

Studies in 1 Corinthians

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1 Corinthians 1

The introduction to the epistle is found in verses 1-9.

This is divided into two parts:

1. The opening salutation (v. 1-3).

2. The thanksgiving (v. 4-9).

v. 1—Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by divine calling and by divine will. Acts 18:17.

v. 2—Unto the church of God. Despite the many failures, divisions, etc. It was not Cephas' church, nor Paul's, nor Apollo's—it was God's.

“To them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

This is our standing in Christ, the result of Christ's saving work on the cross. This can never change. Our state and walk is a different thing entirely.

“Called to be saints”—Called to be God's people.

The rest of the verse shows that this letter, although written to the church at Corinth, was intended for “all who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Their Lord and ours. The Lordship of Christ.

v. 3—“Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. They needed peace in this disorderly church. Also, God's peace which passes all understanding.

This grace and peace came equally from God the Father and God the Son, a testimony to the deity of Christ.

Verses 4-9 are the thanksgiving. His thanksgiving was constant. He thanked God for the “grace given unto them”, for the effects of the grace of God in them. Despite the many bad things occurring in the assembly there were evidences of the working of the grace of God.

v. 5—That in everything you are enriched in Him. This enrichment is spiritual blessing.

Utterance—speech, outward expressions.

Knowledge—the inward apprehension of the truth.

v. 6—“Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.”

v. 7—“So that you come behind in no gift.”

The Corinthian church was richly endowed with spiritual gifts. But, according to the later chapters, rather than use them they were abusing them.

“Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Waiting for” conveys the idea of earnest expectancy.

“The coming” or the revelation of Christ would refer to the rapture or the return of the Lord to receive His saints to Himself.

v. 8—“Who shall also confirm you unto the end.” See John 13:1. He shall keep them either unto the end of their earthly journey or until the revelation of Christ at His coming.

“That you be unreprouable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The report which the household of Chloe had brought to Paul was quite extensive. They reported contentions—there were those who were glorying in wisdom, there

was carnality among them, immorality was being practiced, brethren were taking each other to law.

The first six chapters are Paul's instructions regarding these sins. After the introduction, verses 1-10 expose the fault and gives remedial measures.

v. 10-11—Divisions and contentions. First of all he beseeches them, then he reminds them that they are brethren, and his authority for doing so is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The conditions were serious. First of all there were contentions (verbal strife and arguments), and these brought about divisions. There were factions in the assembly—those who claimed Paul as their leader, those who claimed Apollos, some who claimed Peter, and some who actually claimed Christ. To add to this unhealthy conglomeration there would also be some who were faithful to the word as revealed by Paul who were the true followers of Christ.

v. 13—Is Christ divided? There is one Christ, therefore there is one body. Ephesians 4:4-6. Was Paul crucified for you? Or any of the other leaders? Were you baptized in Paul's name? or any of the other leaders' names? The obvious answer to these questions is NO. Christ was crucified for them, and they were baptized into Christ's name.

v. 14-17—Paul explains and seems to be relieved that he had not baptized many. He believed his mission was to preach the gospel, not to baptize.

The last phrase of verse 17 introduces us to the next error, "Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."

Paul's preaching was not in wisdom of words or in human eloquence.

From verses 18-25 Paul contrasts human wisdom with the wisdom of God. Human wisdom despised the cross. The cross, says Paul, was actually the display of the wisdom of God.

v. 18—To those who are perishing, the cross is foolishness. To those who are saved, it is the power of God.

v. 19-20—Quotation from Isaiah. Paul applies it to the present situation.

v. 21—The world has never found God through its wisdom. This was ordained by God. But it has pleased Him through the preaching of the Gospel (which includes the Cross) to save many.

v. 22—The Jews ask for signs or miracles. The Greeks seek wisdom or philosophy.

v. 23—But we preach Christ crucified. This to the Jews is a stumbling block. To the Greeks it is absolute foolishness.

v. 24—To them who are called (saved)—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God's power and wisdom.

v. 25—Unregenerate men do not believe this. Man calls the cross-work of Christ foolishness. This so-called foolishness of God is for wiser than the wisest plan of the wisest man. Moreover, what seems weak and feeble, the death of Jesus, is stronger than man's power.

v. 26—"For you see your calling, brethren." Not many are wise or noble.

v. 27—God has chosen whom the world counts foolish to confound the worldly wise. He has chosen the weak to confound the mighty.

v. 28—God chose what the world counted poor and insignificant. God chose people of humble birth.

v. 29—All this was for the purpose that no flesh should glory or boast in His presence.

v. 30—Paul reminds the Corinthians that what they are and have they obtained it by their union with Christ. He is made to us Wisdom (chs. 1-4), Righteousness (chs. 5-10), Sanctification (chs. 11-14), Redemption (chs. 15-16).

v. 31—We cannot glory in our own achievements. If we are going to boast we must boast in the Lord.

Study in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16

The Wisdom of Man Versus the Wisdom of God

We are living in an age in which some people believe the achievements of modern science have rendered both ancient wisdom and particularly the idea of divine revelation obsolete. With the explosion of science, space, and medicine, the accumulation of knowledge has created little gods among us. Divine revelation, as contained in the Scripture, is dismissed as a relic of the unenlightened past - not relevant to this enlightened age and therefore, obsolete. We have become materialistic and self-sufficient. We have come to believe that we have no need for God.

Key verses: 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

“We preach Christ crucified: unto the Jews a stumbling block [...] Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Corinth was well known for its love of philosophical discussion. Christianity had come under their caustic scrutiny. They had dissected it mercilessly, piece by piece. They ridiculed its basic teachings, and rejected Christ and His teachings. The Jewish philosophies were stumbled by Christ's teaching...it cut across their traditions. They were scandalous - it was an offense and an insult to their superior intelligence. The Greek PhD's thought the whole idea of Christianity was foolishness; it was absurd, preposterous even.

Paul labored for eighteen months in this hostile climate. Despite the belligerent conduct of his adversaries, he preached the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17), he preached

the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18), and he preached Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). In Romans 1:16, he writes, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Paul believed that though his message was foolishness to the worldly wise, to those who were being saved, it was the power and wisdom of God.

As it was in the first century, so it is in the 20th. The rationalist, the humanist, and the scientist join together to categorically dismiss the facets of the Christian faith. The religionist has joined this group in denying the fundamentals of the faith, especially Christ's Deity and atonement. [Describe this]

What is the wisdom of God? How is it made known to mankind?

God's wisdom is the plan of salvation and transcends all human wisdom. Note the efforts of man prior to the coming of Christ. Consider Solomon's offering of 20,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. The mind-boggling and intricate religious system as practiced by the Jews, brought them no closer to God. The wisdom of God is displayed in the plan of salvation. [Describe the activities in Heaven prior to the laying of the foundation of the earth.]

The cry..."Whom shall I send?"

The response..."Here I am. Send Me!"

See 1 Peter 1:18-19. We are not redeemed by silver and gold, but by He "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." The wisdom of God is seen in the God-man...in the hypostatic union...in His deity...in His virgin birth, His sinless life, atoning death, glorious resurrection, and miraculous ascension...in the coming

of the Holy Spirit and in Christ's second coming (firstly to rapture the church, then to come back to earth to set up His kingdom). These great truths are the comprehensive display of the power and wisdom of God.

The Message

The success of the early church was because of the purity of its message. Despite diabolical opposition, the apostles never deviated from the preaching of Christ crucified, risen, ascended, and coming again. They were strong believers of the resurrection. The early preachers combined the death and resurrection of Christ. They maintained that He not only died, and was buried, but that He rose again, and showed Himself to many believers. See 1 Corinthians 15.

Writing to the Roman church (Rom. 4:25), Paul said, "He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification." Romans 10:9 says, we must believe in the resurrection to be saved. This was the message the early evangelists preached; there is no other.

The Members Chosen

See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. As the pure Gospel was preached in Corinth, many were saved. The majority of those in fellowship at Corinth were from the lower strata of society. God called a few of the influential and of noble birth. He chose more of the uneducated, the weak, the lowly, the despised, and the ones who were of no account.

[Note the words calling or called mentioned three times in 1 Corinthians 1:24-26. Note also the word chosen in v. 27-28.] It is God who calls and it is God who chooses. This is a point that is often missed. Ephesians 1:4 says,

“chosen before the foundation of the world.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, “Because God from the beginning hath chosen you to salvation.” Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “It is the gift of God.” Only those who are chosen by God are members of the True Church – the Bride of Christ. [Consider the difference between professors and possessors.]

The Method Paul Used to Win Souls

1 Corinthians 2:1-5. Paul was one of the most highly educated men of his day. Academic achievement was no stranger to him. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. In Philippians 3 he gives a resume of his achievements. If any man could have dazzled the Corinthians with worldly wisdom and oratory it was Paul.

See 1 Corinthians 2:1. He says he did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom. In verse 4 he continues by saying, “My preaching was not with persuasive words.” Paul came to Corinth in weakness, fear, and with much trembling, but miraculously, his simple words were filled with Holy Spirit power. Men were convicted of sin through righteousness judgment. Men and women were convinced that they were sinners and cried out for mercy. Lives were changed. Of course, there can be no salvation without a prior work of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Maturity

This is a facet of Christian life that is often neglected. Are you a mature Christian? Have you grown into spiritual manhood and womanhood? In your present spiritual condition you fall into one of three categories: You are (1) A spiritual babe, (2) A carnal believer, or (3) A mature Christian. Mature believers are the minority in

the Church today. The church is full of spiritual babes and carnal believers. The Corinthian church was full of carnal Christians and spiritual babes. Paul had to feed them with milk. They could not digest strong food.

This is the situation presently in the church. Far too many of us are uncertain and unstable in our faith. It is true that we are saved, but our faith is secondary to many things in our life (careers, professions, sports, things, our own egos). In this carnal state, the world, the flesh and the devil control us, and there is no spiritual growth or progress. We are like children tossed about with every wind of doctrine. See Ephesians 4. This carnal state is the cause of the sterility - stagnation and powerlessness of the Church. So many miss so much. Perhaps you are one of those. Oh the blessings, beauties, and glories that are to be found in Christ for the mature believer! [Describe]

1 Corinthians 2:9 is not for the future life, but for the present. "No eye has seen, and no ear has heard, neither has the human mind conceived the things that God will give to those who love them and walk with Him." I invite you this morning to come like Mary and sit at the feet of our Lord...Or to be like John and lean on the Savior's breast. Then you will experience joy unspeakable and, full of glory, you will experience a peace that passes all understanding.

1 Corinthians 3

Describe the three kind of men that God recognizes.

The natural man—the unregenerate man.

The carnal man—the Christian who is ruled by the flesh.

The spiritual man—the believer controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The carnal man though not making spiritual progress was not anti-spiritual. They were babes, spiritually immature, lacking in spiritual understanding.

Because of this condition Paul fed them with milk. There is only one period in our Christian life that we can rightly be called babes.

To remain a babe is to be carnal. The marks of a carnal believer are jealousy, strife, and divisions. If we display these traits (sins) we are walking according to human standards.

v. 5-8—In these verses the Spirit of God cuts down to size those men whom the carnal had places at the head of the faction. They are servants and are nothing in God's estimation. As servants or instruments they planted and watered, but God, who is everything, gave the increase.

v. 8—There were those who believed that the servants named were not in fellowship with each other. Paul refutes that "we are one."

Each servant will be rewarded for his own work.

v. 9—The dignity of our calling and position in Christ. We are God's fellow-workers. We, the church, are God's cultivated field. We are God's building.

v. 10—This verse sets the context for what follows. Paul has in mind here the Corinthian assembly. He says that as an architect he laid the foundation. Then others came along and built on it. Then comes the admonition, "But let every man take heed."

v. 11—Paul reveals the foundation—Jesus Christ. The Person, the one who "came forth from the Father." This is not the fundamentals of the faith. Christ is the foundation.

v. 12—The builders and their building materials. The builders would refer to the teachers, genuine and otherwise. Their ministry adds to the building that which is valuable by divine standards, or what is worthless. The teacher who can minister divine principles to profit, and edify the church. His teaching is represented under the figures of gold, silver, and precious stones. The gold would set forth the attributes of the Godhead, the fullness of which dwells in Christ. The silver would symbolize the redemption wrought by God through Christ. The precious stones would represent those truths which set forth the excellencies of the Person and character of Christ.

Examples of wood, hay, and stubble have been given already. "Persuasive words of man's wisdom." "The wisdom of men." The "Words which man's wisdom teaches." The metaphors would include anything subversive or contrary to the truth. Anything done in the energy of the flesh is in a carnal way.

v. 13—There's a day of judgment coming for the believer. At the judgment seat of Christ the material contributed, service rendered, will be revealed in its true character. It will be revealed by fire. The fire would suggest God's holiness, when evil is brought into contact with this holiness it is consumed. The fire will separate the destructible from the indestructible.

v. 14—Those whose work remains after the testing will receive a reward.

v. 15—Those whose works are destroyed will suffer loss. Yet they themselves will be saved.

