, desires, and lusts" but none of them must obtain the mastery over us" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Apparently some compared man's appetite for food to his appetite for sex, reasoning that if one is right, so is the other. Food and stomach serve only a temporary purpose; to maintain the body. Fornication serves to tear down the body, which is meant for the Lord's service. The Lord dwells in and cares for the body. While the stomach serves a temporary purpose, the body will be raised by God for an eternal heaven, if properly used (1 Corinthians 6:13-14).

Christians are parts of Christ's body (12:27; Ephesians 5:30). Paul could not even imagine a part of the body of Christ being joined to a harlot. After all, sexual intercourse causes a man and woman to become one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31). So, the fornicator,

who is a Christian and "one spirit" with the Lord, makes Christ one with a harlot. Therefore, Paul urged the brethren to flee sexual immorality, even as Joseph literally did (Genesis 39:12). While other sins may attack members of the body, the body is not the instrument of sin. It is thus given over in its totality to sin, both outwardly and inwardly (2 Corinthians 6:15-18).

### **The Temple of the Holy Spirit**

Paul said every Christian's body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). These verses point to an indwelling. On page 366 of *The Timeless Trinity for the Ceaseless-Centuries*, Roy H. Lanier, Sr. says,

The Greeks have two words for temple. One is 'hieron' which included the place where the money-changers had their tables, where the priests had their apartments, even where doves and cattle were kept for offerings. Then they had the word 'naos' which included the holy place and most holy place, the dwelling place of God...This distinction in meaning of these words is observed scrupulously by New Testamentwriters....How can the human body be the temple of the Spirit unless the Spirit dwells in the body? Then Paul says which is 'in you'. Here we have that Greek preposition 'en' with the dative of a person again, which means 'in the person'. So in this verse we have two proofs of the actual indwelling of the Holy Spirit: 1). The human body is the temple (naos) of the Spirit; 2).

The Spirit is 'in you'.

As sinful men (Romans 3:23), the Corinthian brethren were in bondage to sin. (Romans 7:14). As Christians, they had been bought, out of that bondage, by the Lord (Acts 20:28; Romans 6:16-23; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9). Because God bought us, we should glorify and serve him to the best of our ability.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What should a Christian who has suffered a loss at a brother's hands do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What points does Paul use which made you answer #1 as you did?



3. What sins had the Corinthians been in? How were they changed?

4. In what sense could all things be "lawful" for Christians?

5. What does Paul here say is the temple of the Holy Spirit? How should that affect the Christian's thinking about fornication?

## **Lesson 9**

### **Questions About Marriage**

#### **1 Corinthians 7:1-24**

#### **Should A Single Christian Marry?**

Paul turned from dealing with problems of which he had heard to questions the Corinthians had asked. The first question, as seen by McGarvey, was, "Is marriage to be desired or avoided by Christians?" Paul answered that it was better not to touch a woman. He was referring to sexual relations, which for the Christian would be confined

to marriage (see Genesis 20:6; Proverbs 6:29). Due to circumstances at the time (see verse 26), the apostle's answer was an exception to God's rule, or plan (1 Corinthians 7:1; Genesis 2:18).

Yet, to avoid sin brought on by natural desires, some should marry. God gave the marriage bed as a special place of joy to fulfill man's desire. Marriage was also given by God to provide a helper specially suited to man and a means of procreation (1 Corinthians 7:2; Genesis 2:18; 1 Timothy 2:15). Paul said marriage partners should satisfy one another's desires to help each other avoid great temptation. Neither one has the right to refuse the other the privileges of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).

He further instructed that they should not deprive one another, except upon agreement during a special time of prayer. After that time of denial, relations should be resumed lest one, or both, be tempted to sin. Paul was not commanding them to refrain from relations during special seasons of prayer. Those matters are to be decided by individuals at home (1 Corinthians 7:5-6).

Some have enough self-control in the area of sexual desires that would allow them to live without marriage (Matthew 19:11-12). Not everyone has the same gift, so all could not remain single as Paul did. Under the circumstances at the time of writing this letter, Paul said it would be better for those who had never married, or were single again because of death, to remain single. However, if one could not control his desires, it was better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Corinthians 7:7-9).

### **Should Married Christians Separate?**

The second question would seem to be, "Should a Christian, who is joined to Christ, separate from the union of marriage?" Jesus had answered this question (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18). Generally, they should not even separate. Lipscomb says, "If she and her husband cannot live harmoniously together let her remain unmarried. She is not permitted to marry again. That would be adulterous." Further, "If the wife who has separated from her husband finds that, after all, she cannot live a single life in purity the only course open to her is to be reconciled to the husband whom she has injured." The rules of this verse apply to a husband, too (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Paul wrote the Lord's commandments (14:37), but the Lord had not spoken of this matter while on earth. By inspiration, Paul spoke the Lord's will in the matter. To this point, Paul has instructed believers married to unbelievers. If the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer and allow him to be faithful, the believer should not separate. The principle applies to believing wives as well as husbands (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

There is nothing sinful or illegitimate about a marriage between believer and unbeliever. The children were not born of an illegitimate union. So, the law would not require the believer to quit such a relationship. McGarvey says the word "unclean" should be taken in the Jewish sense, meaning "not to be touched." A marriage of such a nature under Moses' law would have been unclean (Deuteronomy 7:1-3; 1 Kings 11:1-2; Ezra 9:1-2). "The law of Christ so reverses that of Moses that the Christian sanctifies or removes the uncleanness of the unbelieving

partner, and of the children" (1 Corinthians 7:14).

If the unbelieving partner refuses to live with the believer, so long as the believer practices his, or her, beliefs, then, the believer does not have to live with the unbeliever. Continuing to live with the unbeliever would, under these circumstances, place the believer in slavery to Satan and cause him to reject Christ. The unbeliever cannot, by appealing to the husband-wife relationship of love, force the believer into such bondage. The believer should, however, separate peacefully. By being peaceful and patient, the believer may be able to convert the unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:15-16; 1 Peter 3:1-2).

### **The Christian's Social Relations**

Becoming a Christian should not be used as an excuse for disrupting normal social relations, assuming they are not sinful. Christianity is only disruptive to that which is evil. It encourages us in all the good relationships we have in life. The apostle also stated the rule applied to all the churches, not just Corinth. To illustrate his point that radical changes in social relationships are unnecessary unless sin is involved, Paul mentioned circumcision. Some, perhaps out of embarrassment, had tried to hide the fact that they were circumcised. Others, who were Gentiles, had thought it would be necessary to be circumcised to please God. Paul told them to remain as they were when called by the gospel. Obedience to the law of Christ is what counts once one becomes a Christian (1 Corinthians 7:17-19; Galatians 5:6).

Lipscomb saw three basic distinctions that "divide and unite" mankind. They are: national, social, and physical

(Galatians 3:28). Becoming a Christian does not require a change in those distinctions. Anyone can be a Christian if he is willing to obey the gospel. Slaves did not have to escape slavery to be Christians. However, if freedom was offered, it was to be preferred since more time would have been available for the Lord's service (1 Corinthians 7:20-21).

Even in slavery, Christianity frees man from sin (1 Corinthians 7:22; Romans 6:22). Upon becoming a Christian, those who were free become slaves to Christ because he purchased them (1 Corinthians 7:22; Romans 6:22; Acts 20:28). Since Christ bought Christians, they are his servants no matter what state they may be in (Ephesians 6:5-8). Their work should have been done to God's glory. So, each Christian was admonished by Paul to remain in the basic social relationships they were in at the time they obeyed Christ, unless the association involved sin (1 Corinthians 7:23-24).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What does Paul mean when he says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman?" Why did he say such a thing?
2. List some of the purposes God has for marriage.
3. Does becoming a Christian change one's marital relationship? If so, how?

4. Is separation something a Christian should consider? What about divorce? What does "not under bondage" mean?

5. How should becoming a Christian effect basic social relations?

### **Lesson 10**

#### **More Questions About Marriage**

##### **1 Corinthians 7:25-40**

#### **Is Celibacy Preferable To Marriage?**

McGarvey thinks the third question must have been, "Is celibacy or virginity preferable to marriage?" Paul was inspired in his judgment (7:40; 14:37), so we can rely on his answer. The basic rule to be followed was to stay the same. Because of the distress Christians found themselves in at that time, married or unmarried were to seek no change (1 Corinthians 7:25-27).

Remember, the statements above were statements of inspired judgment, not commands. If one could not control himself, marriage was not a sin. It would simply increase the number of problems to be handled and Paul would have liked to help them avoid that (1 Corinthians 7:28). Paul digressed into a discussion of the shortness of our time upon the earth. The suffering of this life is limited.

When this life is over, even if one used life's pleasures to the fullest, it was going to seem as if he had not used life's pleasures fully. You may recall, the pleasures of sin are short lived (Hebrews 11:24-25; 1 John 2:17). When the distress came, Paul wanted them to be free of the extra cares of marriage. The unmarried can center his whole attention on the Lord's work. In contrast, the married man has to watch for the needs of his family and divide his attention. This, of course, was stressed because of the pressures (distress) they were to face. A woman is like a man in respect to this issue. All this advice was for their good at that time. He did not mean to place them in the path of undue temptation, only to help them avoid an extra load of cares. This, then, should not be used to substantiate a marital prohibition (1 Corinthians 7:29-35).

