



THE LIVING WORD



First Corinthians

Raymond C. Kelcy



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FOREWORD

The student is urged to keep before him Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians while using this book. Such books as this cannot displace the Bible; rather they intend to serve as guides and helps in the study of the Bible.

Various commentaries were consulted in the preparation of these lessons. Some of those found to be more helpful were the following: Erdman, Charles R., *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Phil: Westminster Press, 1928); Findlay, G. G., "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960); Lenski, R. C. H., *Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1946); Lipscomb, David, *First Corinthians*, ed. J. W. Shepherd, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1935); McGarvey, J. W. and Pendleton, Philip Y., *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1916); Morris, Leon, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* in the Tyndale Series (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960); Proctor, W. C. G., *Commentary on First Corinthians* in *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's, 1956); Robertson, Archibald, and Plummer, Alfred, *First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* in the *International Critical Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1958); Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931).

Scripture quotations in this book are from the American Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated. For the reader's convenience phrases and references from 1 Corinthians are in bold type.

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Chapter One

Introducing You to the Christians at Corinth

Greetings (1:1-3)

The greeting is the form found in Paul's other letters: first the name of the writer; then the name of the recipients; after that the usual words of greeting. When the letter is read in the church at Corinth it will be seen immediately that it is from Paul, and the fact of his apostleship will also be re-impressed upon the minds of the readers. Paul reminds them that he is an apostle; that he is a "called" apostle; and that his call was through the will of God. He was not self-appointed, nor was his appointment by or through men. His call came directly from God. Apostolic authority is surely claimed. There is no reason for doubting that Paul was the author of the epistle. The internal evidence is strong: the style and language is unquestionably that of Paul. The external evidence is also clear: the epistle is cited early and often by writers outside of the Bible. It is the consensus of New Testament scholars that the letter is from Paul.

Grace and peace became the typical Christian greeting; sometimes "mercy" is added. Paul sees the Father and the Son as the source of grace and peace. Thus Christ is linked with God the Father as co-author of these great blessings. This close association of Jesus with the Father shows that these early writers acknowledged the deity of Christ in no uncertain terms.

The letter is addressed to the church of God which is at Corinth. This group is further defined as them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. The primary idea in "sanctify" is that of being set apart for God; "saints" is from the same root. Thus the verb form is "sanctify" and the noun is "saint." A saint is a person who has been sanctified, set apart to the service of

God. In the New Testament, saints are not regarded as a special group of Christians in distinction from other Christians; they are not thought of as a mere part of the church. They are thought of as being the church. They are not made saints by the church long after their death. All Christians are saints.

The expression, **With all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place**, is interesting. Are we to understand that Paul is including saints everywhere in his greeting? This is possible grammatically. However, it seems better to connect the expression with "saints." The meaning then is that the Corinthians are called to be saints with all others everywhere who call upon the name of the Lord. Paul is desirous of their seeing themselves as a part of a great brotherhood. In another of Paul's letters he makes it very plain how people are called: "Whereunto he called you through our gospel" (2 Thess. 2:14).

There is no greater testimony to the power of the gospel than the fact that a church composed of saints existed in Corinth. That we might appreciate this fact the more and have a better understanding of the epistle, it is necessary that we know something of the city of Corinth, the beginning of the church there, and the circumstances that called forth the letter.

Corinth, the City

The ancient city of Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. A century later the city was rebuilt as a Roman colony and soon regained much of its former greatness. It was a cosmopolitan city, being composed of Greeks, Romans, and Jews, and had a population of a half million. Some estimate the population as high as 700,000. A large number of these were slaves. Having three good harbors, the city drew the traffic of both the eastern and western seas. From such trade it prospered in a material way. Besides being a trade center, Corinth was famous for its arts: many celebrated artists made their homes there, and the Corinthians prided themselves on the embellishment of their city and the adornment of their temples. Corinthian brass and Corinthian architecture became famous. The city was likewise famous for its athletic events. However, with all its prosperity, the city had many poor as is indicated by the large number of slaves. The church founded by Paul was composed largely of people from among the lower classes. In general, though, Corinth may be described as a large, famous, and prosperous city. It was the capital of the Roman

province of Achaia and was called by some "The capital and grace of Greece."

The fact that Corinth was a commercial and political capital not only attracted great wealth and many people, but also gross immorality. The ancient city had been noted for licentiousness and the new city soon acquired a similar reputation. Dishonesty, drunkenness, and all other sorts of vices were excessive. Money was freely spent for sinful pleasures. Mobs flocked to the Isthmian games which were held every two years, and the results were very degrading. Immorality was connected even with the religion. The worship had to do with Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty (the Roman Venus). In old Corinth there had been a temple of Venus in which a thousand prostitutes were kept. Aphrodite worship was found also in the new city but there is no record of prostitutes in connection with the new temple. The very word "Corinthian" came to be practically synonymous with a profligate, and the verb "to Corinthianize" meant to be immoral. Many scholars have pointed out that Paul was in Corinth when he described the depths of pagan vice in the first chapter of Romans.