You can see here the havoc which will be wrought by ministry given in the wisdom of man, instead of in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

v. 16—"Know ye not." This is the first of a series of appeals in this epistle.

5:6—"Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

6:2—"Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"

6:3—"Know ye not that we will judge angels?"

6:9—"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"

6:15—"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"

6:16—"Know ye not that he that is joined to a harlot is one body?"

6:19—"Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?"

9:24—"Know ye not that they who run in a race all run?"

The appeal in these passages is to a fact which the reader should have acknowledged.

"Know ye not that ye are God's temple?" This metaphor would apply to the local church. The word used for temple is a specific word meaning the inner sanctuary, the holiest of all. An assembly is depicted as a company set apart for God, a place of worship, a communion of saints characterized by holiness, in whom is seen the glory and the beauty of the character of Christ.

The divisions at Corinth were the negation of all this.

"And the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." The emphasis is on the "in you."

We can only be holy, set apart, a place of worship, a place where Christ's glory is seen, as the Holy Spirit is given liberty among us.

v. 17—The same word is used in the original for "defile" and "destroy". If any man defile the assembly by corrupting it, by unprofitable teaching, or defiling it in any way and leading it away from the state of holiness God expects, God will punish the offender by divine retribution.

"For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Holy—separated from sin and consecrated to God.

Anyone who ministers the Word should be careful to minister to the edifying of the Church.

v. 18—"Let no man deceive himself."

This would be a warning to those mentioned in the previous verse. The contrast in the remaining part of the

verse is between worldly wisdom and true wisdom from God. Before we can become wise for God we must become a fool in the world's estimation. See 1:18-25.

v. 19—This verse tells us what God thinks of the wisdom of the world. The rest of verses 19 and 20 suggest that God knows the craftiness or the unscrupulous conduct of teachers who use worldly wisdom to obtain their own needs. This had happened at Corinth, hence the factions.

v. 21—"Therefore, let no man glory in men." That put all leaders of divisions in their proper place, and admonished all in fellowship at Corinth.

"All things are yours."

Not just that which is given you by a special leader. They belong to Christ therefore they belong to you.

v. 23—Every blessing is the believer in Christ's portion. In the world, in life, in death, in the present circumstances, or in the future, all are yours.

v. 28—Best of all "you are Christ's." John 10:27-28.

1 Corinthians 5 & 6

In 1 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul proceeds to deal with the second of the evils existent in the early church of the Corinthian assembly. The first was worldly wisdom, which was leading to division among church members. The second, we see here, is fornication. To add to the seriousness and heinousness of the actual sin, the assembly was already aware of the condition's presence among them but had not addressed it or attempted to eradicate it from their midst. Paul identifies this problem outright in his letter. He says, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you." (1 Corinthians 5:1) We also know from 1 Corinthians 7 that the Corinthians had written a previous letter to Paul about other things, but gave no information about this other problem Paul is referring to. It was common knowledge, then, that Paul knew about these sexual immorality issues. However, this was no ordinary problem.

If we look at the Old Testament scriptures with which Paul and the early church would have been well acquainted, we see that the Mosaic Law prohibited this. In Leviticus 18:8 it says, "The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it is your father's nakedness." In Deuteronomy 22:30 we learn, "A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed." These were just two types of laws in the mosaic law regarding sexual sin. In addition, though, these things were forbidden under Roman law during the age of the early church. What we can deduce from the Corinthian situation was that the nature of the sin was

that one in the fellowship was living with his stepmother as his wife while his father was still alive. It seems that Paul references this situation when he mentions the man in 2 Corinthians 7:12, saying, "Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you." The woman concerned in these relationships was probably an unbeliever, hence Paul does not direct his rebuke toward her. Note the depth to which a carnal believes can sink.

Paul describes the spiritual condition of the church as a consequence of this polluting sin. He says, "and you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:2) Paul is identifying the church members as so "puffed up" with their own wisdom, knowledge, and eloquence of their favorite teachers, that they were insensitive to the scandal created among outsiders, and damage done to the testimony of the assembly. They did not mourn such conditions in their church, but should have been grieved by their own sin with a godly concern and confusion over evil. Moreover, there also should be action and evidence of recourse in the church for the sin committed. Paul argues for the offender to be put out of the fellowship. (See Corinthians 5:6-8) It seems from Paul's later epistle that the Corinthians accomplished this and listened to Paul's words, and in the interval between the sending of the first and second epistles this man repented. (See 2 Corinthians 2:5-10) In 1 Corinthians 5:3, Paul says, "for I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has

so done this deed." This meant that though absent, Paul considered himself present in spirit. He had judged the situation from afar, from knowing the people involved, and recommended that when the church was gathered together the offender was to be delivered to Satan by the assembly. Paul did not only mean the elders would be responsible for this though. He intended for the entire assembly to participate since that sin had indeed affected the entire church. This was the course recommended by Paul.

Paul then goes on to establish the authority in which such an action is undertaken. He proclaims this is to be done "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 5:4) To Paul, there was no greater authority or power to be invoked than that of the Lord Jesus. Paul intended the action of the assembly to be both drastic and sobering. He commands them to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Corinthians 5:5) This would mean that the offender would be put out of fellowship, out from the plans where God's authority was owned, and into the world where "the god of this world holds sway." (See 1 John 5:19) In this instance, this man was also delivered to Satan for "the destruction of the flesh." This might have involved physical affliction from the apostolic authority of Paul.

Paul also aims to show that this action would help preserve the holiness and testimony of the local church, destroy the flesh and its passions in the offender, and lead to the ultimate restoration of the man concerned. From what we know, it seems as though in this instance,

these goals were realized and the man was indeed restored. (See 2 Corinthians 2:5-10) In 1 Corinthians 5:6, Paul then rebukes the church for their boasting since the body is indeed corrupted from even this one sin among them. He exhorts them, "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" Leaven is often a symbol of evil in the scriptures, because it spreads and expands. This means that the Corinthian church cannot ignore the evils among them, thinking they are alright as long as they are not the ones sinning. Rather, Paul is saying that insensitivity and indifference to the problems at hand do affect the whole church.

Paul then commands the church, "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:7-8) What Paul refers to here is the traditional Jewish celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (See Exodus 13) Prior to and during this feast, the Israelites meticulously searched for and removed all leaven from their homes. So in assembly life as well as individual life, evil in any form must be recognized and removed, so that the holy character of Christ may be seen. When Paul identifies Christ as their Passover, he is referring to Christ as the sacrificial lamb of the Passover, which was the feast celebrated after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since Christ is our Passover, like the Israelites we should search for and cast out all sin, malice and wickedness from our lives and in our

midst, living sincerely and according to truth before God.

Paul then refers to a former letter he had addressed to the Corinthian church: "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world." (1 Corinthians 5:9-10) Most likely, the contents of a former letter needed some further explanation. Perhaps some in the church may have asked as they read the first letter, "How can we live in this world and do what Paul asks?" So as to avoid confusion and give specific guidance in these matters, Paul writes his answer to their specific question. We can only speculate what this might have involved. He then goes on to say, "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person." (1 Corinthians 5:11) Paul is clarifying what he means when he asks those in the church not to engage with people committing these sins. He is also including those who are not in the world, rather those in the church as well that should be avoided. This means that if a brother in Christ becomes a fornicator, a coveter, an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, or an extortioner, you must not fellowship with him in any way, whether in the church or in a social capacity.

Paul continues by asking a rhetorical question: "For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?" (1 Corinthians 5:12) Paul is saying here that he has no

authority to judge the unsaved without the moral law and guidelines of the church. He also points out that it is the privilege and responsibility of the believers to judge evil in the church because of the authority given to them through Christ. Finally, Paul sums up his exhortation about this evil present in the church by commanding the church, "But those who are outside God judges.

Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." (1 Corinthians 5:13) Paul intends to show them that God is the only one truly responsible to judge wickedness in the world. While we are responsible to judge evil in the church, only He can truly judge the wickedness in the world. Therefore, Paul admonishes the church to extricate the wicked person from among them so that they no longer will be guilty of indifference and through the corruption of that sin in their assembly.

Note the incredulity of the opening statement.

v. 1—"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you. Immorality of a kind that even pagan's condemn."

This incredulous, immoral state, was common knowledge among those in fellowship. The heinous sin that was being practiced at the time of writing was so degrading that it was forbidden by the Romans and also by God. Leviticus 18:8; Deuteronomy 22:30.

This young man, in fellowship, was living permanently with his father's wife. She in all probability was his step-mother. The absence of any mention of the woman indicates that she was not a member of the assembly. To compound the horrendous nature of the sin, it appears from 2 Corinthians 7:12 that the father was still in fellowship.

The ultimate tragedy of this incestuous relationship was that it was being tolerated by the elders.

v. 2—Despite the immoral, internal conditions there were many in fellowship who were proud of the assembly. Paul reminds them that the proper attitude, under the present circumstances, should be one of overwhelming sorrow and shame. Then they should take punitive action, and the brother concerned should be removed from their midst. Their self-complacency and pride rendered them insensible both to the scandal created among the outsiders, and to the damage done to the whole assembly.

Please note that this case shows that the natural conscience of an unregenerate man can act on a higher level than the seared conscience of a carnal believer.

v. 3—In this verse Paul displays the closeness and reality of his spiritual and apostolic relationship with them in this matter. Even though physically absent, he was with them in spirit and had judged the sin.

v. 4—“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the greatest authority to be invoked. (1) it is indicative of character, John 17:6; (2) it is indicative of rank, Hebrews 1:4; (3) It is indicative of power, John 17:11-12; (4) It is indicative of authority as in this instance.

Then note, “In the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.” What a meeting Paul envisaged. Meeting in the awesome presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Meeting with the greatest authority that can be invoked. Meeting with the limitless power of the Lord Jesus Christ present. At a meeting like this there would be no room for the flesh, pride, worldly wisdom and human vindictiveness. Such a meeting would be permeated with reverence, humility,

and godly sorrow. Those present would be utterly cast upon God for wisdom, guidance and the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit.

1. Paul considered judgment in the matter was that this brother should be put away from among them. He did this with full divine authority.

2. That he should be delivered to Satan for the “destruction of the flesh.”

The putting away or excommunication of the erring one should be the last resort and should only be implemented when all other means of recovery have been exhausted.

We do not like to carry out extreme divine commands these days. We are the stronger numerically but the poorer spiritually.

Paul says with apostolic and divine authority, “Put him away from among you...deliver such a one to Satan.”

Please note this action is against him who deliberately, willfully, and knowingly persists in sin.

To deliver someone to Satan is to excommunicate the offender from fellowship, where God’s authority is owned, into the sphere where Satan, the “god of this world”, holds sway.

See 1 Timothy 1:20. Paul had exercised his apostolic authority and delivered two false teachers to Satan.

See 2 Timothy 2:26. He did this that “they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil, having been made captive by him, unto the will of God.”

The object of this excommunication is “the destruction of the flesh.” It was the flesh that caused the sin and it

must be destroyed. This is not annihilation, but rather that his physical body should experience the destructive powers of Satan. If the erring one is really a true believer he will repent under the pressure from Satan and the judgment of God. On the other hand, if he is only a false professor, he will plunge deeper and deeper into sin.

v. 6—“Your glorying is not good.” Possible rendering —“Your pride in your church is lamentably out of place.”

Pride blinds the eye, hardens the heart, and loosens the tongue. This is a blow against their professed wisdom.

Then there is a certain emphasis on the word “little.” All housewives know that a little leaven inserted into the dough will eventually permeate it completely. If thou, a little leaven, spreads so quickly through the whole lump, how much more will this gross sin of fornication affect the spiritual well-being of the assembly?

v. 7—“Purge out the old leaven.” Leaven is symbolic of sin. Sin or evil should be dealt with as soon as sufficient evidence has been gathered of its existence.

The church is afraid to exercise discipline today. In this case the apostle was not acting upon hearsay. There was concrete evidence as to this man’s guilt. Neither the church nor the elders should jump to premature conclusions. Neither should they believe every scandal that is circulated. This is a divine, infallible role—Matthew 18:15-17. If he will not hear the church then he is to be put under discipline. The old leaven must be purged at all costs.

Stress at this point the importance of holiness, purity, and moral integrity. 2 Corinthians 6. Warn of the dangers of sin in a local assembly—public and private.

Paul reminds us here that “Christ, who is our Passover has been sacrificed for us.” At the Passover, the Jews were commanded to remove all leaven from their houses in preparation for the feast. This signaled the complete break with the old life in Egypt, and announced their entrance into a new life with God.

So with an assembly, the fellowship must be maintained in all purity. Every sin and impurity must be cleared out of the individual life and the corporate life of the assembly.

v. 8—“Wherefore let us keep the feast.” The feast is not the Passover or the Lord’s Supper. But the believer’s life, which is spoken of here as a holy feast, is to be kept continuously from the evils in the context, including adultery, malice, and wickedness.

We should forsake, cast out the sins of the old life, the sins of the flesh, the sins of malice and wickedness. We should practice the Christian graces of sincerity and truth.