### **Giving A Daughter's Hand In Marriage**

At the time Paul wrote, the fathers' gave their daughters' hands in marriage without consulting them. Paul said that fathers might feel they wronged their daughters by keeping them from marrying, even after the normal age for marrying. Such fathers, when they saw their daughters were not able to withstand the temptations of the unmarried state, were urged by the apostle to go ahead and let them marry. There was no sin in being married. However, the father that was sure the marriage of his daughter would be incorrect for the time, was free to act according to his judgment. Paul's judgment on this matter assumed that no circumstances warranted a different conclusion. Paul was not saying it was against the Lord's will to allow a virgin daughter to be given in marriage. He was saying that due to the coming trials, it was wiser to keep her from marrying (1 Corinthians 7:36-38).

### **Should Widows Remarry?**

McGarvey thinks the fourth question was, "Should widows remarry?" Marriage is a contract for life, with but one exception (Romans 7:1-3; Matthew 19:9). If either party died, the other was free to remarry. However, the Christian widow was restricted by Paul to marrying "only in the Lord."

There are two schools of thought regarding the expression "en kurioo," which is translated, "in the Lord." McGarvey translates, "to a Christian." This reasoning says only a Christian is in the Lord (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-28; Revelation 14:13; Ephesians 6:10; 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 2:5-7). Guy N. Woods in Questions and Answers Open Forum Freed-Hardeman College, quotes from Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon 'Of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. They "define the phrase enkurioo, 'in the Lord', 'esp. in Paul or John usage, to designate a close personal relation...be or abide in Christ...gameetheenaii en kurioo marry in the Lord---marry a Christian, 1 Corinthians 7:39'." Lipscomb writes, "This prohibits the widow marrying one not a Christian."

The other view is that "in the Lord" means in accord with the Lord's will. In Ephesians 6:1, en kurioo is used in a discussion of children obeying their parents. Certainly Paul's point there is that children should obey their parents as long as what they ask is in accord with the Lord's will.

Again, under the circumstances present at the time of Paul's writing, the Christian widow would face less problems



unmarried. Lipscomb and Shepherd say the idea behind, "I think," "implies full persuasion that in the advice he had given he was speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 7:39-40).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Was Paul's judgment just his opinion? What did he judge about Christian virgins?
2. Is marriage sinful? Why did Paul advise the Corinthians not to marry?
3. What advantage might a single Christian have over a married Christian?
4. Should a Christian father encourage his daughter to marry?

5. Should Christian widows remarry? What does "only in the Lord" mean?

## **Lesson 11**

### **Meat Offered To Idols**

#### **1 Corinthians 8**

##### **A Question of Christian Liberty**

The questions sent by the Corinthians to Paul did not end with those on marriage. McGarvey sees the next question as, "Have not Christians perfect liberty to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols?" Apparently they argued, in connection with this question, that all had knowledge with regard to this matter. Paul pointed out that their puffing up instead of building up was not helpful in teaching others the truth. Knowledge with love builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1).

One who is conceited because of his knowledge shows his ignorance. The more one really knows, the more he knows he does not know. The one who acts out of a proper sense of love for the brethren will be known and loved by God (1 Corinthians 8:2-3).

##### **Real Deity**

When an animal was sacrificed, only a small portion was burned. The rest was either eaten by the sacrificer or sold. The heathen looked on this meat as specially blessed. It seems some of the Corinthians correctly argued that the idol did not represent real deity (Isaiah 44:14-18). The heathen worshiped innumerable gods (1 Corinthians 8:4-5; compare Exodus 20:3).

There is only one true God, who created all things (Genesis 1:1). He even created those things worshiped by the heathen. Mankind and all he knows exists by his power (Acts 17:28). It is man's purpose to serve him (Ecclesiastes 12:13). There is but one Lord, who created us (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2) and causes us to be reconciled to God in the church (1 Corinthians 8:6; Acts 20:28).

### **A Demonstration of Brotherly Love**

Despite the fact that there is only one true God, Paul indicated some converts still held a feeling of reverence for the idols they had long worshiped. They would have sinned in eating meat offered to such idols. This was probably the reasoning behind the apostles' injunction of Acts 15:29. In contrast, the eating or not eating meats had no effect on the strong brother's relationship with God. The apostle argued that since it does not make one any better in God's sight, his concern should have been for its effect upon others (1 Corinthians 8:7-9).

One Christian might have been able to eat without sin, yet his actions could have given another boldness to eat and thereby have caused him to sin. The second sinned because in eating he felt he was paying reverence to the idol. Paul was saying it is possible to participate in an act which is not sinful in itself and have it become sinful because of its effect on others. Leading the weak into a situation which would tempt them to sin would have caused Christ's death to be in vain for that one (1 Corinthians 8:10-11).

It is a sin against Christ to so lead a weak one to sin. Jesus told his disciples, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if

a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). In describing the judgment, the Lord pictured himself speaking to those who would not enter heaven. The King said, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40-45). Paul's conclusion was that Christians should not take advantage of their liberty because of its effect on others. Exercising their freedom without consideration for their brethren would be placing a snare or trap in the path of a weak brother (1 Corinthians 8:12-13).

Paul's thinking on these matters was likely solidified by his experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-9). Jesus asked him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Yet, he had never had direct contact with the Lord until that time, so far as we know. His only crime was in persecuting the body of Christ, or church, which Jesus equated with persecuting him!

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What differences do you see in the weak and strong brothers?

2. What can we know about the gods of this world and the true God?

3. What affect does the actions of a strong brother have on a weak one?

4. How should Christ's sacrifice impact our thoughtfulness toward our brother's weaknesses?

5. Name some things strong brothers today may have to forego for weaker brethren.

## **Lesson 12**

### **Paul's View of Preaching**

## **1 Corinthians 9**

### **Paul's Defense of His Apostleship**

Apparently false teachers had come to Corinth. It seems they were trying to discredit Paul as an apostle. First, they wanted to know why he refused pay, perhaps asserting it was because he knew he was not an apostle and did not deserve an apostle's pay. All freed men are entitled to wages for work. Apostles would have been entitled to more pay as more qualified teachers.

One qualification of an apostle was seeing Jesus. So, second, someone questioned whether Paul had seen Jesus. Of course he had (Acts 1:22; 26:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). The Corinthians were further proof of Paul's apostleship since they were the fruits of his labors. A seal vouches for the validity of a document. In the same way, the Corinthian church's existence vouched for Paul's validity as an apostle. If he was a fake, so were they. Paul's defense of his apostleship was, as above, that he had seen Jesus and his labors were being rewarded with a fruitful return. This argument had satisfied the apostles (1 Corinthians 4:15; 9:1-3; Galatians 2:6-10).

### **Paul's Rights As An Apostle**

The church should feed its workers. As an apostle, Paul claimed the right to receive food and drink for his labors. It would seem most of the apostles were married. Paul and Barnabas had a right to support for themselves and a family as much as any other apostle, or one sent by the Lord. Of

course, if they had a wife, she must be a believer (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). Even the Lord's brethren were married (Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38.) Paul called Barnabas an apostle because he was "one sent" (1 Corinthians 9:4-6; Acts 14:14; 13:2; Galatians 2:9).

Wages are the incentive to faithful workers in any line of work. This was God's opinion as well as man's. The apostle quoted Deuteronomy 25:4 to show that God even wants working animals to be treated fairly (compare Psalm 104:21; 27-30; 147:9; Job 38:41; Matthew 6:26-30; Luke 12:24). If God cares for animals, he would certainly care for men. Paul used the principle to show that man should pay a fair wage to the laborer for his work. Again, the laborer's incentive is his reward (1 Corinthians 9:7-10).

### **Physical Rewards for Spiritual Service**

Spiritual blessings are beyond value, so paying the laborer who brought such was a good exchange. Other cases of spiritual debt being repaid with material goods could have been listed by the apostle (Romans 15:25-31; Philippians 4:15-17; Acts 11:27-30). Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had supported others. Certainly he and Barnabas deserved the same. Paul had not asked for wages so he could not be accused of seeking personal gain (1 Corinthians 9:11-12).

As the apostle went on to note, those working in the temple sacrificing ate of those sacrifices (Numbers 18:8-13; Deuteronomy 18:1). Also, the Lord established a principle that would require pay for spiritual labor (Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7). Paul did not exercise his right to receive pay. Neither did he write to start doing so. Paul would rather

have died than receive earthly reward since he received great spiritual joy from sacrifice for the gospel's sake. By not receiving pay, he was able to reach many more people with the gospel, which gave him joy (1 Corinthians 9:13-15).

### **Paul Sacrificed To Serve**

Paul was commanded to preach the gospel (Acts 26:16-20). As one who had obtained mercy, he had to proclaim mercy. He was not able to glory in simply being a faithful steward. Since he was commanded to preach the gospel, there was no reward in being simply faithful in keeping that command. If he had done it without being commanded, he might have had reason to glory. Paul did not want to misuse his right, so he did not accept any money. This gave him a reward for his labors. Later Paul apologized because this seemed to have hurt the church (1 Corinthians 9:16-18; 2 Corinthians 12:13).