The Church At Corinth

Into this materially prosperous, intellectually alert, and morally corrupt city, Paul came with the gospel while on his second missionary tour. There is no more certain date of Pauline chronology than Paul's stay in Corinth at this time, and this date is important relative to the entire question of such chronology. When Paul reached Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla had "lately come from Italy. . . because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome" (Acts 18:2). Sources outside of the Bible reveal that the edict of Claudius was in A.D. 50. Luke says that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia when Paul was in Corinth (Acts 18:12). An inscription found at Delphi enables us to date Gallio's entrance into office at about A.D. 51. Paul left Corinth after Gallio's arrival but not immediately after. It can therefore be said with certainty that Paul's stay of eighteen months in Corinth was in the early fifties. Some place the time of his departure at A.D. 52, others at 53.

The beginning of the church in Corinth is related in Acts 18:1-18. Making his home with Aquila and Priscilla, Paul reasoned with Jews and Greeks in the synagogue every sabbath. It was here that

Silas and Timothy, who had tarried in Berea when Paul left there, now rejoin Paul. Their coming and the news Timothy brought of the steadfastness of the Thessalonians must have put new heart into Paul, who had recently suffered persecution in Thessalonica and Berea, and whose ministry in Athens was anything but encouraging. Paul testified concerning Jesus but met such opposition from the Jews that he declared: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." After that he withdrew to the house of Titus Justus and continued his ministry. Many Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized; among the number were those of the house of Crispus who was the ruler of the synagogue. As additional encouragement, the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision assuring him of his protection and informing him that he had many people in Corinth. Accordingly, Paul stayed there for eighteen months before sailing for Syria in company with Aquila and Priscilla.

It is interesting to note that Paul wrote his first epistles, the letters to the Thessalonians, during his stay in Corinth. Some of his inner anxieties which he felt while in Corinth may be seen in such passages as 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8. We realize how many details of Paul's life are missing when we note that the Book of Acts compresses a period of eighteen months into seventeen verses.

Occasion of Paul's Epistle

After leaving Corinth Paul came to Ephesus and, leaving Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, went on to Caesarea and Antioch (Acts 18:18-22). After some time in Antioch Paul began his third journey and returned to Ephesus where he remained for a period of between two and three years. Communication between Paul and the Corinthians was not difficult since the journey from Corinth to Ephesus was only about eight days by sea. News about the Corinthian church may have reached Paul on numerous occasions. A report from the household of Chloe is distinctly mentioned as having brought news of certain irregularities in the church. Paul sent Timothy to help the church in Corinth with its difficulties (4:17; 16:10), and at some time prior to the writing of 1 Corinthians had sent a letter of warning against keeping company with the immoral (5:9). Evidently the letter was brief and was not preserved since it was superseded by the longer epistle which is the subject of this study. It is known that Paul talked to Apollos

in Ephesus (16:12) and that a letter from the Corinthians asking for advice on various points reached Paul, likely having been brought by the trio mentioned in 16:17.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians after sending Timothy to Corinth, evidently expecting the epistle to get there ahead of Timothy whom he sent by way of the land route. That Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote the epistle is stated in 16:8. The letter may safely be dated in the mid-fifties, A.D. 55-57. The immediate occasion was the letter from the Corinthian church and the news from the house of Chloe. Paul associates Sosthenes in his greeting; just who this man was is not known. Some think he was the one mentioned in Acts 18:17, and that he was subsequently converted; however, this cannot be decided conclusively.

How the Epistle Is Organized

The epistle may be outlined as follows:

Introduction (1:1-9).

- I. Division — the problem of factions (1:10—4:21).
- II. Moral laxity in the church (5:1—6:20).
- III. Marriage (7:1-40).
- IV. Meat offered to idols (8:1—11:1).
- V. Disorders in public worship (11:2—14:40).
- VI. The Resurrection (15:1-58).

Conclusion (16:1-24).

Chapter Two

The Foolishness of God

(Chapters 1 and 2)

The Party Spirit (1:4-17)

Paul praises and encourages when possible; so before he begins discussing the disorders at Corinth, he expresses gratitude to God for the church there (1:4-9). Though many errors existed, the church was ahead of the pagan world which surrounded it, and there was much for which Paul could be thankful. He thanks God for the grace which had been bestowed upon these people and for the fact that the Corinthians lack no gift. Moreover, Paul assures them that God who has thus far blessed them in such a gracious way will continue to supply their needs and will confirm or strengthen them. The continuance of such favors may be confidently expected for God is faithful.