In the concluding verses of this chapter the apostle stresses the treatment that should be meted out to evil-doers who have gotten into the church. We are not responsible for what goes on in the world. God alone is the judge of those outside the church.

v. 9-10—The believer’s attitude to the world is that he is in it but not of it.

v. 11—In this verse the tone changes. Paul writes with apostolic authority and divine power. In the church there

are certain rules and commandments. Spiritual believers are not to keep company with certain people.

1. A brother who is a fornicator—one who is living immorally.
2. A covetous brother—the grasping, greedy brother. This is just as evil in God’s sight as fornication.
3. An idolatrous brother—He is one who has demoted God to second place because of his interest in some other thing of passion.
4. A railing brother—A person with a loose, vicious tongue. A character assassin is as wicked in God’s sight as a murderer.
5. A drunkard—Do not touch strong drink. You may stumble a brother.
6. An extortionist—He is one who cheats, especially the poor. Then gives a large offering to the Lord. God says “keep your dirty money.” God wants holy money for His holy service.

Paul has brought to our attention 6 heinous sins. Then he gives us a direct command as to how we should treat those who practice those sins. “Don’t eat with such persons.” “You are not to sit down to eat with such a one”, and I take it that this includes the Lord’s Table. People should be warned to stay away from the Lord’s Table if living as depicted here.

v. 12-13—it is not our business to judge those without the church. God will judge Him in due course. It is our business to judge those within the Church. The elders and the church should maintain careful discipline over its members for the glory of God. The final admonition, “It is your duty to put away from among yourselves that

wicked person.” Before this extreme action is taken, every effort should have been made to restore the erring one.

Should he persist in his sin and defy the discipline of the church, then the time has come for the Word of God to be acted upon.

1 Corinthians 7

The matter under consideration was drawn to Paul's attention by letter.

There were various problems mentioned in the letter but Paul chose to speak of the problems which some had regarding marriage.

This chapter deals with some general principles (v. 1-7), has a discussion of the problems of marriage (v. 8-24), and addresses the unmarried (v. 25-40).

Paul may have been asked in the letter to approve celibacy as a duty for all. Instead he submits that celibacy is good, and that it was a personal preference for him. However, he advises that marriage is a necessity for most to avoid fornications. This admonition would be particularly useful to the believers at Corinth.

v. 3-5—In these verses Paul brings to our attention that marriage in the Lord is a partnership between two people. It is the union of two people who become "one flesh." This unique relationship involves mutual obligations and conjugal rights. Should these rights be violated, those concerned open themselves to subtle, devilish temptations.

v. 6-7—Paul says that he has been speaking these things as an inspired man, and was not giving a command or laying down regulations. In verse 7 he again expresses his celibacy and adds "I wish all men were like me." But finally he says that everyone has a special gift from God. One brother's gift is for celibacy, while another's is for marriage.

v. 8-9—In these verses Paul speaks to the unmarried and to widows, and advises them to remain single. Consider the current circumstances. Then he adds some practical advice, that if they have no control over their passions then they should marry. It is better to marry than to be tortured with ungratified desire. In such a state one is no good for God, nor man.

v. 10-24—Paul addresses married people. Firstly, he gives a charge to all who are married and reminds them that it was the Lord Himself who first gave the instructions.

v. 10—The wife must not leave her husband.

v. 11—But if she leaves or divorces him let her remain single, or be reconciled to her husband. The same charge was given to the husband.

v. 12-16—In these verses Paul gives his opinion on mixed marriages. This was a subject on which the Lord gave no leading.

v. 12-13—If a believing husband has a wife who is a heathen, still burning incense to idols, and she still wants to live with him, he should not put her away. Jewish law required the unbeliever to be put away—Ezra 9:1—10:44. Despite this, the NT truth is no separation. The same rules apply to the believing wife. She must not leave her husband.

v. 14-16—In these three verses we find three reasons why the aforementioned command should be obeyed.

1. The unbelieving partner and the children of a mixed marriage are sanctified. This does not mean that the partner and children are saved. It means that they are kept from heathen contamination and brought into

contact with believers, and so are put in a place of privilege, being shown the way of salvation.

2. The second reason Paul gives for the preservation of the marriage is found in the fact that God has “called us to peace.” If the unbelieving partner decides to leave, the believing partner is instructed to let them go. In such cases the believing partner is not morally bound. There must be no striving and fighting about this, because “God has called us to peace.”

3. The third reason for no separation is given in this verse. There is the distinct possibility that through a godly life and witness the unbelieving partner might be saved.

v. 17-24—In these verses Paul summarizes the marital relationship. He urges each one to abide in God’s calling, to live the life God has allotted to them. This is an important message for it is mentioned three times in these verses.

v. 25—In the remainder of the chapter, Paul deals with three groups: (1) The unmarried young, v. 25-35; (2) The parents, v. 36-38; (3) The widows, v. 39-40. This section of the chapter points out that under the prevailing circumstances that celibacy is desirable, but it is not demanded.

v. 25-26—In these verses he urges marriageable maidens to remain unmarried because of the present distress. At this time there were considerable pressures in being a Christian. In fact, history records that many believers were losing their life. For this reason the same advice was given to the young men. Paul gives three reasons why they should remain in their present state: (1) Because of the distress and sorrow that could be

involved (v. 28); (2) Because the time is short (v. 29); (3) Because the present world order will pass away (v. 31).

v. 32-35—Paul is pointing out here that unmarried people have less distraction and less responsibility, therefore more time to serve the Lord. He cares for the things of the Lord and how he can please Him. On the other hand a married man cares for the things of the world, and how he may please his wife.

v. 36-38—The question that keeps coming up in the chapter is whether to marry or remain single. In verse 36 Paul mentions the case of a young woman who is passing the bloom of her youth. Her boyfriend is wondering if they should get married or remain single. Paul suggests that they should get married, that he was not sinning in doing this. This verse gives us the other side. If he feels strongly enough not to marry, and has the will power and self-control over his passions and desires, then he doeth well. The inference here could be that this young man is going to serve the Lord more fully.

v. 38—This verse has a message to the fathers of unmarried daughters. He asks the question about all this, “What should I do? Should I give my daughter to be married?” Paul’s answer to the question is, If you give your daughter to be married you do well. If you do not give your daughter to be married you do better. Paul’s whole argument in the chapter seems to be that the celibate state is not holier than the married state. But it affords greater opportunity to serve the Lord.

v. 39—Paul makes the sweeping statement here that a wife is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. If her

husband die then she is free to marry, but only in the Lord.

v. 40—It is Paul's considered opinion that a widow is much happier if she does not marry again.

In making these statements and giving these instructions, Paul believed that he had the mind of the Spirit of God.

This chapter begins a new section of the epistle. In the first section Paul answered questions raised by the household of Chloe. In this section he answers the questions sent to him by the Corinthian church. There were three questions:

1. Problems relating to marriage.
2. Concerning things offered to idols.
3. Concerning spiritual gifts.

The marriage relationship occupies a prominent place in the Word. Marriage for a believer becomes God's own wonderful picture of the mystic union which subsists between Christ and His Church. At Corinth there were many irregularities to be corrected, hence the reason for chapter 7.

v. 1—"It is good for a man not to touch a woman." The Roman church has taken this phrase and carried it to extremes. They believe that the unmarried monk or priest and the unwedded nun are holier than those who are married. Not so. Paul has in mind here the service of the Lord particularly as it related to that time. To be a Christian and to publicly confess Christ in baptism was to put one's life in jeopardy. Under such conditions, Paul says, it might be best for a man to remain single. He is

not suggesting that an unmarried person is holier than one who is married.

v. 2—Paul recognized that there were certain dangers attached to this regulation. Corinth was a wicked city and full of immoral temptations. There were also human tendencies in one which might encourage fornication and immorality. If this be so then he urges that each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

Verses 3-5 contain some instructions and advice to the married. One of the things brought out here is the oneness of the marriage union. Genuine marriage is a partnership, a union of two people who become “one flesh.” This covers every area of the relationship.

v. 6—Paul admits that these things which he has written in verses 2-5 are instructions from him as their spiritual guide. He is counseling by permission from God, not giving a specific commandment from God.

v. 7—“Yet I would that all men were as myself.” Paul chose celibacy for the sake of the Gospel. He saw the benefit of this, that he would be free to move about without the responsibility of supporting a wife and home. He qualifies this statement lest he be misunderstood. He says that no matter the condition of one, celibate or married, God has endowed each with a gift, by His grace, therefore we should use it according to our circumstances for the glory of God. Paul says that for him to do this, it is better for him to be a bachelor.

v. 8—This verse contains advice to the unmarried and widows, especially the widows. He urges them to remain in that state for the sake of the gospel. The case of

young unmarried women is treated separately in verses 25-28.

v. 9—If for some reason the widows lack control of their passions and desires, they should marry. It is better to marry than to be tormented with ungratified desire. (1) In this condition there is no desire for the things of God; (2) There is the danger of falling into sin.

v. 10-11—Notice the strong language here to believers. It is the Lord who is commanding.

1. Let not the wife depart from her husband.

2. If she chooses to leave, then she has to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.

3. The believing husband has not to put away or divorce his wife.

v. 12—“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.” These words have been used to contrast the difference between inspired and uninspired teaching. When Paul says that “the Lord is commanding” he means that the Lord has already given instructions, which he has repeated. In this verse he is dealing with a situation not covered by the Lord. So he says “I speak”. He spoke by inspiration, claiming the same authority as His words as for the words of Christ Himself. The subject of our present verses was not covered by the Lord.

The class referred to here are those who were married before conversion. Then the husband got saved. Paul instructs the believing husband that if his unbelieving wife desires to stay with him, he was not to put her away.

v. 13—Expresses the same truth in reverse.

v. 14—In a situation of this kind the unbelieving partner is sanctified by the believing. This means that they are brought into a new relationship with God, because there is someone in the home who loves the Lord, prays, reads the Word, and lives for Christ. The unbelieving partner, being exposed to this, is privileged and being exposed has a better chance of being saved. The children in a marriage like this are holy. It is a privilege for a child to be brought up under godly influence of a believing parent. There is a better chance of it being saved, and in this sense they are set apart.

v. 15—In a union like this there is always the possibility that the unbelieving partner might leave. Under the circumstances the believer is not bound.

v. 16—Would point to the desirability of maintaining the marriage union.

v. 17—This verse is Paul's final word in the previously mentioned matters. Whatever circumstances you find yourself in, remain therein. These instructions were not only for the Corinthian church, but were obligatory to all churches.

1 Corinthians 7, Part 2

Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians begins a new section of this epistle. In the first section, chapters 1 through 6, Paul answers questions raised by the household of Chloe. But in this section he answers the questions sent to him by the Corinthian church. There seemed to be three prominent questions Paul addresses: problems relating to marriage, problems involving things offered to idols, and problems concerning spiritual gifts.

First, let us look at what we know about the supposed marriage issues troubling this church. In the Word, the marriage relationship continually occupies a prominent place, because marriage for a believer becomes God's own wonderful picture of the mystic union that subsists between Christ and His church. In Ephesians 5 we learn about this majestic illustration. Paul describes this relationship, saying, "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish...for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two

shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:23-27, 29-32)

At Corinth, there were many irregularities to be corrected regarding marriage, most likely due to misunderstandings and their background of living in a pagan city within the Roman Empire. The Corinthian church had probably come to believe that sexual relations, even within marriage, were to be abstained from and avoided. So when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:1, “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: ‘It is good for a man not to touch a woman,’” he is saying this as a means of rectifying the Roman church’s misunderstanding of taking this phrase to extremes. They believed that the unmarried monk or priest and the unwedded men were holier than those who were married. Paul then has in mind here the service of the Lord, particularly as it related to that time when publicly confessing Christ in baptism was to put one’s life in jeopardy and in the face of persecution and danger. Under such conditions, Paul says, it might be best for a man to remain single, because both marriage and celibacy have certain benefits, but not all are called to be celibate, nor is either one more holy than the other. He is not suggesting that an unmarried person is holier than one who is married.

Paul continues on by saying, “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:2) Paul recognized that there were certain dangers attached to this regulation of marriage. Corinth was a wicked city, full of immoral temptations from pagan worship. There were also human tendencies in which

one might encourage fornication and immorality of sexual sin. If this be so then Paul here urges that each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband, in order that the church would be protected from desiring sexual immorality and having the benefit of appropriate sexual relations within marriage. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 contains some instructions and advice to those who are or will be married, saying, "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." Paul addresses the oneness of the marriage union here, acknowledging that genuine marriage is a partnership, a union of two people who have become "one flesh" and struggling to fight against sin in this partnership as well as all other areas of their lives.