Paul gladly gave up his right to support so that he might convert more. In fact, he was willing to give up anything so long as it was not sinful. McGarvey says, "Paul observed the Jewish distinction as to meat (ch. 8:13); and honored their feasts (Acts 20:16); and classed himself among their Pharisees (Acts 23:6); and even had circumcision administered (Acts 16:3), where it did not interfere with the liberty of Gentiles. (Galatians 2:3-5.) All of these were innocent concessions to and harmless compliance with the law." He was unbending in his strict compliance with gospel requirements, however.

Next, Paul explained that he could live as one outside the law of Moses, or a Gentile, in order to win Gentiles to the



Lord Jesus (Romans 2:12-16). He did not force the law of Moses upon them. Lipscomb writes, "Paul adapted himself to the habits and modes of thought of the Gentiles; quoted their poets (Acts 17:23) and did not urge on them the ceremonies and 'works of the law' but 'by the hearing of faith' (Galatians 3:9)." He goes on to explain the sense in which Paul was without law, stating, "The death of Jesus on the cross had made him free from the law of Moses (Colossians 2:24), and brought him under the 'law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:2.)" The previous chapter explained how he avoided hurting the weak. Paul would have yielded to anyone's wishes, so long as they were not sinful, in order to gain the hearing of another soul (1 Corinthians 10:33; 2 Timothy 2:10). He sacrificed all this to save others and himself (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 1 Timothy 4:16).

### **Controlling Self To Receive The Prize**

All the talk about sacrifice reminded Paul of the sacrifice and self control necessary to reach the heavenly goal. He used the illustration of runners who sacrifice many hard hours of training devoting themselves to the single purpose of winning. Likewise, Christians should devote their whole being to their purpose of reaching heaven (Philippians 3:12-14; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:1-2). Athletes give up much, through self-control, to attain a perishable crown, but Christians strive to reach an imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9:24-25; 1 Peter 5:4).

Knowing the value of the prize, Paul said he ran without hesitation. He was not practicing but running the actual race. Like an olympic boxer in the ring for competition, the apostle sent his punches straight to their mark. Paul

fought the desires of his flesh to control them. McGarvey suggests that Paul had been like a herald telling the rules of the game. It would be tragic for the announcer not to meet the announced requirements (1 Corinthians 9:26-27).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What qualifications did Paul have to be an apostle?

2. What reasons did Paul give to prove preachers deserve support?

3. Explain Paul's thinking on physical rewards for spiritual service.

4. Give reasons Paul preached. Why would he do so without pay?

5. Briefly describe the illustration Paul used to show the importance of self control. Name some areas we should be especially attuned to today.

### **Lesson 13**

#### **Lessons from Old Testament Examples**

## **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

### **Blessings Israel Received**

Though Paul was writing primarily to Gentile Christians, Abraham would be considered their father in the spiritual realm (Galatians 3:7-8, 29), as would the other faithful fathers of the past. The Corinthian brethren probably knew the basic facts of the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, but Paul wanted them to see its spiritual significance. He first referred to the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-22). The Israelites were buried in the sense of being completely covered from sight. A wall of water was on both sides and the cloud between them and Egyptians. The cloud did also cover them (Psalm 105:38-39). In the sea, they passed from disputed leadership, between Moses and Pharaoh, to undisputed leadership by Moses, God's messenger. Thus, like baptism for the Christian, the crossing of the Red Sea saved the Jews from bondage (1 Corinthians 10:1-2; Exodus 14:30; Romans 6:3-4, 16-18).

The manna God provided in the wilderness could be said to be spiritual because it came from God. It was also a type of Christ (John 6:31-35, 49-51). Through it, the Jews should have come to recognize God as the giver. Its provision should also have induced them to be thankful, which would have spiritually strengthened them. Rocks were used on two occasions to provide water when needed. The rock is said to have followed them in the sense that it was available when needed (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8). In the Christian age, Jesus provides living water (John 4:14). The apostle's comments on Christ as the rock prove Jesus existed in Old Testament times (1 Corinthians 10:3-4).

### **Lost Though Rewarded**

As Paul continues his discussion of their fall in the wilderness, he emphasizes self-control as he did in 9:27. Five times in the preceding verses he emphasized the participation of all in the blessings of deliverance. Then, he reminded the Corinthians that few received the reward (Deuteronomy 1:31-38; Numbers 26:62-65). Their starting number had been 693,550 (Numbers 1:3; 2:32)! "Scattered" suggests the desert was strewn with their corpses (see Vine). On page 27 of *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, T. W. Brents cites verses 5 through 12 and says, "We know not how the apostle could have given more conclusive proof that the number of the elect composing the Church of God at Corinth, was liable to be diminished by apostasy than is here given" (1 Corinthians 10:5).

The apostle indicated those serving under the law of Christ can learn from the mistakes of those Israelites. They lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt (Numbers 11:4-6; 32-34). A desire to return to the old life and its sinful pleasures is thus condemned. Egypt equals the sinful life. Paul then makes reference to Exodus 32 where in connection with idolatrous worship they apparently danced and let their passions run wild. Anything placed before God is idolatrous (1 Corinthians 10:6-7).

Numbers 25:1-9 contains the record of the next incident mentioned by Paul. The number used by Paul may have been rounded down and Moses' number rounded up. Idolatrous worship often led to sexual immorality because it was a part of such worship among other nations. Allen says immorality follows rejection of God (Romans 1:18-32). The Israelites also tried God's patience. This

was either through lack of trust (belief in his power and word; Acts 5:9; 15:10; Hebrews 3:9), or by needlessly exposing themselves to danger (Matthew 4:7). Paul may have been referring to the incidents recorded in Numbers 21:4-6. There are two cases of murmuring done by the children of Israel (Numbers 14:1-2; 27-29; 16:41-49). God is never pleased with complaining (1 Corinthians 10:8-10).

### **A Warning For Us**

All other ages pointed toward this last great one in which we live. Notice "all" of them received God's blessings and mercy (vs. 1-4), yet "some" turned away (vs. 7-10). Their sins grew out of lust (James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:16-17). Since they had many blessings yet fell, it serves to warn us. Trusting obedience will keep us from falling (1 Corinthians 10:11-12; 2 Peter 1:10).

1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches God watches out for us as individuals and providentially cares for us. It also shows he has control over all things, even the forces of evil, since he will not allow too much pressure to be brought against us. General kinds of temptation are listed in 1 John 2:15-17. Other Israelites had resisted that which caused some to fall (See *The Timeless Trinity for the Ceaseless Centuries* by Roy H. Lanier, Sr. for further comments, pp 386-387).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What things does Paul say happened to all the Israelites in the wilderness?

2. Why were most of their corpses strewn in the wilderness?

3. Why does Paul relate these stories?

4. What lessons can we learn today from each sin which caused them to fall?

5. What special promise did Paul give at the end of his discussion of their fall? How can such help us in our daily lives?

#### **Lesson14**

#### **Dangers of Idolatry**

#### **1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1**

#### **Flee From Idolatry**

Idolatry is dangerous. As surely as one would flee from a snake coiled at his feet, he should flee from idolatry. Perhaps to make the lesson more palatable, and certainly because he truly loved them, Paul addressed the Corinthians as brethren. The apostle went on to tell them he was writing to them as men and women who could discern the truth. They knew drunkenness, reveling, lust, etc. were closely related to idolatry. It should have been readily apparent to them that anything so closely related to such sins ought to be avoided (1 Corinthians 10:14-15). In a letter to the church in Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

### **The Lord's Supper and Idolatry**

When any Christian partakes of the Lord's Supper, he partakes of the blessings of fellowship with Christ and his brethren. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper recall Christ's death. The fruit of the vine Christ blessed and the Corinthians gave thanks for involved a full fellowship, or partnership, of all who partook. Similarly, the unleavened bread broken in the memorial involved all who participated in a communion with the whole body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20).

Paul wanted them to see that the Lord's Supper emphasizes the united nature of the church. Though the body is comprised of many members, it is still one body. Paul thought of the church as true Israel and the wilderness wanderers as "Israel after the flesh." When they offered sacrifices, part was given to God on the altar and part was eaten by the worshiper (Deuteronomy 12:18). Thus, they



had fellowship with God (1 Corinthians 10:17-18).

### **Eating At the Idol's Table**

It was certainly true, as Paul admitted in 8:3, that an idol was not a real god. However, there was some reality behind the idol. The Greeks considered an idol to be a "demi-god or minor deity--a being between God and men" (McGarvey). To the Christian it would have been a demon or an evil spirit. To eat of meat offered to idols, then, would have brought a Christian into fellowship with a demon.

Since the wine at an idolatrous feast was blessed and dedicated to the idol, just as the wine in the Lord's Supper is consecrated to the Lord, Paul said the Corinthians had to choose which one they would be dedicated to. They could not serve both. Otherwise, they would have been like a "wife who would provoke her husband to jealousy by showing her affection for another man" (Lipscomb). Paul wanted those who would risk arousing Christ's anger to know he was strong enough to destroy them (1 Corinthians 10:19-22).

### **Seeking The Good of Brethren**

Paul knew all things not morally wrong were lawful, but some of those would not build up or strengthen the church. When Christians have the right to do something, the question should be "How will it affect others?"