Paul then admits in 1 Corinthians 7:6 that these instructions which he has written in verses 2-5 are instructions from him as their spiritual guide, and should not be a command to abstain, rather a "concession" for certain times in life when the couple feels the need to fast and abstain from appropriate marital sexual relations. He is counseling by permission from God rather than giving a specific commandment from God. Paul then says, "For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. " (1

Corinthians 7:7) Paul had chosen celibacy for the sake of the Gospel and being available to serve the Lord fully without a marriage relationship in his life. He saw the benefit of this because he would be free to move about without the responsibility of supporting a wife and home. Yet, he qualifies this statement lest he be misunderstood, because neither state – whether married or unmarried should be considered better or more holy than the other. Rather, he is saying that no matter the condition of a person, whether celibate or married, God has endowed each with a gift, by His grace, therefore we should use our gifts according to our circumstances for God’s glory. Paul admits here that for him to do this service for the Lord, he is better equipped and available as a bachelor.

Paul also gives advice to the unmarried and widows, in 1 Corinthians 7:8, saying, “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am.” He urges them to remain in that state for the sake of the gospel for their availability to serve the Lord without hindrance or obligation to spouses and children. The case of young unmarried women is treated separately in 1 Corinthians 7:25-28, where Paul urges those who find themselves in the state of singleness to use it to the Lord’s advantage, but not think it sinful if they find themselves later in a marriage relationship, for this is indeed also a gift from the Lord. Paul understands that it is better to marry than to be tormented with ungratified desire, as he continues in 1 Corinthians 7:9, “but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” He recognizes that if believers are tormented in this

condition, there is no desire for the things of God, and therefore a danger of falling into sin.

Paul then employs very strong language here to believers in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 regarding the problem of divorce. He says, "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife." Paul makes sure to note that these commands are coming directly from the Lord as the final authority, not Paul himself. Let us review these particular teachings of Paul concerning divorce. He teaches that a wife should never leave her husband, but if she does, then she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Paul is taking this teaching directly from Jesus Himself who taught his followers this in Mark 10:1-12. Additionally, Paul is saying that aside from the wife, the believing husband too should never put away or divorce his wife either. This is strong and bold language in commanding believers not to divorce, whatever the circumstance.

Paul goes on to address his own teaching regarding divorce, aside from the letter of the law that the Lord has taught. He says, "But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy." (1 Corinthians 7:12-14) These words have been used to contrast the difference between inspired

teaching that comes from the Lord and uninspired teaching that comes from human understanding of the inspired Word of God. When Paul says “the Lord commands,” or “the Lord says,” he means that the Lord has already given instructions regarding these things, which he is repeating. However, in this section, he is dealing with a situation not covered by the Lord, so he clarifies the teaching by saying, “I speak.” He spoke by inspiration, claiming the apostolic authority for His words as for the words of Christ Himself. The subjects of this section refer to those who were married before conversion. For instance, if the husband had been saved, Paul instructs the believing husband that if his unbelieving wife desires to stay with him, he doesn’t have to put her away or divorce her because of her unbelief, and that this situation, if reversed, should be treated likewise. In a union of this kind, the unbelieving partner could be sanctified by the believing partner; this means that they are brought into a new relationship with God.

Because there is someone in the home who loves the Lord, prays, reads the Word, and lives for Christ, the unbelieving partner is exposed to this, is privileged, and has a better chance of being saved. Furthermore, the children in a marriage like this also have the opportunity to be sanctified and holy. It is quite a privilege for a child to be brought up under the godly influence of a believing parent. There is a better chance of a child of this union being saved, so in this sense they are set apart.

Paul then describes that in a union like this, there is always the possibility that the unbelieving partners might leave: “But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in

such cases. But God has called us to peace.” (1 Corinthians 7:15) Under these circumstances, the believer is not bound. In other words, it would not be a sin to let him or her go. The reference to “peace” here could mean either peace in the home when the unbeliever leaves, or it is possibly an exhortation to preserve the marriage relationship; however, verse 16 certainly points to the desirability of maintaining the marriage union. Paul’s final word regarding the Corinthians’ original concerns of which they had written is in 1 Corinthians 7:17. He says, “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.” Paul intends to commend the Corinthian church to remain steadfast in whatever circumstances they find themselves in. These instructions were not only for the Corinthian church, but were obligatory to all churches, and should be commendable to us as fellow believers today.

1 Corinthians 7, Part 3

This chapter begins the new section of the epistle. In the first section, chapters 1-6, Paul answers the questions raised by the household of Chloe. In this second section, he answers the questions sent to him by the Corinthian church, which were varied in topic. There were questions relating to marriage, questions concerning things offered to idols, and questions concerning spiritual gifts. Chapter 7 exists because the church in Corinth needed to see how these particular areas were connected to Christian faith.

Commentary:

Verse 1:

Paul writes, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." The Roman church had come to believe this and had carried it to the extreme. They began teaching that the unmarried monk or priest and the unmarried nun were holier than those who were married. However, Paul is not saying that at all. In saying this, he does not have holiness in mind, but rather the services of the Lord, particularly as they are related to that time. In that particular time, to be a Christian and to publicly confess Christ in baptism was to put one's life in jeopardy. Under such conditions, Paul says, it might really be best for a man to remain single. In no way is he suggesting that a person who is unmarried is holier than the person who is married.

Verse 2:

Paul recognizes that there are certain dangers attached to this regulation. Because of inherited human

tendencies, this might encourage fornication or sexual immorality. In such circumstances, he urges that every man should have his own wife and every woman should have her own husband.

Verses 3-6:

These verses contain advice to the married and in regards to the marriage relationship and verse 6 refers to the preceding verses of this chapter.

Verse 7:

Paul chose, for the sake of the Gospel, to remain unmarried. The benefit to him was that he was free to move about with no responsibility to the home, etc. In order that the church might not misunderstand his statement, however, he qualifies it, stating that whether one chooses to be celibate or married, each was endowed with a gift by the grace of God.

Verse 8:

This verse contains advice to the unmarried and widows. He urges the widows to remain as they are for the sake of the gospel. He treats the unmarried women separately in verses 25-28.

Verse 9:

If it is impossible for some to do this, then Paul says they should marry.

Verses 10-11:

Paul uses strong language here: I command that a believing wife should not leave her believing husband. If she does, then she should remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. In addition, the believing husband must not put away his wife.

Verses 12-16:

These verses refer to those who had married before conversion. The first instance he cites is in the case of a brother with an unconverted wife. Paul says if she is willing to live with him, then let her stay. Conversely, if a sister has an unconverted husband who is willing to stay with her, then she must not leave him.

As the believer stays with their partner, the unbelieving partner is sanctified. This does not mean that they are saved because of the relationship. It does, however, mean that they are brought into a relationship with God. This happens as there is someone in that home who loves the Lord, who prays, who reads the Scripture, and who lives for Christ. As the unbelieving partner is being exposed to this privilege, he or she has a better chance of being saved. In this sense, they are set apart.

In the case of the children, they were unclean, but are now holy. It is a privilege for any child to be brought up under the godly influence of a believing parent. There is a better chance of them being saved in this atmosphere than in an unconverted home. So, in this sense, they are holy.

In verse 15 there is the possibility that the unbelieving partner in marriage will depart. Paul says here, that the believing one does not sin in letting them go. Verse 16 sums up the former argument. By staying with an unbelieving partner, the believing partner may see his or her spouse saved.

Verse 17:

This verse contains Paul's final word in regards to marriage. Whatever circumstances you find yourself in,

remain therein. These instructions were not only for the Corinthian church, but were obligatory for all churches.

Verse 18:

Paul extends his teaching from the marital union to circumcision and slavery. His exhortation is the same for both the Jew and the Gentile. Whatever circumstances you find yourself in, remain therein. If you were a Jew when you were saved, do not try to become like a Gentile. On the other hand, if you were a Gentile when you were saved, do not attempt to become like a Jew.

Verse 19:

With God, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of value. It is the keeping of the commandments of God that is of value to him.

Verse 20:

As it is in the marital union, so it is in all other spheres of life. Everyone should remain in the sphere in which he was saved.

Verse 21:

Here Paul begins to deal with slaves in their situation. If you are a converted slave, he urges you to remain that way. If you are set free, he urges you to use your freedom for the glory of God.

Verse 22:

A slave, though subject to his master, can still be the Lord's servant. If he is set free and has no earthly master, he is the Lord's bond slave.

Verse 23:

The Lord paid the price of redemption and freedom from the slavery of sin. Therefore, they are the Lord's servants.

Verse 24:

This is a repetition of verse 20, with the addition "with God."

Verses 25-40:

Paul gives counsel to the unmarried. This subject was introduced in verses 8 and 9, but here is handled more fully. In verses 25-28, the apostle gives his private opinion. Though he is writing under the influence of the Spirit, the Lord has not given him authority to command that an unmarried girl must or must not marry. However, his inspired judgment in the matter is that, under the prevailing conditions, it would be better to remain unmarried "for the present distress."

Are you married? Do not try to dissolve that marriage. Are you married? Seek not a wife. Paul claims that if you marry, despite what he has said, you have not sinned. But, nevertheless, you will have trouble. Paul gives this advice in order to spare you this trouble.

In verses 29-31 the apostle says that life is short, and it is more important to glorify God than to rule out our happiness. As a wise pastor, Paul says, "I would have you free from worry." The unmarried person, being free from marital responsibilities, is free to even give his life for the Lord, if necessary. The married person has to give thought and attention to his wife and family. The difference between the married and unmarried sisters is this: the unmarried sister is free to engage more broadly in the Lord's work, while the married sister must take

care of her husband, home and children. This, of course, is the Lord's will, but it limits her sphere of service.

Paul says that he is writing this for his profit. He does not want to cast a snare over them or to deprive them of their liberty to choose which way they want to live. But rather, he says in effect, "I am showing you the best way to serve the Lord." He concludes, if anyone who is unmarried thinks it better to be married, then he should go ahead and get married, for there is no sin involved. On the other hand, if one does not feel any particular yearning for marriage and has decided to remain single, he should do so. One does well whether married or single. He who marries does well, but he who does not marry does better.

A wife is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive. If the husband dies, she is free to marry again, but only in the Lord. If she remains unmarried, Paul's judgment is that she will be much happier. There were some who were questioning Paul's authority to say these things. Therefore he adds, "and I think that I have the Spirit of God" as the mind of Christ in this matter.

1 Corinthians 11

v. 2—Notice how Paul introduces his correction of disorders. He praises them that they remembered him, and that they kept the teachings of the faith that he had taught them.

v. 3—“But I would have you know” suggests that he is about to give some new teaching on a special matter. The meaning of a head covering by Christian women. Three headships are brought to our notice in this verse: God, Christ, and man. It is headship, not Lordship.

The thought of headship is authority, control, and the related subject of subjection. The Christian man is under the headship of Christ. The Christian woman is to be under the headship of man. Even as Christ, for carrying out the redemptive purposes of God, placed Himself completely in subjection to the Father. This reference to Christ eliminates all thought of superiority or inferiority.

v. 4—For a man to wear a hat when praying or preaching is dishonoring to Christ.

v. 5—Any sister who prays or teaches with her head uncovered dishonors her head (man—Christ). Paul says any sister doing this is in God’s sight as if she were shaved. In that day immoral women went unveiled, and slave women were shorn.

v. 6—By inspiration Paul says that if a woman persists on having her head uncovered, let her shave off her hair. No good woman would ever do that, it would be shameful. Then says Paul, let her be covered.

v. 7—This verse gives the reason why a man ought not to cover his head. “He is the image and glory of God.” Note also that the woman is the “glory of man.” It is God’s will that women should be in subjection to man.

v. 8-9—The relative positions of man and woman is brought to us in these verses. Adam as God’s representative was made head of creation. The woman came from man. She was created for man.

Verses 11-12 would teach us that there is no thought of superiority or inferiority. Man and are necessary to each other in the Lord.

v. 10—“For this cause.” Because man was given headship, dominion and authority, the woman has to have “authority” on her head. Her head covering becomes the visible token of subjection to her God-appointed head. “Because of the angels.” The angels witnessed the rebellion which brought sin. Now in the new creation it is possible for them to see godly order.

When God’s order is carried out in the Church gatherings there is the passions setting forth of Christ and His Church. The man uncovered in the position of authority represents Christ. The woman covered in the place of accepted subjection sets forth the Church in subjection to her Risen Head and Lord. What a privilege it is for a Christian woman to manifest to angels this precious truth. How gladly it should be accepted.

Praying and Preaching

Should Christian women pray or preach? Yes they can, but only within the sphere set forth by the Word of God. For them to do so in a church gathering where men are present is direct disobedience to the instructions of the

Word of God. Read 1 Corinthians 34:35 and 1 Timothy 2:4-12. The truth set forth in these two passages is emphasized by the head coverings worn by the sisters “under disobedience”, “not to usurp authority over the man.”

There is nothing in the Scriptures that would forbid women praying or preaching when only women and children are present. Even then her head should be covered. These instructions were given to cover our church related activities. They do not cover the activities in the home.

Hat or Hair

There are some who believe that a woman’s hair is her covering. See verse 15. therefore she needs no other cover.

v. 13—“Judge in yourselves.” “In the light of what I have just said, Consider for yourselves it is proper or decent for a woman to offer prayer to God (publicly) with her head uncovered?”

v. 14—Does not nature teach you that for a man to have long hair it is a shame or a dishonor to him.

v. 15—A woman’s hair is her glory...it is given to her, saved and unsaved alike, for a covering. It is provided by nature.

The Christian woman is given the privilege and responsibility of wearing an additional covering which sets forth:

1. The truth of subjection.
2. The headship of man.

One would not charge all sisters who do not wear hats in church services with willful disobedience to the Word, for this truth is not taught in many churches. The world scoffs at any such teaching as would please women in a subordinate position to men. Some Christian women are influenced in their thinking and actions by the world's standards. To reject the commandment of God is to dishonor Christ, displease the angels, dishonor her husband, and dishonor the men.

1 Corinthians 12

Chapter 11 is the fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:12. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Note the contrast: He has been glorying in things which had no glory in men's eyes, ending with a humiliating experience of being "let down" in a basket to escape the wrath of a Gentile governor.

In chapter 12 he turns our attention abruptly from being "let down" to being "caught up" to heaven, where he received visions and revelations.

v. 2—"I know a man in Christ." Paul is speaking of himself. Paul was "caught up to the third heaven." A likely time for this to have happened would be when he was stoned at Lystra. How Paul ever kept this secret for fourteen years is a miracle.

v. 2—He was caught up to the "third heaven."

v. 4—He was caught up "into Paradise."

Paradise and the third heaven is the same place. To the thief on the cross Jesus said, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise." This then is where the Lord is. The dwelling place of God. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." This was indeed a unique experience. What an honor. Not one of his accusers had been honored in this way by God.

Note the remarkable fact—Paul's body was lying in the dirt outside Lystra, but the real Paul was in Paradise. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." While there, he heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." That is, he heard and saw things which

are impossible for man to describe, and which God evidently did not want him to reveal or discuss.

The nearest he ever came to discussing this was when he quoted from Isaiah 44:4.

Such an experience could have made Paul an inveterate boaster. But verses 5-6 show us that while he may boast of these experiences, yet personally he will boast in his infirmities, lest anyone should think of him more highly than they should.

v. 7—Paul mentions here a “thorn in the flesh” that God gave him to keep him humble. This thorn or splinter was “for the flesh.” It both hurt and humbled. This thorn or splinter was of considerable magnitude. It was like a beam. It weakened physically and possibly affected his speech. 1 Corinthians 10:10. Notice how he mentions infirmities or weaknesses in verses 9 and 10. God’s grace and Christ’s power more than compensated for his weakness.

Verse 10 epitomizes the life and experiences of Paul showing his weakness to avert these things. He closes the section with a tremendous statement of triumph —“When I am weak then I am strong.”

v. 11-13—Paul regrets at having to boast like a foolish person. It was their belligerent attitude that had forced him into this situation. Surely they know now, on account of what he had written, that he was not inferior to the false teachers. Also, they themselves knew the signs that indicate apostleship performed among them, miracles, wonders, and mighty works.

v. 13—this verse would give the idea that when Paul was serving in Corinth and realized that there was

opposition to his apostleship, he refused to take support money from them. He was supported by gifts from other churches. Then rather scathingly he adds, "Forgive me this wrong."

v. 14—Paul is ready to take another trip to Corinth. He assures them that he will not be a burden to them financially. "I seek not your support, I seek you for Christ."

v. 15—He expresses his deep concern and love for them. I will gladly lay my life down if it will be for your good. Even though I love you, the less I be loved by you.

v. 16—This verse describes what his enemies were saying of him. They said, "He tricked you by his so-called humbleness and lowliness. He really did this to humiliate you under his power."

v. 17—Paul reminds them that, no matter what his enemies thought, I did not make gain/money of you personally, nor through any of the messengers I sent you.

v. 18—Did Titus, or the brother I sent with him, take advantage of you? He and I acted in the same spirit, and walked the same paths.

v. 19—Have you been supposing, during my absence, that in my writing I have been defending myself? That is not so. What I have written, I have written before God and Christ, and it has been to build you up spiritually.

v. 20—This verse describes the condition of the assembly at Corinth, as the evil spirit of fault-finding took hold of them. In their midst there were: "debates" (several people fussing over unimportant things, quarreling),

“envyings” (jealous of other people’s works),
“wrath” (envy leads us to bitterness, fault-finding,
anger), “strife” (in-fighting between brethren),
“whispering” (a very dangerous practice, fault-finding by
a little group), “back-bitings” (talking behind a person’s
back, never to his face), “conceits” (arrogance, self-
assertion), “insults” (internal disorder).

v. 21—As I look at your spiritual condition I am afraid
that when I come to you I will be terribly upset. Because
despite my letters and admonitions there are some who
have not repented of the impurity, sexual vice, and
sensuality which they formerly practiced.

Paul as a true man of God firstly would grieve over the
situation. Then he would act with authority, rebuking
evil and urging repentance.

A Study of Spiritual Gifts

There has been an appalling failure among assemblies to appreciate the importance of spiritual gifts, as determining the ministry of the local church, and as being essential to its fruitfulness. In most assemblies there is the jack-of-all-trades syndrome. Usually some dear brother is running around in circles doing ten different jobs, few of them effectively.

Leaders in local churches discourage the developments of spiritual gifts when they play the “I’ve got to do everything” superstar role.

While this act is being played, spiritual gifts lie dormant in many who should be sharing in the local ministry. The practice of acknowledging and developing spiritual gifts untaps resources of godly manpower. It thaws out frozen assets, roots out unemployment among believers, and reflects the priesthood of believers.

The result of this unleashing of this hidden power is the building, binding, and beautifying of the local body.

At this time let us ask ourselves, “What is a spiritual gift?”

A spiritual gift may be defined as a divine enablement which the Lord Jesus gives to every believer through the Spirit, to empower him to serve God in some specific way.

Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts. There are no ungifted believers. 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:6.

There is a difference between a spiritual gift and a natural talent. Non-Christians and Christians have natural talents which have been present from birth. They are talented in music, they paint beautifully, they master languages, they orate eloquently, sing well, write efficiently, and have brilliant minds. All these are natural talents, not spiritual gifts. They instruct, inspire, and entertain on a natural level.

On the other hand, spiritual gifts come from God and relate to the building up of the saints and the winning of the lost to Christ. Paul calls them spirituals.

When a believer exercises his gift in the power of the Spirit, he enters a supernatural sphere. Spiritual gifts must never be regarded as an enlargement of natural powers. They must be regarded as spiritual and a supernatural gift, bestowed on believers by God in keeping with His will and purpose.

When did we receive these spiritual gifts?

Without exception, every believer of the moment of the New Birth receives a gift or gifts. These gifts are not normally seen immediately. Verify this thought by comparing the natural sphere. All the factors of ability and natural talent are latent in a newborn child. In both the natural and spiritual spheres it is a matter of development and use of these gifts, rather than additional gifts being bestowed at a later time.

There is a divine purpose in the life of each believer. Spiritual gifts are given to each one by the Godhead for the fulfillment of that purpose. 1 Peter 4:10.

Spiritual Gifts Differ in Value

While there is equality of privilege in the Christian faith, there is not equality of gift. 1 Corinthians 12:22.

Some gifts are more effective and essential than others. Paul contrasts the gift of prophecy with the gift of tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:5. He also said, "I would rather speak five words that can be understood in order to instruct you, than ten thousand words in a language nobody understands."

Even though gifts differ in value, they are equally honorable. The growth and spiritual expansion of an assembly is often hindered by members who do not know their gift. There are others who know what their gift is but they neglect it and refuse to develop it.

Beloved child of God, you have received the great gift of eternal life, but do not forget that you have also a spiritual gift. It is important to you and to the local church that you know your gift and that you use it for the upbuilding of the saints, the reaching of the lost, and for the glory of God.

The Source from which Gifts Come

1 Corinthians 12:4. Not how the Trinity is involved. In verse 4 it is the Spirit, in verse 5 it is the Lord, in verse 6 it is God.

Note the distinction in the NT between spiritual gifts and gifted men to the church. Spiritual gifts has reference to the supernatural powers possessed by individual believers. Gifted men has reference to the sovereign placing of gifted men in the church for the purpose of winning souls and ministering to the body.

The principal thought in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is that of spiritual gifts given by the Spirit. Ephesians 4 states that gifted men are given to the church by the risen Christ.

A Description of the Permanent Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:7-8. These two gifts are intimately linked together.

Let us look at the gift of knowledge first. The Lord gives to some an extensive knowledge of the Word. They know the Book from Genesis to Revelation. They can unerringly turn to any portion under discussion. Their capacity for memorizing and knowing the Scripture is phenomenal. One may have the gift of knowledge and yet fail miserably because of the lack of ability to use the knowledge in the right way.

This is where the gift of wisdom comes in. this wisdom is the ability to use what God has revealed in a way that helps and blesses others and glorifies God.

Some people, despite their vast knowledge of the Word, use it so clumsily that they turn both saved and unsaved off. The gift of wisdom, on the other hand, is the ability to use the Word of God wisely, so that people are encouraged and built up.

There are other areas also in which the gift of wisdom operates.

v. 9—The gift of faith. This is not the faith by which we are saved. This is a special faith for a special service. George Muller of the Bristol Orphan Homes was the outstanding man of faith in the nineteenth century. He told the Lord, “Thou wilt have to supply the means.” He then spent every cent he had to open the first house. The Lord sent more money, more children were

admitted, more houses were bought, and the work prospered and grew.

Brother Muller vowed that he would not ask or even tell his needs to anyone. He diligently laid them out before the Lord. During his lifetime he received \$6,500,000. A glorious tribute to the faithfulness of God and the triumphant faith of George Muller.

A Gift of Faith

Some have tried to emulate what Muller did, and despite improved business technology, they have failed. Why? Because they were trying to do George Muller's work without his faith.

Hudson Taylor is another example of one who had the gift of faith. When he founded the China Inland Mission he resolved never to ask any man for money, but to trust God for all his needs. God miraculously rewarded the exercise of Hudson Taylor's gift of faith.

The missionary who went to China with no support.

Miss Gourlay in the incurable ward in the hospital in Edinburgh.

The Gift of the Discerning of Spirits

In everyday language this is the ability to see through people. The gift of discernment is the special ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. A person with this gift has the ability to unmask Satan, especially when he is posing as an angel of light. It could be a brother or sister.

The discerner can also detect false teachers, even false teachings which sometimes are close to the truth.

Peter displayed this gift when he exposed the deceit of Annanias and Sapphira. He also exposed Simon the sorcerer as a professor and not a possessor.

We need men and women who are gifted in this way.

The Gift of Being a Help

The gift of helps carries the meaning of giving assistance, or lending a hand. The gift of helps is the Spirit-given ability to serve the assembly in any supporting role.

Usually this gift is demonstrated in the temporal sphere, but sometimes it moves into the spiritual.

Describe what happened after the appointment of the seven deacons. The Word increased and many were saved.

I was impressed with a story I read recently. A young minister just settled in his first pastorate in Philadelphia and was visited by some of his godly members. “You do not seem to be a strong preacher,” they said. In the normal course of events you will fail. But we are going to meet every Sunday morning before the service to pray for you. The church grew to over 1,000 members and the Pastor became one of America’s foremost preachers, and a world renowned evangelist—Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman. We was helped by the prayers of these godly helpers.

Potential outlets for the exercise of the gift of helps seem almost unlimited. The gift of ministering and the gift of helps would appear to be one in the same. These gifts are possessed by all believers to a lesser or greater degree. The task of the church would be impossible apart from this gift of helps.

The same word is used by Paul when he said, "Support the weak." Acts 20:35. It is also used by Martha in intensive verb form when she said to Jesus, "Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Bid her therefore that she help me." Luke 10:40.

Another example of the gift of helping is found in Acts 6. The Grecian element complained against the Hebrew sector, claiming that their widows were being neglected.

Satan was busy in the infant church by creating dissension and more importantly by turning the apostles from their divinely appointed ministry to lesser tasks. With divine instinct the Twelve resisted the temptation asserting that it would be a mistake for them to neglect the Word of God and wait on tables. They solved the problem by having the church choose seven spiritual men to take over this work.

These gift of helps was not really waiting on tables, though this was involved. The real help was in freeing the apostles to major in the Word and prayers.

The distribution of food was an incidental matter. Anyone who can help a Christian worker devote more time to spiritual ministry is expressing the gift of helping.

After the election of the seven deacons, or helpers, "The Word of God kept on increasing, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly." V. 17.

This gift is not for helping the sick, the aged, orphans and widows. The gift of helps is lending a hand wherever it will release other workers to their spiritual ministries.

Acts 13:5—Barnabas and Saul referred to John Mark as their helper.

1 Corinthians 16:15—Stephanas addicted himself to the “ministry”; i.e., to helping the saints.

Preparing meals for God’s servants is certainly a ministry of helps. Thank God for the Marthas as well as the Marys.

The Gift of Governments or Ruling

Leadership is necessary in every church. The Lord appointed and trained the Twelve, who did some ruling in the early years of the Church. They maintained the testimony in Jerusalem and no doubt supervised the activities of the church when everybody else scattered abroad.