The apostle said brethren did not need to ask questions

about meat bought in the marketplace, since meat there would have been divorced from idolatrous practices. He went on to quote from Psalm 24:1, which proves all meat is pure since it comes from God. Neither did the apostle deem it necessary for the one asked into a heathen friend's home, and not to a sacrificial feast, to ask questions about the food since such would not be an act of worship (1 Corinthians 10:23-27).

However, if someone, probably a weak brother, pointed out that the meat had been offered to an idol, Paul said a Christian should not eat for the sake of the one who pointed it out. Of course, he would still have the right to eat, but should have forfeited it for the sake of the other (1 Corinthians 10:28-29).

### **Sacrificing To Save A Brother**

Obviously, the strong could have been thankful for any meat and eaten. The apostle asked whether they should allow their freedom to cause another to fall and speak evil of them? He wanted the brethren to realize they should be willing to give up all rights so God's purposes might be furthered. Nothing was to be done to cause others to either remain in, or fall back into sin. Paul's main purpose was to save men. He was willing to sacrifice privileges to accomplish that purpose (1 Corinthians 10:30-33).

Paul would have the Corinthians follow him as he followed Christ. He was especially referring to his willingness to give up his rights to attempt to save others, just as Christ had been willing to do. Remember, he gave up any wages he may have been due so no one would be hindered in their obedience to the gospel (1 Corinthians 11:1).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Describe what occurs when brethren partake of the Lord's supper.

2. What did Paul say would occur if the Corinthians joined in eating meat sacrificed in demon worship?

3. What criteria should we use to determine whether or not it is right to be involved in any activity?

4. Under what conditions could a Christian eat meat offered to idols?

5. How should we view our liberty when a brother's salvation is at stake? What facts make this so?

## **Lesson 15**

### **Woman's Role In Worship**

#### **1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

#### **God's Order of Authority**

Traditions can be those formed by men and handed down

from generation to generation. However, when Paul spoke of them in 1 Corinthians 11:2, he was speaking of the doctrine passed from Christ to the apostle to the Corinthians. Notice, Paul did not create the traditions but "delivered" them. Much of the New Testament had not been written when Paul was penning this letter. The truth they knew came from the words of inspired men, whether spoken or written. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Man was given dominion over woman in Genesis 3:16. He was to love her as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Man, in turn, was directed to submit himself to Christ as Lord. This was first accomplished when a man obeyed Christ in baptism and was to continue as he walked in the light of God's love and instructions (Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:7; John 14:15). The God-given order is: God–Christ–man–woman. Notice, in the garden Jesus prayed, "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (1 Corinthians 11:3; Matthew 26:39).

### **Signs of Subjection**

Covering the head, in the Corinth of Paul's day, showed that a man was in subjection to someone. In worship, Paul said, a man's head should be uncovered, since he would have been in subjection only to Christ at that time. Neither should a man today wear a Masonic ring, star of David, or any other object which might indicate he is in subjection to someone other than the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:4).

The covering of the head for a woman was used to indicate she was in subjection to her husband. In addition to the natural covering God gave them, the women of Corinth threw something around their head as a sign of subjection. A woman who went in public with her head uncovered was openly rebelling. She would have been saying she was independent, thus not in subjection a man. Shaving a woman's head was used as a sign that she was an adulteress. It was also a custom of that day for a courtesan to shear her hair. A woman stooping so low as to go without her covering in public worship might as well shave off all her hair and assume the appearance of a courtesan or adulteress, according to Paul (1 Corinthians 11:5-6).

### **An Argument From the Order of Creation**

There was nothing created that was superior to man (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:6). Because of this, Paul said a man covering his head would bring shame on himself, the image and glory of God. In contrast to man, woman was of and created for man. Her purpose was first to glorify her husband. Paul's statement was true because woman was made from man's rib in the creation. Genesis 2:18 says woman was created to fill man's needs for companionship (1 Corinthians 11:7-9).

Because man was created first and the woman was created for him, Paul urged her to always show her subjection to man during worship. In Corinth, this was done by wearing a veil. Likely, the angels signify God's displeasure over woman worshipping uncovered (see Luke 14:10). Concerning this whole matter of the veil, Guy N. Woods writes in Questions and Answers Open Forum: Freed-Hardeman College Lectures:

...in the church in Corinth..it was required of women to worship with covered heads and men to worship with uncovered heads--the covered head, in the case of woman, to evidence her subordination to her 'head', (man), and the man to indicate his subordinaion to his 'head'--Christ. (Verses 3, 4, 5)...(a) Paul did not originate the custom of covered heads for women but sancitioned a practice already recognized; and, (b) that while the headship relation continues, the manner by which it is indicated does not...I believe this matter is in exactly the same category as the instruction of the same apostle regarding the kiss a mode of greeting (Romans 16:16)...it was not a method of greeting which the apostle originated; he simply took what was already done and sanctified it--made it a holy form of greeting...From this passage it is plain that it was not intended that Christianity should needlessly vary from the national customs of the day. For Christians to introduce needless innovations would be to add to the misconceptions which already subjected them to persecution...Not the slightest change had occurred in the relationship of men and women: both are to be subordinate to their heads; but, they do not indicate it as they did in Corinth and other countries of the ancient world.

Woman is only inferior to man in the sense of rank

established by God in the creation. Man and woman are mutually dependent on one another for existence, as God appointed. While woman originally was made out of a part of man, men are now born of women. They depend on each other for existence. All this was appointed by God. therefore, woman should be satisfied with her position and man should not over-emphasize his position of authority (1 Corinthians 11:10-12).

### **Long Hair**

Paul asked the brethren to use their own judgment to determine whether or not it was proper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered. As McGarvey wrote, "Instinct should teach us that the head of a woman is more properly covered than that of a man, for nature grants it a greater abundance of hair." He also went on to note men of Paul's day cut their hair short, unless they were under some vow like that of the Nazarite. "Long hair in a man betokened base and lewd effeminacy," according to McGarvey. The apostle's words suggest to us that a man should not want to wear hair so long he looks womanly, nor a woman hair so short, she looks manly (1 Corinthians 11:13-14).

A woman's long hair was given to her by God as a beautiful covering. To end all discussion Paul says this was the practice in the churches of Christ, apparently indicating other apostles had in some way confirmed what he was saying and it was universally accepted. The churches should strive to be in agreement in practice (1 Corinthians 11:15-16). While today a veil would not indicate anything to the general populace, Christian women still need to show their subjection to their husbands. A proper spirit is a necessary part of a woman's spiritual attire (1 Timothy



2:9-10)!

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What "tradition" did Paul deliver about authority?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did a covering on a man's head indicate in Corinth of Paul's day? What about a woman's?

3. What reasons did Paul have for asking Corinthian women to wear a covering on their heads?

4. What does nature teach about a man's hair? A woman's?

5. How can a woman today indicate she has on her covering?

## **Lesson 16**

### **Partaking of the Lord's Supper**

#### **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

#### **Problems In Coming Together**

Paul thought the very act of Christians coming together should encourage unity and spiritual development. Paul said the Corinthians were failing in that and reprimanded them. Reports of their conduct in the assemblies of the

saints had already come to Paul before he wrote. Some of the reports may have been exaggerated, but Paul believed it when it was said they were dividing into factions when the congregation came together (1 Corinthians 11:17-18; Isaiah 10-13).

Divisions caused by carnal thinking tend to separate those who are striving to meet God's standards (2 Timothy 2:15) from those who are not. The "approved" Paul mentioned would be those who, like metal, pass the test and prove to be genuine. The divisions in the Corinthian church and misuse of the supper made it no longer proper to call it the Lord's. The Lord would have no part in their division (1 Corinthians 11:19-20).

Perhaps because the Lord ate the passover feast with his disciples before instituting the Lord's supper, the church at Corinth ate a feast, often called a love feast, before partaking of the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians were each bringing their own meals and partaking of it in party groups. They did not wait on each other and while the poor went hungry, the rich drank to excess. Thus, the love feast was not a true communion at a common table where each could receive alike. The poor were shamed instead of being fed. Paul praised them (vs. 2) when they deserved it and rebuked them when they deserved it (1 Corinthians 11:21-22).

### **The Lord's Instructions Concerning the Supper**

The Lord himself told Paul about the sacred supper. The night of the supper's institution was the night in which Christ was betrayed and thus was a solemn occasion. The bread he took on that night would have been unleavened

since this was the type of bread used during the passover week (Exodus 12:15). Jesus, as always, thanked God for his blessings, of which the supper would be a part. Since Jesus was present in body at the original supper, the bread could only have represented Christ's body. They were to partake of it remembering the Lord's sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

Jesus took the cup in the same manner he had the bread. Obviously, he gave thanks. The contents of the cup, or fruit of the vine, represented the cleansing blood of Christ. That blood sealed and confirmed the new covenant under which sinners can be set free from the terrible debt of sin (Romans 6:23). First Century Christians gathered together on the first day of the week to partake of this supper (Acts 20:7). Paul reminded the Corinthian brethren that they were to remember the Lord's sacrifice each time they gathered for the purpose of partaking the supper. In this act, they looked back to the cross and forward to Jesus' return to take his people home (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

### **The Proper Attitude Is Required**

Paul stressed the need for the proper attitude in partaking of the Lord's supper. Irreverence while partaking would have shown a light concern for the sacrifice being remembered. Each participant, then, needed to ask himself whether or not he was eating and drinking in thankful memory of Christ's sacrifice. Such was especially true because an improper attitude would lead to condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

Paul declared many in Corinth were suffering spiritually because of a wrong attitude in receiving the supper. In fact,

many were spiritually asleep or nearly dead. The apostle tried to encourage the brethren by assuring them that condemnation would not come upon those who kept a close watch on their attitude. The Lord only disciplined those in the wrong so they might not be lost eternally (1 Corinthians 11:30-32).