In their leadership capacity they advised the ordination of the seven deacons.

Paul saw to it that each new assembly had elders and ordained them.

Acts 20:17—There were elders or leaders in the church at Ephesus.

Philippians 1:1—There were elders and deacons in Philippi.

Titus 1:5—Titus was asked by Paul to ordain elders in every church.

The gift of ruling or governments is mentioned twice in the two lists of gifts. In Romans Paul urges that “he that ruleth should rule with diligence.” Romans 8:8. Thought the Holy Spirit leads and guides the assembly overall, yet some believers are given the gift of leadership. In

Romans 12:8 the word rule means to stand over, superintend, preside. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 governments mean to go before, to lead.

It is also translated “Master”, meaning helmsman, demagogic, non-dictatorial. Spiritual leadership and authority expresses itself in wisdom, tact, example, humility and service. Paul equates leadership with labor. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. He also says that high esteem is due leaders, for their work’s sake.

Believers are exhorted to obey “Spirit-ordained elders,” for they watch for your souls as they that give account. Hebrews 13:17.

In most assemblies two groups are found side by side. One group wants to keep on doing things as always, to conduct business as usual. The other group wants new ways to reach out. One is preserving, the other prophetic. One is conservative, the other creative. One is traditional, the other inventive.

Those with the gift of leadership should know when to stay with the old way of doing things and when to innovate with new ministries. Whether piloting the church through unusual or routine maneuvers, the helmsman must keep the assembly in balance, lest it stiffen with traditionalism or run riot with liberalism.

The gift of leadership or ruling involves setting goals for the future, motivating people, and executing plans. They also should be open to discussion and review.

No assembly can function successfully without spiritual leadership. The gift of leadership is not confined to the eldership. Anyone who has this gift is exhorted to

exercise it with diligence, i.e., with responsibility and zeal. Romans 12:8.

We need spiritual leaders and statesmen today.

The Gift of Showing Mercy

The gift of showing mercy is the Spirit-given ability to manifest practical, compassionate, cheerful love toward suffering members of the body of Christ. To show mercy is to have compassion on.

This is not a superficial feeling, but a deep down compassion, supernatural in its origin. It is not just kindness springing from the human heart. It is divine love, agape love, Spirit-inspired, acting in Christ's name with the object of glorifying God.

The Lord's compassion was expressed in deeds of mercy. He healed the blind, the lepers, and the sick. He also fed the multitude. His death on the Cross was the supreme evidence of His compassion for mankind.

Early believers showed mercy by selling their lands and houses to help the poor among them. Acts 2:44-45.

Dorcus made coats and clothes for poor widows. Acts 9:36. The newly converted Philippian jailer showed mercy within a short time of His conversion. He washed the wounds on Paul and Silas' backs. Acts 16:33-34. This gift has to be exercised with cheerfulness. Romans 12:8. The visitor in the sickroom should radiate sunshine.

The gift of mercy is directed to saints in distress. It often overflows to the outcasts, the poor, the underprivileged, the sick, the handicapped, the retarded, the unlovely, the shut-ins, and the hungry.

A widow came home from a two-month stay in the hospital and found her house cleaned from top to bottom by ladies from the assembly.

Showing mercy is taking a hot meal to a family where the mother is incapacitated.

Every believer should show compassion to the needy, especially those of the household of faith. Those who have this precious gift of showing mercy should practice it diligently. In some instances this gift is being neglected among us.

The Gift of Exhortation

Romans 12:8. This is a very important gift. It is practical and stirring. It is not necessarily bombastic, vociferous, or thunderous.

The word translated “exhorts” means to comfort, console, and implore.

The exhorter is one who admonishes, encourages, comforts and leads us into a closer realization of God’s will. The exhorter comes alongside and with supernatural ability helps, strengthens, and steadies.

The Gift of Giving

Most believers give to a lesser or greater degree.

Some give out of a sense of duty, some just give for giving’s sake. Others give to the best of their ability. Paul urges us to give liberally, generously, freely and with joy. This is normal but is not what is meant here.

Paul said of the Macedonian churches that the grace of God was bestowed upon them. Despite great trial and

affliction and deep poverty they were willing to give to their limit and beyond their limit, in abundance of joy.

The gift of giving is also illustrated in the widow's giving of her two mites. Luke 21:1-4.

Spiritual Gifts and How They Can Be Stirred Up

The development of gifts is very important to the individual and to the assembly.

Paul urges Timothy:

1. Neglect not the gift that is in thee—1 Timothy 4:14.
2. Stir up the gift of God which is in thee—2 Timothy 1:6.

Since every believer has been given a spiritual gift at conversion, the same exhortation is necessary today.

As responsible believers we must not neglect our gift, and at every opportunity we should stir it up.

In the process of finding our gift we should try various kinds of ministry. In some we will feel more comfortable than in others. In some forms of service we will find an inner satisfaction and peace.

Some of the believers will react favorably and confess to being blessed. The inner satisfaction with the attested outward blessing will give some indication as to where the gift lies.

The aforementioned would equate to stirring up our gift. Then there is a second aspect which is important.

The elder and leaders have a responsibility to develop and stir up gifts. They must provide opportunities to exercise gifts.

Furthermore, as opportunity arises those who are mature should encourage and pray for the young brethren who are struggling with spiritual direction. There are a variety of ways in which we can involve our young men. They can be asked to give a testimony or a brief message. Others with aptitude could be involved in the opening of a meeting or in song-leading.

During the process of development much patience must be exercised by all. Sure, there will be lapses from normalcy. There even may be some embarrassing situations. But the progress made in the development of spiritual gifts far exceeds the occasional lapse.

Great wisdom and care needs to be shown in the process of development. Despite our personal wishes everyone will not turn out to be a preacher. To waste time or afford opportunity to one desirous to speak publicly but is not gifted is a grave injustice on the saints and dishonoring to the Risen Lord.

Our aversion to “one man ministry” must not drive us to an equally wrong position of “any man ministry.”

The aforementioned has to do principally with the “speaking gifts.” To discover our “serving gifts” a believer should spend much time in prayer.

A believer cannot function in the Body if he does not know his place and his gift. The recognition and use of the gift can be a tremendous blessing in the local church. There are several basic steps necessary to discovering one’s gift:

1. It is important to know the gifts which the risen Christ and the Spirit has given to the Church. These are found in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4.
2. It should be a matter of concern and a matter of prayer.
3. Various types of service should be tried.
4. There should be counsel with spiritual brethren.
5. We should develop our gift as opportunity affords.

Description of the Permanent Spiritual Gifts

From the beginning the Church has been plagued by two opposing extremes in the doctrine of spiritual gifts.

There has been and there still is abuse of spiritual gifts. On the other hand there has been an appalling failure to appreciate the importance of spiritual gifts.

The usefulness and fruitfulness of the Church depends on the understanding and scriptural use of spiritual gifts.

We should notice at this point the distinction drawn in the NT between spiritual gifts and gifted men.

1 Corinthians 12-14 describe the spiritual abilities or supernatural/extraordinary powers that are given to believers by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:11 has reference to gifted men being given to the Church by the ascended Lord. After a close analysis of the Word we conclude that there are some gifts that are temporary and some that are permanent.

Conservative scholars believe that there are 16 spiritual gifts mentioned in the NT. 9 of these are with us today. 7 were phased out during the apostolic age.

Let us now take the gifts given by the Spirit.

1. Ministering—1 Cor. 12:20; Rom. 12:7. Every believer more or less has this gift. It is the gift of helping. The work of the church would be impossible apart from the exercise of this gift.

2. Administration—1 Cor. 12:28; Rom 12:8. This gift is obviously only bestowed upon a few. These leaders have been given authority by God and should be respected and obeyed. Heb. 13:7.

3. Exhortation—Rom. 12:8. This is a very important gift. It is practical and stirring. The exhorter is the one who encourages, comforts, admonishes, and leads us into a closer realization of god's will.

4. Giving—Rom. 12:8. Most Christians give, but there are some who give till it hurts.

5. Mercy—Rom. 12:8. the former gift has to do with the poor and needy. This gift is related to the sick and afflicted. This gift has to be used with cheerfulness.

6. Evangelism—Eph. 4:11. The evangelist is the one who propagates the Gospel. His supernatural gift is reaching men for Christ.

7. Faith. Some have outstanding faith, having confidence in God and His power.

8. Pastor—Eph. 4:11. A pastor or shepherd is worth his weight in gold. He is one who feeds, leads, protects, and cares for the flock.

9. Teacher—Eph. 4:11. The gift of teaching must be considered as one of the major gifts. The teacher's main task is to make known the will of God from the Word of God.

What is a spiritual gift? It may be defined as an enablement which the Lord Jesus gives to every believer through the Spirit to empower him to serve God in some specific way. This "spiritual" differs from natural talent.

A talent is a natural endowment which is bestowed upon a person at birth. This can take the form of superior skill in music, singing, an exceptional mind, art, oratory, or any exceptional natural ability.

This kind of talent comes from natural sources.

Unbelievers possess these talents as well as believers.

Contrarily, spiritual gifts are graciously given by God to born again believers at conversion. When this gift is recognized, nurtured, and developed, it can be used by the Holy Spirit to bring tremendous blessing. Spiritual gifts are given for the glory of God, the development of spiritual character, for the building up of the church, and for the winning of the lost for Christ.

Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 12:7, "To each one is given this gift by the Spirit that he may use it for the good of all." "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, dividing to each one individually as He wills."

Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:7.

It is an indisputable fact that every believer has a special God-given gift or special enablement for service.

The following points deserve close consideration:

1. Gifts differ in value, but all are equally honorable.
2. Gifts are to be used in love.
3. Spiritual gifts must not be regarded as an enlargement of natural powers. They should be looked on as a supernatural ability bestowed in keeping with the purpose of God.
4. Many individuals with little natural talent have been mightily used by God.

The growth and spiritual expansion of an assembly is often hindered by members who will not recognize their gift, and even if they do, neglect it, refusing to stir it up and develop it.

Beloved child of God, since you have received the greater gift of eternal life, you have also received spiritual gifts. It is important to you as an individual and to the local church that you know your gifts and use them for the glory of God.

Discovering One's Gifts

Every believer should spend much time in prayer, seeking to discover his gift. A believer cannot function in the Body if he does not know and use his gift. The recognition and use of the gift can be a tremendous blessing in the local church.

There are several basic steps in discovering one's gift:

1. It is necessary to know the gifts which the risen Christ and the Spirit have given to the Church.
2. It should be a matter of concern and a matter of prayer.
3. Various types of service should be tried.
4. There should be counsel with spiritual believers.
5. We should develop our gift.
6. A teacher should study the Word and develop communication skills.

How Can Gifts Be Encouraged or Stirred Up?

The development of gifts is very important to the individual and the assembly.

In writing to Timothy, Paul urges him:

1. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee." 1 Tim. 4:14.
2. "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee." 2 Tim. 1:6.

So then, having come to the conclusion that every believer has a gift from God, the same exhortation is necessary today. Do not under any circumstances neglect your gift. And at every opportunity stir up your gift.

In finding out our gift we will try various kinds of ministry, and we will find more inner satisfaction doing some forms of service more than others. Furthermore, people seem to react more favorably and confess to being blessed by some forms of my service rather than others.

The inner satisfaction with the attested outward blessing gives us some indication as to where our gift lies.

This would be stirring up our gift as an individual. The elders and leaders have a responsibility to stir up and develop gifts. For instance, they must provide opportunities for the exercise of gifts. Furthermore, as the opportunity arises, those more mature should encourage the young brethren.

There are a variety of ways in which we can involve our young men. They can be asked to share a testimony or give a brief message from the Word at some of the meetings. Other with the aptitude could be involved in song-leading or opening a meeting where a chairman is necessary.

During this process of development much patience must be exercised by all. Sure there will be lapses from

normalcy. There may even be some embarrassing situations, but the progress made in the development of gifts far exceeds the occasional lapses.

Even more important than all these opportunities is the one presented each Sunday morning or evening as the case may be. The openness of the Lord's Supper brings an obligation to every believer to prepare to participate. This provides an important opportunity to exercise and develop spiritual gifts.

Great wisdom and care needs to be displayed in the process of development. Despite desires, everyone will not turn out to be a preacher. To waste time or afford opportunity to one desirous to speak publicly, but is not gifted, is a grave injustice to the saints, and dishonoring to our risen Lord.

Let me issue a warning at this time. Our aversion to one man ministry must not drive us to an equally wrong position, that of "any man ministry."

Every man ministry is neither the cure for, nor an acceptable alternative to, one man ministry. They are equally unscriptural.

Women's Service in the Church

Priscilla helped her husband teach Apollos the way of God. Acts 18:26.

Paul called Euodias and Syntyche his "fellow laborers" even though their personal differences were endangering the unity of the local church. Phil. 4:2-3.

Phoebe was a "servant" of the church. Rom. 16:1.

Dorcus helped the poor by making clothes. Acts 9:36, 39.

Lydia opened her home to Paul and his coworkers. Acts 16:15-40.

Older sisters and mothers should be ready to teach the younger women. Titus 2.

Mary worshipped the Lord. John 12.

Martha served tables.

Mary Magdalene gave her possessions to Christ. Luke 8.

Prayer is one of the more important aspects of our faith and work for the Lord. Generally speaking most sisters can do this better than most men.

The mother's influence on her children—Eunice and her mother Lois.

I believe that a mother plays a greater part in molding the character of the child during their formative years.

Psychologists say that the first seven years of a child's life are the most important for the development of character. These are the years when the child comes mostly under the influence of the mother.

To be a mother and to raise the child for God is one of the highest privileges given in God's economy.

Studies in the Use of Tongues

Speaking in tongues is not in itself a phenomenon peculiar to Christianity or even to God, but rather it actually has been practiced by pagans with most likely no exposure to Christianity. There has been evidence of many different people groups and faith traditions having outbursts as the result of either hypnosis or hysterics directly from Satan. This observation helps us see that tongues' speaking has existed in the past and present apart from the God of the Bible. Therefore, we can conclude that the mere fact of speaking in tongues proves nothing as to its source and origin, and that non-biblical tongues' speaking has its source in man or Satan. However, biblical tongues' speaking was from God. Let us look at the use of tongues in the Bible and what we know of it.

Tongues in the Bible

While there is no record of any tongues' speaking in the Old Testament and no reference to it in the Gospels, certain people in the New Testament proved to be filled with the Holy Spirit: Joseph, the Virgin Mary, Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Anna, and Simeon. Then, when we come to Acts and the epistles we find that tongues' speaking is confined to a very narrow period of time in the development of Christianity. That period is between Pentecost and the waiting at Corinth, which was probably approximately twenty-five to thirty years. (See Acts 2 and 19) Outside this period there is no mention of tongues anywhere in Scripture. This is an important fact when we remember that four of the great church leaders were present at Pentecost: Peter, James,

John and Jude. These four leaders of the early church altogether wrote seven books of teaching for Christians, yet not one reference is made to tongues' speaking in any of them. Even Paul wrote fourteen books of the New Testament, yet only in one of them does he mention tongues. This book, 1 Corinthians, was one of Paul's earliest writings and was written by way of correction and proof. In most aspects of the Christian life in the Spirit, tongues' speaking is almost altogether ignored in the New Testament. There are only five passages in the Bible dealing with tongues. First, in Mark 16:17, the gift of the Holy Spirit is mentioned and promised. Secondly, in Acts 2:10-17, the gift of the Holy Spirit is granted and given to the early church at Pentecost. Lastly, we see mention of the Holy Spirit in Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians 12:13-14 where Paul addresses the gift of the Holy Spirit being misused and misdirected in the church.

The Value of Signs and Gifts

Let us look for a moment at the presence of healings and miracles in the Scriptures and their connection to speaking in tongues. Signs and miracles were always connected with Israel, as we can see from the early chapters of Acts. Pentecost was primarily a sign to the Jews that Christ had risen from the dead and ascended to God's right hand. Many of the Jews demanded for Christ to give them more and more signs in order to prove his claims. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:22, "the Jews require a sign." Yet gifts had not yet been given to the early church followers since Jesus had not yet ascended. John reports in his gospel in 7:39, "...for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." So the startling event of Pentecost, and the

undisputed fact in this occurrence was that untrained men suddenly communicated the message of God in languages they had not previously known or studied, but which the heavens recognized and understood as their own! God gave His outburst of divine power to convince the Jewish nations of the authenticity of His gospel message of the resurrected Christ. This was to be the sign the Jews would need to see, hear of, and believe! The incomprehensible gibberish that we hear sometimes today would not have proved anything and would have been valueless and meaningless as a sign to the nations. So it is important to remember that these men spoke in actual languages rather than non-sensical utterances. (See Acts 2) If we look at the actual words used for “tongues” in our English translations of the original text, there are actually two words used for tongues. In Acts 2:4 and Acts 2:11, this word represents the tongue or language in which one person expresses himself. But in Acts 2:6 and Acts 2:8 another word is used that means actual dialect or language of people groups. So, at Pentecost these different groups heard the message of God in their own language or dialect, and understood it perfectly. In Acts 10, we see that the Gentiles were visited in the same way, speaking with tongues or languages. Then again in Acts 19, twelve men at Ephesus spoke in languages or “tongues” as well. The idea of unknown or ecstatic utterance seems foreign to these instances in Scripture. There are some further important conclusions regarding this observation. First, on none of these occasions is there a hint that the gift was sought or asked for by those who received it. Secondly, this gift of the Holy Spirit was given to all concerned and present without discrimination. The

Spirit was given not because of maturity or spirituality, but to all followers who were present.

The Gift of Hearing?

There are some who believe that tongues' speaking was a gift of hearing rather than of speaking. It is suggested, in light of the Acts 2:6 and Acts 2:8 statement "every man heard them speak in his own language," that the speakers gave the message in their own Galilean language and the crowd heard it each in his own language. If this is so, why does Acts 2:4 state, "they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance"? This theory would be a contradiction of Mark 16:17 where Jesus sends out his disciples to perform signs and miracles, saying, "they shall speak with other languages." If this thought is carried over to the Corinthian passage mentioned previously, it also ignores the Spirit's demand for an interpreter. So we can conclude that his gift of hearing is not probable or feasible given the texts.

Head Coverings

1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 states that lawlessness would characterize the last days. In many areas in the spiritual realm this spirit exists. There is the desire to water down or circumvent divine principles.

In this passage there are eight outstanding facts: three heads, three glories, two coverings.

The three heads are the headship of God, Christ, and man.

This headship is divine order. An appreciation of this truth is important. Catastrophe has fallen upon the human race because this great truth has been disregarded.

The Three Glories

v. 7—Man is the glory of God.

v. 7—Woman is the glory of man.

v. 15—Women's long hair is her personal glory.

In the Scripture "covering" denotes subjection. When Rebecca saw Isaac, she covered herself, she acknowledged Isaac as her head. Genesis 24:65. The seraphims in Isaiah 6 had six wings. With four wings they covered their faces and feet, with two they flew. It took twice as much energy to cover themselves as it did to serve.

v. 7—The reason a man wears no covering on his head is because he is the glory of God, and God is subject to no one.

The woman representing man's glory is covered. She covers her personal glory. In doing this she is acknowledging the headship of God, Christ, and man. She is also proclaiming that when the saints are assembled that she is man's glory and is not to be seen.

v. 10—"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels."

Two things here: "Power" is the symbol of authority. "Because of the angels"—see Ephesians 3:10. The angels are interested in what goes on in the assembly. No one knows the divine order and the truth of headship more than the angels. They stand in amazement as they see the silent ministry of the covered head, and the obedience of a devoted heart.

The Two Coverings

The best commentators see two coverings: the hair and a covering over the hair.

Some say that the covering is in the context of women praying or prophesying. From verse 5 they take the liberty of allowing sisters to take part publicly. This cannot be the meaning according to 1 Corinthians 14:24 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Sisters must keep silent. But this would take us into spheres where sisters do take part publicly: women's meetings, a women's class, teaching Sunday School, etc.

Two important truths: (1) Nature has given a woman hair for a covering, v. 14. (2) God has ordained that she cover her head when assembled in the Lord's name publicly.

Please note in this connection in verse 14 that it is a shame for a man to have long hair. V. 16—"If any person

presumes to raise objections on this point, I say to you that we have no such custom, of women attending public services bare-headed, in any of the assemblies of God's people."

Speaking in Tongues

We must now move into chapter 13 where the Holy Spirit takes up the subject of tongues in the context of love and permanency.

The conclusions that we will arrive at are fatal to the whole emphasis on tongues, then and now.

Let me correct an error here. This chapter is not a disconnected essay on love in the abstract as most people imagine. This chapter shows the relation of love to the use of all the sign gifts.

Love is the “most excellent way” of 12:31 and it is given as a yardstick by which we can check all we do for God and with His gifts.

Verses 1 and 2 show that even the highest gifts used with fanatical devotion are worse than useless if not used under the energy and guidance of love. This is the love that never seeks its own interest but wishes and works for the best for others. This cuts at the roots of an ostentatious use of tongues which is claimed to make me feel wonderful, but which communicates nothing to others and certainly does not build up.

Speaking in Tongues in Private

I cannot find any reference in the Scriptures to allow anyone to practice speaking in tongues in private. If the gifts of God are to be used for the upbuilding of others, and tongues were a sign to unbelievers, what is the point of speaking in tongues in private?

The tongue in our mouth is for communication, through the language we speak we communicate.

What communicating is a person doing, shut up in a room by himself and not knowing what he is saying?

Tongues were given for a sign to unbelievers, to communicate the Gospel and the truth of God, to upbuild the Church of God.

To me, speaking in tongues in private is the ultimate in self-centered and unproductive futility. This is exactly what the Corinthians were guilty of.

The love in 1 Corinthians 13 is never occupied with itself. It expresses itself by giving to others. The listed qualities of this love show us that this love does not seek its own (v. 5), never behaves itself in an unbecoming way, is never puffed up by its own attainments, and would never stoop to the vulgarity of exalting itself or showing off.

Temporary Gifts

Verses 8-13 show us that the miraculous sign or gift on which they put so much emphasis were not even permanent in the plan of God.

When this purpose was served, they would pass away.

Verse 8 says, "Prophecies shall be done away." "Tongues shall cease." "Knowledge shall vanish away."

This will happen when "that which is perfect is come." V. 10.

We believe this to be the Scriptures. Before the completion of the Scriptures, prophets were necessary to give oral messages from God. With the completion of the Scriptures there was no need for the prophet.

With the coming of the Scriptures there was no use for tongues, the Scriptures were translated into those languages.

v. 11—When I was a child, I spoke as a child, etc. Paul is saying here, “When I was a spiritual baby I spoke in tongues, but when I developed into a mature man I left that infantile level of communication behind me for the permanent state of manhood.”

Rules for the Use of Tongues

God has laid down certain rules for the use of tongues. These rules were evidently broken at Corinth.

1. Tongues must always be used for edifying or upbuilding the church—14:3-5, 26.
2. Women are to be silent in the church meetings—14:34.
3. There must always be an interpreter for the benefit of those present not understanding the tongue, or such tongues were forbidden—14:28.
4. Even with an interpreter they were to speak one by one in turn, never more than three and preferably only two on any given occasion. Ruling out any confusion of which God is not the author—14:27.
5. The tongue used must always communicate a message. There was never to be any incoherent gibberish—14:23.
6. The tongues spoken were to be a sign to unbelievers—14:22.

This concludes what the Scripture has to say about Tongues.

The Baptism of the Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

The baptism of the Spirit is one of the areas around which there is a great deal of controversy and error.

Let us look at some of the errors first and then the Scriptural explanation.

The baptism of the Spirit is improperly linked with some of the ministries of the Spirit. Some Pentecostal groups link the baptism of the Spirit with certain of the temporary gifts, in particular tongues and healing.

The temporary gifts: apostleship, prophecy, miracles, healing, tongues, interpreting tongues, discerning of spirits.

The permanent gifts: pastor, teacher, evangelist, service, administration, exhortation, giving, showing mercy, faith.

Some groups teach a particularly objectionable theory which says that that Baptism of the Spirit is subsequent to the salvation and produces special sanctification.

These groups also teach that the baptism of the Spirit can only be had after great striving and agonizing, then the baptism is authenticated by speaking in tongues.

This theory cannot be substantiated from the Scriptures. On the contrary Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," etc.

The Corinthian church was a carnal, quarrelling, divided and defiled group, yet they had the baptism of the Spirit.

The Scriptural teaching on this point is that the baptism of the Spirit takes place for every believer at conversion. What this means is that individual believers are brought into the body of Christ at conversion.

Then simultaneously with conversion they are baptized with the Spirit and fused together with all believers into one body. The human body is a picture of this.

Paul may have had this in mind when he wrote Ephesians 4:5.

The baptism of the Spirit is universal for believers, and is not reserved for a few. The Gospels predicted that Christ would baptize with the Spirit. Acts 1:5.

At this point stress the difference between baptism and filling.

Nowhere in Scripture are we exhorted to seek the baptism of Spirit. We are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.

This baptism is into Christ Himself. See v. 12. The reality of this was anticipated by Christ when He said, "In that day you shall know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you." John 14:20.

The "you in Me" relationship was accomplished through the baptism of the Spirit. Before conversion we were in Adam. After conversion we are in Christ.

This baptism is identification with Christ. The believer is identified with Christ in His righteousness, His death, His resurrection, His glorification.

Baptism of the Spirit is not only identification but it is also a union of life. Because we are baptized with the spirit into Christ, He encompasses, surrounds, encloses,

and indwells us. Through the baptism the believer has become an organic part of Christ, as the branch is part of the Vine.