When the Lord's supper was eaten, Paul told the Corinthian Christians to wait to have fellowship with each other. To avoid turning the Lord's supper into a common meal, Paul instructed them to eat at home. With their appetites thus cared for, they would have been able to participate in a proper manner when they ate the Lord's supper. Other, probably lesser, problems were to be straightened out when Paul came to visit (1 Corinthians 11:33-34).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What things should be produced by Christians coming together?

2. What problem associated with the Lord's supper did the Corinthians have?

3. What does the bread represent? What type of bread was used? Why?

4. What was the "cup?" What does it represent?

5. Explain the significance of the word "unworthy?" What led to this concern? How can we avoid the same situation today?

## **Lesson 17**

### **Spiritual Gifts**

#### **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

#### **Recognizing God's Spirit**

It must be remembered that the people of Corinth were primarily Gentiles who had served idols all their lives. They were ignorant of God's will. Spiritual gifts were given by God to alleviate the problems produced by such a background. Lipscomb says these gifts "carried with them ability to know and to make known the will of God, and to confirm it by signs and wonders." In idolatrous worship,

the Corinthian brethren would have been accustomed to giving their mind, emotion and will up to an experience. They would have practiced many irrational things. This they did in worshiping an unspeaking idol. If ecstatic, or unintelligible, utterances are mentioned, it was in conjunction with such idolatrous worship (1 Corinthians 12:1-2).

Teachers can be tested 1) by reason, 2) by scripture, and 3) by fruits. Paul began his explanation by showing, through reason, how to determine if a spirit, or spiritual gift, was from God. Such a spirit would not say Jesus was "devoted to destruction," but would say he was Lord. One would have to have known what a person was saying to use this test. The utterances could not have been ecstatic (1 Corinthians 12:3).

### **The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts**

Different gifts allowed their possessor to accomplish different tasks, but one Spirit gave all gifts. Further, the apostle said different services were rendered by Christians in behalf of their Lord. For instance, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the ability to speak in languages they had never studied. Each listener was able to hear in the tongue, or language, in which he was born. They thereby knew God was speaking through the men standing before them. The Almighty was witnessing that their words were true (Acts 2:1-21; Hebrews 2:3-4).

God, through the various workings of Christ and the Holy

Spirit, showed his support for the church. Each member of the Godhead had his part or role to play. Christ came to speak the words the Father had given him. The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to reveal all truth (John 7:16; 12:44, 49; 16:12-13; Acts 2:32-33). Similarly, gifts were given for the benefit of the whole church and should not have been a source of false pride (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

### **The Miraculous Gifts**

Paul next went on to list the various ways in which the Spirit miraculously empowered those first century Christians. Wisdom was the gospel, which was given completely to the apostles and partially to the prophets. Knowledge was the inspiration necessary to teach that revealed gospel. Both gifts were from the Holy Spirit. Next, Paul mentions faith, which was one of the special gifts given through the laying on of the apostles' hands. It was a faith that enabled one to work miracles. The healings which Paul listed after faith involved curing the sick miraculously (1 Corinthians 12:8-9).

The miracles some were enabled to work would include healing and punishing (Acts 13:9-11). Prophecy was the ability to speak, by inspiration, with God's words. One could discern spirits if he could tell the difference between inspired and uninspired messages. Tongues was the gift that allowed one to speak in a foreign language he had never studied or learned, as the apostles did in Acts 2. Interpretation was the ability to tell what had been said in that foreign language. It seems significant that Paul mentioned tongues and the interpretation of them last. All of the gifts were given by the same Spirit. No one had a right to be boastful. The Spirit bestowed these gifts upon



people by the laying on of the apostles' hands (1 Corinthians 12:10-11; Acts 8:18; 19:6).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How did idol worship impact their understanding of spiritual gifts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was the purpose of the Spirit in all the gifts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why is it important to know how the Spirit speaks? For whom does he speak?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. List the various gifts and briefly explain how they worked.
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## **Lesson 18**

### **One Body With Many Members**

#### **1 Corinthians 12:12-31**

##### **The Unity of the Body**

There is but one body. That body is the church. Paul told the Ephesian brethren, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling." Earlier in the same letter, he had said, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him

who fills all in all" (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23).

There are many different offices in the body, but only one body. The Spirit, working through earthly ministers, had caused people to be baptized into the one body. After baptism, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). If the baptism into the one body is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which would be a filling or overwhelming, then why would Paul go on to say they were "made to drink into one Spirit?" In other words, why would a person already filled with the Spirit have to drink of it (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)?

The human body and the church have many members, each with a role to play. Apparently some thought their possession of less showy gifts made them non-essential to the body (church). By referring to the human body, Paul showed each member fulfills an important function. No matter what their function, Paul said each was a part of the body and must perform his duty to the best of his ability. The need for differing gifts was thus made very plain. Different functions were to be performed by different members of the body to have a body working as a harmonious whole (1 Corinthians 12:14-17).

### **The Need For Different Members**

God put different members in the body to perform specific functions. If all were the same part, even the most important, they would not have made up a body. Different members are needed to make a body. McGarvey suggests the higher the animal was in God's creative order the more members it had with varying functions. No body would be complete if it lacked even one member. Every member

depends on the others (1 Corinthians 12:18-21).

Paul went on to observe that the more essential members of the body (heart, lung, etc.) are also those members requiring the most protection and care. Also, parts that lacked physical beauty are covered with apparel, thus making them more pleasant to look upon. Some parts have no need to be adorned but add beauty to the body. Yet, those parts depend for their existence upon the less beautiful parts (1 Corinthians 12:22-24).

### **Division Is Undesirable**

Clearly, the facts Paul presented proved God created the body in such a way that division is undesirable. Every member of the physical body feels for the other members. If one member suffers, the whole body feels pain. Anyone who has ever smashed his thumb or stubbed his toe knows what Paul is saying. He can feel the hurt and a sickness in his stomach, though it was his thumb that was smashed! What is good for one member of the body sends blessings to all. Most of us have heard an athlete say winning the big game made him, or her, forget all about the aching muscles (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

Paul said the church at Corinth was Christ's body. Each member had a job to be done. He then repeated the spiritual gifts list giving the order of recipients. The apostles were inspired messengers of God. Prophets were inspired to reveal God's will in a more limited way. Teachers took the revealed word and explained it to other Christians. Miracles and healings were used to show the messenger was from God and to punish the wicked. "Helps" describes those who saw others' needs and sought

to provide for them. "Administrations" was a description for church leaders and those able to counsel the weak. Note that tongues and the ability to interpret them rank last in both lists (1 Corinthians 12:27-28).

Paul had demonstrated that positions and duties in the body of Christ are as varied as in the physical body. All positions are needed. If the Corinthian brethren wanted greater gifts, the apostle said they would have to desire them and strive to be worthy of them. Yet, he said there was a way that was even greater than gifts. That was the way of love which he wrote about next (1 Corinthians 12:29-31).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Explain how one becomes a part of Christ's body? What is the body?
2. In your own words, demonstrate the importance of every body part.
3. What interesting facts about the body did Paul give?

4. Explain why division is so undesirable.

5. Describe the function of each of the recipients of the various spiritual gifts.

## **Lesson 19**

### **The Greatest Is Love**

#### **1 Corinthians 13**

##### **The Power of Love**

Being able to speak the languages of men, or even angels, produced nothing but a hollow sound without meaning if love was absent, according to Paul. It should be remembered that angels are spiritual beings (Hebrews 1:7) and do not speak in the same manner as men (Luke 24:39). This was a hypothetical situation Paul used to show even the most impressive abilities would be empty without love.

Lipscomb says, "Love denies self for the good of object. Passion seeks its own gratification." The Corinthians had taken pride in spiritual gifts, yet, apparently, lacked the

necessary love for those who could be benefitted by them. Instead of being concerned with how impressive these gifts made them appear which made them nothing, they should have been concerned with how others might learn the truth. Lipscomb noted even Judas Iscariot had the ability to work miracles (Matthew 10:1), yet he betrayed the Lord!

Providing for the needs of others is a work of Christianity, but is meaningless without love as its root cause. Even martyrdom loses its effect without love. As McGarvey says, "Willingness to fight and die for Christianity will not take the place of loving obedience to Christ" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

### **The Nature of Love**

Love will cause one to endure wrong for a long time as Christ did (1 Peter 2:23). Love is good to all. Love is not jealous over another's good fortune, nor does it seek to impress others with its position and accomplishments. Love is well-mannered toward others. It does not seek to fulfill its own desires. Violent tempers are not the product of loving hearts. Love does not allow grudge holding or keeping record of wrongs committed against oneself.

True love does not feel good because others sin or suffer sin's consequences. It enjoys the truth's successes. It would not coverup for others' wrongs. It quietly suffers the wrong of others. Love looks for the best in all it sees. It longs for the time the sinful will repent. Love withstands the assaults of evil with patience (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

### **The Temporary Nature of Spiritual Gifts**

Spiritual gifts were needed to aid in the growth and development of the early church. The need for those gifts came to an end when God's will was completely revealed. In contrast, love is always a part of the church and its development. The prophecies of which the apostle spoke would be the inspired speaking of God's message (1 Corinthians 14:3). This comes from the Greek word *Katargeo*, which means they would be abolished. Roy H. Lanier, Sr. says this is the same word used in Ephesians 2:15; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14 (destroy); and 2 Corinthians 3:11. Thus, one could learn from such speaking (the written record of), but the continued use of Spirit guided speaking would be brought to an end by God's decree. In the same way, Paul said the Spirit given knowledge would be abolished (12:8).

Concerning tongues, Paul used the Greek word *pauo*. This would usually denote a willing cessation in contrast to a forced end. Tongues were used to confirm the fact that the revealed message was from God. When men stopped delivering Spirit inspired messages, as Paul has said they would do at God's command, then the use of tongues would stop of itself, or naturally. Remember that Jesus promised the apostles that the Spirit would guide them into "all truth" (John 16:13). Thus, we could safely say the inspired message would cease to be delivered at least by the time of the death of the last apostle (Jude 3). These things were temporary, lasting only until the whole faith was delivered to man (1 Corinthians 13:8-9).

### **The Permanence of Love**

There is a strong parallel between 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 and Ephesians 4:7-15. Thus, it seems the "perfect" is the



"unity of the faith." The parts of verse 9 were used to confirm and reveal God's will for man, so the "perfect", or we might say the complete or whole, is God's revealed word, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The use of spiritual gifts was compared by the apostle to childhood, or immaturity, and the time of God's completed message to manhood, or maturity. The perfect word will supplant the partial spiritual gifts. Similarly, there is a difference in seeing someone in the mirror and seeing them face to face. Before revelation was complete, there was only partial knowledge of God, now we know God completely (1 Corinthians 13:10-12).

Paul plainly said gifts would pass away. However, he also said faith, hope and love will stand until the earth's end. Love is that which caused God to send his Son (John 3:16) and causes us to obey (1 John 4:19). It will be experienced in the fullest possible sense in eternity when all God's faithful are at last able to worship him around the throne and experience the joys of the prepared place (1 Corinthians 13:13).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. In what sense did and does love validate acts of service?
2. List at least seven characteristics of love. Explain how a person who loves will express that love to its object.
3. Describe the purpose of spiritual gifts. How long were they to last?

4. Why is love said to be the greatest of faith, hope and love?

## **Lesson 20**

### **The Proper Use of Spiritual Gifts Part 1**

#### **1 Corinthians 14:1-19**

#### **Prophecy Builds Up and Comforts the Church**

Paul had already told the brethren that love is most important to Christians. Yet, he thought it was good for the Corinthians to desire the gifts that might aid them in furthering Christ's cause. Preaching by inspiration, or prophecy, was the greatest gift. The tongues speaker might be telling divine truths or revealing some of God's mysteries, but only God could understand since it was in a foreign language. Those prophesying could build up the church and help it grow spiritually. They could exhort and encourage. Also, they could comfort their brethren (1 Corinthians 14:1-3).

In the normal Corinthian assembly, there would be no

profit to tongue speaking. Prophecy, on the other hand, would help instruct the church. Tongues helped missionaries. Tongue speaking was profitable in that it showed the individual speaking had the Spirit of God. The one speaking may have understood what he said. However, prophesying would be profitable to the whole church since all could understand (1 Corinthians 14:4-5).

### **One Must Be Able to Discern To Learn**

If the people in the assembly could not learn from what was said, what good was the sound? Even in musical sound, there must be a distinct sound made in order to make sense. There are certain rules of beat and harmony that must be followed. A child just playing with an instrument seldom makes a hit record.

McGarvey says, "Moreover, some instruments, such as the trumpet, because of the fixed and established laws of tone, are used to convey a language as well defined and unmistakable as that of the voice. Thus, certain notes on the trumpet command a charge, others the joining of battle, and yet others the retreat, etc. Now, if the trumpet or trumpeter fails to produce this tone-language intelligibly, the army is thrown into confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:6-8).

In the same way, tongue speaking that was not understood by the listener was wasted effort. At best, it was like talking to oneself. At its worst, it could create confusion. Languages are useful only when they make sense. They are not for mere display. Both the speaker, who used a language, and the listener, who could not understand the

language used, were as ignorant foreigners to one another (1 Corinthians 14:9-11).

### **Desire That Which Builds Up the Church**

Thus, Paul urged the Corinthian brethren to desire the spiritual gifts that would be most useful. Particularly, he urged them to desire those gifts which would be good for the edification of the church. The word for "edification" originally meant "(the act of) building; building up," according to Thayer. In the church, it came to mean, "the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness" (1 Corinthians 14:12).

If they had the gift of tongues, Paul encouraged his readers to pray that they might be given the power to interpret them. That power could only come through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:15-17). Such a power would be needed so the listeners could be helped to understand the sense. The one praying in a foreign language could understand, in his own spirit, his prayer. But, his understanding would not profit the congregation since they could not understand (1 Corinthians 14:13-14).

Paul desired that the ones praying or singing should pray or sing as inspired by the Holy Spirit and in a language the congregation could understand. Prayers need to be prayed so that all could understand. Otherwise the congregation would not know what was said and could not affirm its truthfulness. Of course, the prayer would be a truthful one, if inspired by the Holy Spirit, yet, the congregation would not benefit if it could not understand (1 Corinthians 14:15-17).

Paul was able to speak in more languages than anyone in Corinth. Yet, when a congregation was assembled, Paul was more concerned with how much the people learned and could understand, than with the impression his ability left. McGarvey quoted Besser as saying, "Rather half of ten of the edifying sort than a thousand times ten of the other" (1 Corinthians 14:18-19).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What gift did Paul think was best? Why?
2. What was the purpose of the gift of tongues?
3. In what situation would tongues be useless? Give two illustrations to support your answer.
4. Why did Paul want the Corinthians to deeply desire spiritual gifts?

5. Knowing we do not have miraculous gifts, how might "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding" be applied to our assemblies?

## **Lesson 21**

### **The Proper Use of Spiritual Gifts Part 2**

#### **1 Corinthians 14:20-40**

#### **Tongues, A Sign to Unbelievers**

Paul appealed to the members of Christ's family at Corinth to quit being like children desiring the prettiest gift. Instead, he wanted them to be like men using good judgment to choose the most useful gift. Yet, he wanted them to take a child's approach to differences, bearing not one grudge (1 Corinthians 14:20).

The apostle quoted from Isaiah 28:11-12, which was originally used to tell Israel that God would speak to them regarding their stubbornness through their captors, the Assyrians. It shows that tongues were foreign languages. Further, speaking in tongues was not profitable unless it was understood by the hearers. Tongue speaking was used to convert unbelievers, while prophecy was used to teach believers (1 Corinthians 14:21-22).

Obviously, if all spoke in tongues at once, confusion would be the result. Such would drive unbelievers away. On the other hand, if all prophesied, the unbeliever would be convinced of his sin and see his need to respond to the gospel. Feeling the truths were directed at him, the unbeliever would be pricked in his heart (see Acts 2:37) and would respond. He would feel that God must have exposed his inner thoughts to the prophet and would recognize the speakers as God's ambassadors of truth (1 Corinthians 14:23-25).

### **Orderly Worship**

It seems there was a large group of Christians desiring to participate in the worship. There were apparently several who possessed each of the gifts. Paul knew it was the Lord's will that everything done in worship to God be done in a manner that would edify. So, he said to limit the number of tongue speakers to three. He directed that they should go one at a time, and only speak with the aid of an interpreter. Without an interpreter, a tongue speaker could not edify (1 Corinthians 14:26-28).

Only two or three prophets would be allowed to speak at each assembly, according to the apostle's instructions. The other prophets were then to judge the truthfulness of the prophecy. If, while one prophet was speaking, another prophet received a revelation, he should make it known so the other could conclude and only one speak at a time. Paul's words make it clear the prophet still had control over his actions. The Spirit did not take over and force him to act like a puppet. Otherwise, he could not have been expected to stop speaking and allow another to begin. All the prophets in the audience were to listen to one another



since they could each learn from the different revelations given to others (1 Corinthians 14:29-32).

God would not cause several to speak uncontrollably at once. Instead, the Father caused things to be done so that the church might be edified. God would not, and does not today, cause men to be hysterical or frenzied, thus creating a confusion that would not allow edification (1 Corinthians 14:33a).

During the assemblies where spiritual gifts were used, Paul directed the women to "keep silent." This was a rule to be followed "in all the churches of the saints." The apostle presented two reasons such a rule was appropriate. First, he said the law would require women to be in subjection. In Genesis 3:16, God had said, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." By inspiration, Moses had presented God's law in reference to the vows made by a woman. He said her vows would stand unless her father, when she still lived in his home, or husband heard them and overruled her. Clearly, this shows the submission God intended a woman to exhibit (Numbers 30:3-12).