Summation: (1) The baptism of the Spirit is not linked to speaking in tongues or any miraculous gift. (2) The baptism does not produce sanctification, neither has it to be sought after. (3) This baptism takes place at conversion. (4) This baptism is into Christ.

Study on the Use of Tongues

There are three major uses of tongues:

1. Tongues are for a sign.
2. Tongues were given for communication.
3. Tongues were given for edification.

Tongues are for a Sign

This sign is for unbelievers, not for believers. To reach foreigners. Contrast this with what the tongues-speaking advocates practice today. The value then of tongues-speaking is that it is a sign for the unbelieving world. Tongues did not have a message for the believer.

Joel in his prophecy said, "I will pour out my Spirit...and I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth beneath."

See Acts 2:17-21. Explain Joel 2:28-29.

This prophecy was given to Israel, not to the Church, and is yet unfulfilled.

The happenings at Pentecost were given principally as a sign to unbelieving Israel, to confirm the message of the apostles regarding Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:22—The Jews require a sign, etc. The Jews had been taught by their OT Scriptures to look for certain signs which would reveal the Messiah and His messengers. The Lord challenged His listeners (Jews) to admit that He was performing the works of the Messiah. Luke 4:17-19.

The phenomenon of Pentecost was a challenge to the unbelieving nation to believe the message of the Gospel.

Tongues were Given for Communication

At Pentecost the awestruck crowd said, “We hear them speak in our own language the wonderful works of God.” Acts 2:8.

There were those present who spoke 15 different languages or dialects and they each heard and understood the message.

There was person-to-person communication. The reactions of the crowd were different...some believed, others rejected and mocked.

Despite this no one could deny that the works of God had been authenticated, and the Word of God had been communicated.

This was all the more evident when the preachers were a group of untrained Galileans.

Following the thought of communication through Paul says, “If I come to you speaking in tongues (languages) what shall I profit you? But if I speak by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine, then you shall profit.” 14:6.

Communication and edification, exhortation and comfort of the church is the purpose for which gifts are given.

See verses 7-8.

What's the use of playing the flute if the heavens cannot discern the tune? What communication is there if the notes played on the trumpet are garbled? In plain words Paul is telling the Corinthians that communication is vital and basic in the use of tongues.

Some of the Corinthians had the gift of speaking in languages. Explain. This gift was given by the Spirit as a means of communicating the Gospel to unbelievers.

Unfortunately some believers were using or abusing the gift for purposes of showing off. Therefore Paul wrote instruction to regulate its use.

v. 23—Furthermore, Paul says that when the use of the language gift is unregulated, unbelievers are present, they will conclude “that ye are mad.”

Tongues were Given for Edification of the Church

The result of speaking in tongues at Pentecost was that a multitude of unbelievers were saved. The church was built up numerically. Paul urges the use of this gift in chapter 14 for the edification of the Church.

v. 26—“Let all things be done unto edifying.”

The apostle is very emphatic that “all things be done decently and in order.” He says that if no interpreter is present then tongues speaking must not be engaged in. See verses 27-28.

That the Corinthians were using tongues-speaking for self-gratification is evident. Paul therefore calls them “carnal” or immature believers.

Speaking in Tongues is Private

There is no Scriptural authority for anyone to practice speaking in tongues in private. If the gifts of God were to be used for the building up of the church, what is the point of speaking in tongues in private?

The tongue in our mouth is given us to communicate. Our mother tongue or language is given us to communicate with God and with our fellow men.

What communicating is a person doing, shut up in a room by himself, not knowing what he is saying?

Furthermore, tongues were given for a sign to unbelievers to communicate the Gospel to them, that they might believe and that the church may be built up numerically.

To me, speaking in tongues in private is the ultimate in self-centered, unproductive futility.

Rules for the Use of Tongues

1. Tongues must always be used for the edification and building up of the church.
2. Women are to be silent in church meetings.
3. When languages are spoken in the church, there must always be an interpreter present.
4. Even with an interpreter present they were to speak one by one, or in turn, never more than three. These regulations would rule out the confusion which had been practiced. Such confusion was not of God.
5. The tongue or language used must always communicate a message. There was never to be any incoherent gibberish.

6. Tongues, when spoken, were to be a sign to unbelievers.

The Importance of the Resurrection

If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain, and our faith is imaginary or meaningless. We are still in our sins.

Those who have died in Christ are lost, they have perished. If Christ has not risen from the dead we are to be pitied, and of all people we are the most miserable. In other words the fabric of our faith lies in shambles around us.

But Paul continues on the positive side. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of them that sleep in Jesus."

Christ appeared ten times during the days of manifestation, before His ascension. He also appeared to three men one or more times after His ascension.

(1) To Stephen at his stoning - Acts 7:55-60.

(2) To Paul at his conversion - Acts 9:3-8.

at Corinth - Acts 18:9-10.

in the temple at Jerusalem - Acts 22:17-21.

later at Jerusalem - Acts 23:11.

in another vision - 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

(3) To John on Patmos - Revelations 1:10-19.

He appeared also in other visions in The Revelation.

The Principle of Influence

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

Webster says that “influence” is the power of persons to affect others. It is to have an effect on the nature or behavior of others, either for good or bad.

The word “example” is closely related to this. It means to behave so as to be a pattern or model for others to imitate. Our life is a principle of influence and example. The poet has said, “My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done. Leave countless marks of good or ill. E’er sets the evening sun. this is the hope I always hope. The prayer I always pray. Lord, make my life help other lives. It touches by the way.”

In this chapter the Spirit of God deals in a remarkable way with the great theme of Christian liberty and brotherly care.

The Spirit also says through Paul in the chapter that love is superior to all knowledge. He expounds on this thought in chapter 13.

Note the difference between Christian liberty and unbridled license. Liberty is the limits within which a certain amount of freedom may be exercised.

License is excessive, undisciplined freedom, constituting an abuse of liberty.

Within the framework of the chapter it is the question of how for a believer was at liberty to eat meats which at this killing had been dedicated to idols.

Many of these Corinthian brethren were just saved from all the practices of heathenism, and were afraid that if

they ate meat of this character that they would bring dishonor upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Therefore they would not eat. The believers at Corinth were having a problem. This problem was causing some new believers to stumble.

On the one hand there was complete indiscretion by some knowing brethren. These liberal brethren were indiscriminately eating this meat using their Christian liberty as a license to satisfy their fleshly appetites. They did not consider the feelings of other brethren in this matter.

On the other hand there were some believers who were jealous of the good name of the Lord Jesus who were being stumbled by their undisciplined conduct.

v. 11—Suggests that because of the influence and example of these fleshly brethren that some younger believers for whom Christ had died, had been stumbled and gone back to their heathen practices.

v. 12—This conduct is sin against the brethren concerned, and it is sin against Christ. From verse 9 to the end of the chapter the apostle dwells on the importance of concern for the consciences of others.

We may not have the same food problems as the Corinthians but we do need to be reminded that our life affects the spiritual status of others.

Many a weaker brother, a young believer, has gone back into the world because of the bad example and unchristian conduct of carnal brethren. This is a grievous sin against the brother and Christ.

Young people are particularly vulnerable in this aspect. Places are frequented, activities are engaged in, tongues

are loosened...with devastating results on the spiritual life of some, and the shipwreck of others.

Then the evil is compounded when those who engaged in nefarious activities take their place at the Lord's table. Several conditions are the result of this. There is barrenness, coldness, no real worship, going through the motions. For this there will be judgment. We influence people consciously or unconsciously in every phase of life—at business, at school, at play, in the church, in the world, in the home.

We influence others by our general behavior, manners, speech. Ephesians 5:4.

The spectrum of our life is either an influence for good or evil.

The example we show is either Christ exalting or Christ dishonoring. Our influence is either entirely negative and helps no one, or it brings our fellow believers close to the Lord.

Let us look now at some lives whose example and influence changed the lives of others.

Influence of evil. Ahab was one of the most wicked kings of Israel. "There was none like Ahab." He was the product of his wife's influence. Ahasiah, Ahab's son, walked in the ways of his father and mother. Israel as a nation suffered the judgment of God for several generations by following a bad example. 1 Kings 22:51.

Influence of good. Azariah, the son of Amaziah, reigned for fifty-two years. He did what was right in the sight of God, as his father Amaziah had done.

It was to the example and influence of grandmother Lois and mother Eunice that Paul credits Timothy's unfeigned faith.

Christ as an example—Mark 10:45, John 13, 1 Peter 2:21.

The victorious Christian life. If we lived victoriously in Christ, we would not need the world. What the believer has to do with the world is crucify it.

The abundant life leads to victorious Christian living.

The yielded life, the life of service, separation, a Spirit-filled life, these all lead to a mature, fulfilled life in Christ. A life that is filled with unspeakable joy and full of glory.

The Principle of Ownership

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Webster defines ownership as the state or fact of being the owner; the legal right of possession.

Establish at this point where we are and whom we serve.

We have been bought with a price, therefore we are not our own. We have been purchased by God at tremendous cost. Slave market. Our body does not belong to ourselves, it belongs to God.

Before we were saved God made no claims upon us. He allowed the devil to control our body and to satisfy its fleshly appetites. Now that I belong to Christ, I am called upon to resent my body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

Explain at this time the truth of consecration.

The goal of the worldling is to gratify their fleshly lusts and appetites.

As blood bought believers we should give our body to God in an unbridled, unblemished, and unbiased sacrifice in order to glorify God. In and with my body I should manifest the holiness of Christ. My body in its entirety should be used in absolute devotion to Him.

Explain the truth of baptism here.

v. 11—This verse describes the absoluteness of our purchase by God.

1. We are washed, this is the washing of regeneration.

2. We are sanctified, set apart to God in Christ.

3. We are justified, we stand perfect before God in Christ.

This has been accomplished because of what the Lord Jesus and the Spirit of God has done for us.

Brethren and sisters, we belong to God. He owns us.

We were bought with an inestimable and incalculable price. The awesome price was the priceless blood of the Lord Jesus. Because of the greatness of the cost of our redemption, God demands unquestioning and absolute obedience.

No matter the cost or sacrifice.

Vs. 13-18—These verses show us the closeness of the bond that binds us to Christ.

1. We are members of Christ's body.

2. We are joined to the Lord and we are one spirit.

3. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

4. God has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our bodies.

In the totality of our being we are the Lord's. "We are a new creation." Like Paul we should be the bondslaves of our Master, Jesus Christ.

This unique relationship is eternal, for we have been sealed unto the day of redemption. Ephesians 1:13.

Despite these inalienable truths some have been bewitched by the world and its ways. Like the senseless Galatians the world has cast a spell over them. They are being dazzled by the glitter of the world, to their spiritual detriment and the Savior's sorrow.

v. 19—The thought in this verse is that the body of the believer is the temple of the Spirit. Just as the Lord Jesus was the sanctuary of Deity while on earth, our body is the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit and should be used for the service, worship, and glory of God.

How careful we ought to be not to grieve Him, nor to bring dishonor upon our Lord and Master.

We should be careful what we listen to and what we watch. We should be careful where we go. We should examine our conduct. We should be careful with our music. We should watch our morals.

The world, the flesh, and the devil are making strong advances to steal the hearts of God's dear people.

The final exhortation in verse 20 is "Therefore, glorify God in your body."

The believer is to use his body to bring glory to God.

To assist us in doing this the Holy Spirit occupies the body which has been purchased by God.

When a believer is Spirit-filled he enjoys the "abundant life" which the Lord speaks of in John 10:10. "I have come that you might have life," etc. Most believers live beneath their privilege, they know nothing of the superabundant life.

How do we get this life? By abiding in Christ, His dynamic life will flow through us.

The low fleshly life that many live is disappointing, unsatisfying, and leads to defeat and disaster. Cisterns that hold no water.

The abundant life leads to victory in Christ. Victory over the world, flesh, devil, over self, passion, pride. Sin does

not have dominion. The abundant life is a yielded life, a life of service, a separated life, a Spirit-filled life, it is a mature life in Christ.

Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, etc.

The servant's choice—Exodus 21:1-6.

At the end of seven years of service the slave was free to go.

“Instead, he says, I love my Master, I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go out free.”

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”

The Abundant Life is a Separated Life

Romans 1:1

Separation is both positive and negative.

We are to be “set apart for the Gospel of God.” We are to come out from anything that is contrary to the perfect will of God. 2 Corinthians 6:17.

To be separated means to be sanctified, set apart, for salvation and service.

1. The Word of God has the power to separate the believer from sin.
2. God the Father has the power to separate the believer to the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
3. God the Son has the power to separate the believer to righteousness, “having no spot or wrinkle.”
4. God the Holy Spirit has the power to separate the believer unto salvation and service.

Without being separated, you can have relationship with God, but you cannot have fellowship with Him.

You may be united to Him by Calvary, but separated from Him by sin.

Without separation, you can have influence without power. Movement without achievement. You may try but not trust. Serve but not succeed. War but not win.

Without separation to God from sin, our whole Christian life will be wood, hay, and straw.

The abundant life is made possible by the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And being made a reality in our own life, by being separated to Him.