Second, it was considered shameful for a woman to speak in a public assembly. Apparently the wives of the prophets had interrupted and asked questions as their husbands were prophesying. Paul told those women to quit interrupting and ask their husbands at home (1 Corinthians 14:33b-35).

### **Paul's Appeal To God's Order**

The brethren at Corinth were acting as if God's word was revealed only to them and they could tell everyone else

how to act. Actually, Paul had brought them the word. Those who were Spirit inspired would have been able to confirm Paul's Spirit inspired message as truth. We may test the messages of men who claim the Holy Spirit today by comparing it to New Testament revelation (1 Corinthians 14:36-37).

If anyone showed his ignorance by failing to recognize Paul's inspired message as truth, then the brethren needed to waste no time trying to correct them since they were willfully ignorant. Paul told them to desire the gift of prophecy, but not to look down on those who spoke in tongues. All the gifts were to be used in an orderly way since God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:38-40, see also verse 33).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What were tongues? How were those wanting them like children? When should we be like children?
2. How might an unbeliever respond to tongues in the assembly? Prophecies?
3. Describe the things going on in the Corinthian assemblies.
4. What directions did Paul give concerning the use of tongues? Prophecies?

5. Under what circumstances does Paul say women should be totally silent? Why?

## **Lesson 22**

### **Witnesses To The Resurrection**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

#### **The Gospel Received By the Corinthians**

Paul reminded the Christians at Corinth of the good news, or gospel, they had accepted. The resurrection served as the very foundation upon which their hopes were built. Because Jesus died for their sins and God raised him again, their sins were washed away. The apostle assured them that so long as they remained faithful, they would gain heaven through that faith in God's resurrected Son, unless their faith was empty, or founded upon a myth (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

Paul's message was not of his nor any other man's invention. God had revealed the truth to Paul (11:23; Galatians 1:11-12). Christ's death was in behalf of all who would follow his will (Matthew 20:28; Acts 20:28; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:2). The Old Testament prophets had foretold Christ's death and the rejection he would experience in dying (Isaiah 53:5, 10). Prophets also spoke of his burial (Isaiah 53:9). Jesus' resurrection was also

predicted hundreds of years before it took place (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Psalm 16:10; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 2:10).

### **Men Who Witnessed the Resurrection**

Other witnesses, besides scripture, testified to the fact that Jesus was raised. The two disciples who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus knew Peter had seen Jesus (Luke 24:34). The eleven, when Thomas was not present, saw Jesus when they assembled behind closed doors on the first day of the week. Eight days later, when Thomas was with them, they saw Jesus again (John 20:26-29).

On one occasion after the resurrection, more than five hundred saw Jesus. Though some of those had died by the time of this writing, many were alive and could have testified to what they had seen. It is not certain when this appearance took place as there does not seem to be any other record of the occurrence. Nor do we know when Jesus appeared to James, who likely was the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19). The last appearance to all the apostles was on the day the Lord ascended (Acts 1:4-11; Luke 24:44-51). This is likely the one Paul mentioned (1 Corinthians 15:5-7).

### **When Paul Saw Jesus**

The record of Christ's appearance to Paul is found in Acts 9:5; 22:6-8; 26:14-18. McGarvey says, "The other apostles had three years and a half filled with instruction, and so were fully developed in their office; while Paul became a disciple in an instant, and received his instructions briefly

by revelation." So, Paul describes himself as a weak, premature baby. This memory humbled him and may have made him work all the harder. After all, he knew Christ came to die so that he could save sinners and Paul was among the forgiven (1 Timothy 1:13).

The confession of his mistakes would have left Paul open to attack. However, he went on to show that God's grace took him from a low state and made him great, thus making him work all the harder. A resurrected Christ was the theme of all apostolic preaching, including Paul's because they realized the powerful grace found there. The Corinthians had believed in the Lord who overcame death (1 Corinthians 15:8-11; see Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-15; 4:8-12; and 10:34-40 for some of the sermons preached by the apostles). There was no reason for them to doubt the foundation of their faith!

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is the gospel?
2. How and where do the Old Testament scriptures testify to the gospel?
3. List those to whom Paul says Christ appeared after his resurrection.
4. In what sense was Paul "born out of due time" and "least of the apostles?"

5. How did the Corinthians come to believe in Christ?  
How do we come to believe in Christ?

### **Lesson 23**

#### **A Resurrected Lord, The Christian's Hope**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:12-28**

#### **An Empty Hope Without A Resurrected Lord**

Since the Corinthian brethren had accepted the fact of Christ's resurrection, as supported by the verses we studied in the last lesson, the apostle wondered why some were saying there was not a resurrection? Anyone denying the general resurrection, had to deny that Jesus was raised (1 Corinthians 15:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

If Jesus was not raised, the preaching of the apostles was in vain. Too, the faith of all who believed that preaching stood on a worthless foundation (Matthew 12:39-40; Romans 1:4). In fact, Paul said their faith was vain, which literally means empty or void. If the dead are not raised, then Christ was not raised. If Christ was not raised, then the apostles had lied about what God had done. They would have been falsely accusing God of doing something he never did (1 Corinthians 15:14-15; Acts 2:32; 17:30-31).

Paul reemphasized the most important part of the argument, which is found in verse 13, by saying Christ cannot be risen if the dead cannot be raised! Without a general resurrection, the faith of those in the Corinthian church was



vain and they were still in sin (Romans 4:25; 6:23). Anyone who had already died in the midst of such an empty belief was damned. The apostles had only experienced persecution and death because of their teaching about Jesus as a resurrected Lord. In such a pitiable state, they surely would have abandoned their belief if they had have known it had no support (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

### **The Resurrection, A Victory Over Death**

McGarvey says, "On the morrow after the Sabbath of the Passover a sheaf of barley (the earliest grain to ripen) was waved as firstfruits before the Lord. (Leviticus 23:9-14.) The firstfruits had to be thus presented before the harvest could be begun, and its presentation was an earnest of the in-gathering. Now on this very day after the Sabbath Christ was raised as the firstfruits from the dead, and became the earnest of the general resurrection." Jesus, like that wave offering of firstfruits, signifies a general harvest of all who are in the grave (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Physical death came for all men as a consequence of Adam's sin. There was nothing anyone else did to deserve the appointment with the first death. Similarly, all, both those who have done good and those who have done evil, will overcome the grave because Christ did. However, in this chapter, Paul only considered the resurrection of the righteous because of the flow of the argument. Elsewhere, we learn all will be raised on the same day (1 Corinthians 15:21-23; John 5:26-29; Matthew 13:36-43 only one harvest).

Death, and its authority, will be overcome at the

resurrection. With the last authority, other than God, conquered, Jesus will then be free to turn his kingdom over to God (see also Matthew 15:13). Jesus must reign in his kingdom until all enemies are overcome. Daniel 2:44 clearly shows that his kingdom will overcome all other kingdoms (1 Corinthians 15:24-25).

Allen points out that Jesus will reign at God's right hand until the last enemy is destroyed (Acts 2:33-36; 5:31; 1 Corinthians 1:25). The apostle stated death will be the last enemy conquered. That conquest will come when all the dead are raised. Christ was given authority by the Father. All but the One who gave it are subject to Jesus' power (1 Corinthians 15:26-27). In Ephesians 1:19-22, Paul spoke of God's mighty power "which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (see also Matthew 28:18; 1 Peter 3:22).

Jesus' stated purpose while he was on earth was to glorify God and do his will (John 4:34; 6:38; 7:16; 8:29; 12:44, 49; 14:24; 17:8, 21-23). That glorification will finally be complete when all enemies are at Christ's feet. Then, he will turn all over to God, the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Did the Corinthians believe in Christ's resurrection?  
What was their problem?
  
2. Name four of the five things Paul says would be true if Christ was not raised.
  
3. Explain how the concept of firstfruits is related to the general resurrection?
  
4. How did Adam's actions effect us? How did Christ's actions effect us?
  
5. What does Paul say will happen in "the end?"

## **Lesson 24**

### **The Foolishness of Denying the Resurrection**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:29-41**

##### **Actions Which Cannot Be Explained Without a Resurrection**

If there was no life after death, why were people baptized for the dead. In view of Paul's use of pronouns in this chapter, it appears there were false teachers in Corinth who baptized the living in behalf of some who had already died. In verse 1, Paul plainly used "I" to refer to himself. In verse 2, he spoke of the Corinthians as "you." Yet, in verse 29, he spoke of "they." Clearly, Paul had someone other than himself or the Corinthian brethren in mind when he wrote these words about baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29).

Of course, it can also be said that Christian baptism points to a hope of something better beyond the grave. By baptism, one dies unto sin and begins to live for Jesus (Romans 6:3-11). Baptism is powerful because Jesus died and was raised again. Those who submit to baptism live in hope of the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

If there was no resurrection, why did Paul place himself in danger to preach the gospel? Paul was happy to face such danger, even death, because of those who believed his preaching. Yet, without a resurrection, Paul's facing of

peril and fight with beasts (daily danger) was futile (1 Corinthians 15:30-32).

### **A Warning About False Teachers**

As if to confirm our conclusion about false teachers who baptized the living for the dead, Paul warned the Corinthians to beware because wicked people with false teaching could turn them from following the truth. The apostle wanted them to shake off the drunken stupor in which evil had placed them. He hoped they would be shamed by their ignorance, concerning God and his ability, and change (1 Corinthians 15:33-34).

### **"How Are The Dead Raised Up?"**

Though they professed belief in God, the Corinthian brethren wanted to know how he would raise the dead. They also wondered what body would exist in the resurrection. The apostle explained that God accomplishes a resurrection yearly. Farmers sow a single grain expecting to receive the stalk, blade and head, or ear. God is wise and gives each grain a special body that is adapted to its own special needs. Obviously, God can work a resurrection and get great results (1 Corinthians 15:35-38).

Next, Paul turned to the second question, which was "with what body do they come?" He showed that there are many forms of fleshly creatures, yet they are all still considered flesh. The apostle then went on to say that there is a difference between the earthly bodies, just mentioned, and the heavenly bodies, yet all have bodies. Heavenly bodies may be angels, or the planetary bodies. Even the sun, moon, and stars have bodies, though they differ in

appearance from one another and, certainly, from other bodies with which men are familiar (1 Corinthians 15:39-41).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think baptism for the dead was? Why does Paul mention it?

2. What things was Paul willing to suffer because of belief in the resurrection?

3. How might false teachings about the resurrection affect moral conduct? What warnings does Paul give in relation to this?

4. How does the example of the seed help us understand the resurrection?

5. What differences in types of flesh and bodies does Paul mention? Why?

## **Lesson 25**

## **Victory Through Jesus!**

### **1 Corinthians 15:42-58**

#### **The Glorified Body**

The resurrection will be just like what occurs in farmers' fields all over the world. A seed, or body, that will die (Genesis 3:19) is planted, or buried, and is raised with a new specially designed body that will not decay. In a sense, it is still human flesh composing a body, but it is much better than before. It (the body) is buried because it will decay. It can also be described as being in dishonor and weak because it is a body of sin. When raised, it will not rot and those in heaven will not sin (1 Corinthians 15:42-43).

Just like this physical body is suited to a physical man living in a physical world, so will our spiritual body be specially suited to a spiritual world. Adam, as the head of the human race, was made a physical man suited to the physical world in which he would live. Christ was a spirit and as the head of a new race gives spiritual life. The physical body comes first to all, then the spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:44-46).

Our first body, like Adam's, will be suited to his earth. Our second body, like Christ's after the resurrection, will be suited to the spiritual world. Remember, each seed takes on a body best suited to its surroundings. All earthly bodies decay, while all heavenly bodies will be immortal, as Christ is immortal. Just as we all now bear the image of Adam, so shall all the just bear Christ's image after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:47-49; 1 John 3:2).



### **The Greatest And Final Victory**

Our fleshly bodies will have no place in heaven since it is an incorruptible place (1 Peter 1:3-4). God's apostle to the Gentiles was revealing something which had long been concealed when he said not all believers would die a physical death. Some would be changed from corruptible to incorruptible beings and then be caught up into the clouds to meet their Lord (1 Corinthians 15:50-51; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The resurrection and change to incorruptible bodies would happen in an instant. First, the apostle said the trumpet will blow. Second, the dead will be raised with incorruptible bodies. Third, those saints still alive will be changed. To go to heaven, all must change. With the change of bodies at the resurrection, death's power over man will be gone. Death will be swallowed up this powerful moment (1 Corinthians 15:52-54; Isaiah 25:8).

With a loose quotation from Hosea 13:14, Paul joyously and triumphantly declared the resurrection to be the end of death and the fears it holds for mankind (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; see also Romans 5:12-15; 7:7-12). McGarvey writes,

Death is here spoken of under the figure of a serpent. Sin is the bite or sting with which he slays men, and the power or poisonous strength of sin is found in the curse which the law pronounces upon the sinner. By the triple power of law, sin and death, the glory of man was brought to nought; but thanks

are due to God, who restored glory to man through Jesus Christ. Christ gave man the victory over the law, for he nailed it to his cross (Colossians 2:14); he gave him victory over sin, for he made atonement for sin (Hebrews 7:27); and he gave his victory over death by his resurrection which is the earnest of the general resurrection. Wonderful threefold victory!

Because there is a resurrection, Paul urged the brethren in Corinth to not be swayed from their faith in Christ's gospel. Instead, he said they should hold to it knowing heaven would be their reward (1 Corinthians 15:58).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What contrasts does Paul make between the body buried and the one raised?
2. What significant points are made about the first Adam and the natural body?
3. What significant points are made about the second Adam and the spiritual body?
4. What will happen at the time of the resurrection?
5. How will death be defeated? What exhortation arises from the fact that there is a resurrection and all Christians will overcome the grave through Christ?

## **Lesson 26**

### **Closing Remarks**

## **1 Corinthians 16**

### **The Collection For the Saints**

Paul next gave directions concerning what appears to be the same collection mentioned in Romans 15:26-27. Some Jewish converts had been responsible for teaching Gentiles. Since they had helped them spiritually, the Gentiles desired to help the Jews materially (Remember: Corinth was the chief city of Achaia.) Paul used the example of the Macedonians to spur on the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 9:1-15). The same was true the other way around. He used them both to encourage the Romans. Example is a great teacher.

The apostle's instructions concerning the collection was an established practice of getting funds. The New International Version correctly translates, "On the first day of every week..." One was to determine his weekly contribution on the basis of his weekly gain. It was to be set aside in the treasury so it would not have to be gathered when Paul came (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Paul wanted them to select those to carry the money so there would be no accusations about misuse (2 Corinthians 8:19-21). A letter of introduction would be sent with them. If the fund was large enough to warrant it, Paul planned to go himself. We now know that it was large enough to warrant the apostle travelling with those who were selected (1 Corinthians 16:3-4; Acts 19:21; 20:1-4; 24:17).

### **A Change In Plans**

Paul told them he planned to come to Corinth after he passed through Macedonia. Originally, he had planned to pass through Corinth on the way to Macedonia and again on his return, but he changed his plans to give them time to correct some problems. If the problems were corrected, Paul felt they could have a much more enjoyable visit. In fact, Paul was, at the time of writing, hoping to have a good long visit with the Corinthian brethren instead of two short visits. The change in his original plans also came because of the great opportunity he had at Ephesus. The opportunities are mentioned in Acts 19:1-20, while the adversities he faced follow in verses 21-40 (1 Corinthians 16:5-9; see also 2 Corinthians 1:8-2:2).

### **Visits By Timothy and Apollos**

Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22) had set out by land for Macedonia. It seems word of trouble reached Paul after Timothy left and Titus carried this letter directly to Corinth. Titus must have met Timothy as he (Titus) was going back to Paul. This is concluded since Timothy is back with Paul during the second letter's production (2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 13.) Paul was concerned that Timothy not become embroiled in the middle of their division since he was doing God's work. Paul did not want the Corinthians to despise Timothy, perhaps because of his youth (1 Timothy 4:12). Young preachers should be encouraged in their work. Controversy can affect their life's work.

Apollos is first mentioned in Acts 18:24-19:1. He went from Ephesus to Corinth in his preaching work. Paul had pleaded with him to go to Corinth with the others, but for some unnamed reason he would not go at the time mentioned (1 Corinthians 16:10-12).

### **Closing Instructions and Personal Remarks**

Christians must be constantly on guard against Satan. Paul encouraged them to be firm in matters of faith and not let false teachers shake their beliefs as they had on the resurrection. He also urged them to be men in the faith and courageously stand in God's strength. Still, the apostle reminded them that all of a Christian's actions should be based on love. Such should end all strife (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

Paul told them to be subject to those who lovingly ministered to the needs of fellow Christians. He especially singled out the family of Stephanas who had been the first converts in Achaia. The apostle felt he was with the Corinthians as long as Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were with him. While he could not see all of the Corinthians in person, Paul felt an empty spot had been filled by the coming of these three. He also felt the letter he wrote because of firsthand knowledge would provide for some of their greatest needs. So, he wanted the Corinthians to receive them as those who had helped (1 Corinthians 16:15-18).

Paul delivered greetings from some who wished the Corinthian church well, especially Aquila and Priscilla. He also wanted them to treat one another as friends. He then wrote a special hello with his own hand. The rest of the letter was probably dictated to someone who wrote it down (1 Corinthians 16:19-21).

The apostle also directed that those who did not love the Lord, should be judged and punished for their evil. He asked that the Lord come quickly so they might be judged.

Likely, he also saw the Lord's coming as a means of fulfilling another of his desires which was that the Corinthians would have the Lord's blessings, especially heaven. Paul wanted them to know he loved them, despite the correction he had to give in this letter. In fact, correction is an expression of genuine love (1 Corinthians 16:22-24).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Explain the need for and directions concerning the collection.

2. What lessons can we glean for our giving today and how carefully the money should be handled?

3. How should we be challenged by Paul's reference to a great and effective door?

4. What commands are found in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14?

5. Why do you suppose Paul wanted the Lord to come?  
How should we regard his coming?

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**Strengthening the Temple  
of God**

**A Study of 1 Corinthians**

**by**

**Gary C. Hampton**

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### **Dedication**

*This book is dedicated to the brethren in*

*North Little Rock, Arkansas, who first  
encouraged me to put my notes on  
! Corinthians in a form that could be  
shared with them. May God help us all  
grow together in his service!*