In 1:10-11, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to unity, mentioning that the house of Chloe has reported existing factions. The identity of Chloe cannot be ascertained for there is no mention of this person elsewhere. Verse 12 spells out more clearly what Paul means by the contentions: I am of Paul, I of Cephas, etc. Many suggestions have been made, but there seems to be no way of knowing just what was the point of emphasis of each group. There was no difference in the message proclaimed by Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but it may be that some point advanced by each of these had been taken and exaggerated out of proportion. Or it may be that the party choice was made on the basis of the various methods and styles of preaching employed by the preachers. Whatever may have been the points of difference, it is clear that Paul severely con-

demns the party spirit which was manifesting itself in these factions at Corinth.

Paul effectively deals with the divisions with a series of questions (vs. 13). Each question must be answered with an emphatic negative. It was unthinkable that Christ was divided, or that Paul had been crucified for them, or that they had been baptized into the name of Paul. No true Christian, then, should say, "I am of Paul." And what Paul said of himself could, of course, be said of Apollos or Cephas.

In view of the party spirit Paul can be grateful that he had not baptized more of the Corinthians than he had (vs. 14). He gives as his reason, **Lest any man should say that ye were baptized in my name** (vs. 15). Paul goes ahead to say that Christ did not commission him to baptize but to preach (vs. 17). The baptizing could be done by any assistant and that is what had happened — others had done the baptizing. However, Paul mentions a few exceptions: he had baptized Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue (cf. Acts 18:8), and Gaius of whose identity we cannot be certain. Paul was a guest in the house of Gaius when he wrote the epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:23). Some have wondered if this is the same Gaius addressed by John in his third epistle, but the identity of the two has not been established. Paul adds that he baptized also the household of Stephanas which he later says was the **firstfruits of Achaia** (16:15). His mentioning them in a separate category from Crispus and Gaius is likely due to the fact that they had been baptized elsewhere and had moved to Corinth after Paul left there. The fact that Paul does not know whether any others in Corinth were baptized by him shows that inspiration did not supply knowledge of every incidental detail. The point of importance is that Paul was glad he had not baptized more of the Corinthians in view of the party spirit. Paul is not disparaging baptism as some think. He is merely emphasizing the principal work of the apostles and showing that it is of no real significance as to which man administers baptism. After saying that Christ had sent him to preach the gospel, Paul declares he was not sent to preach **with wisdom of words**. He was not to decorate the gospel with human cleverness; he was not to speak in such a way that men would value the words above the facts or, as he puts it, **Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect**. Paul knew the tendency of the Greeks to place a high value on human wisdom and eloquence.

The Foolishness of the Preaching (1:18-31)

In vs. 18 Paul speaks of the word of the cross, referring to the preaching which deals with the cross. Those who are perishing regard this message as foolishness or nonsense, but those who are being saved discern the saving power of God. In vs. 19 Paul quotes from Isaiah to show that mere human wisdom will come to nought.

The futility of worldly wisdom is further emphasized in vs. 20 by a series of rhetorical questions. **Wise, scribe, and disputer of this world** are terms used to describe various types of worldly wisdom and human philosophy. Where are such men and what have they accomplished by such wisdom? God has made foolish all such types of worldly wisdom by making the gospel the power unto salvation. Paul's declaration in vs. 21 that the world has never come to a knowledge of God by its speculative reasoning is reminiscent of Paul's sermon in Athens (cf. Acts 17:22-31). However, what the world could not achieve God has accomplished through the foolishness of the preaching. The Greek word *kerugmatoς*, translated "preaching," denotes the message and not the act of proclaiming. The message that God saves men through a crucified Savior is foolishness to an unbelieving world. God makes no attempt to accommodate the message to the wisdom of the world; on the contrary, he runs directly counter to it by issuing a message of salvation which appears as foolishness to the world.

As Paul brings out in vs. 22, the Jews were miracle-hunters. They had asked Jesus to show his power; their interest was in the practical and they demanded evidence of that type. In contrast, as Paul shows in the same verse, the Greeks loved speculative philosophy and sought after wisdom. In contrast to what both Jews and Greeks sought is the strong adversative, **But we preach Christ crucified** (vs. 23). The sermons in the Book of Acts reveal the truthfulness of this statement. But the message of Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews, an occasion of offense, the very opposite of their idea of a triumphant Messiah. To the Greek the message was the sheerest folly since it did not appear to have an intellectual explanation and did not harmonize with the Greek idea of wisdom. But, as vs. 24 brings out, there were certain ones from among both Jews and Greeks who had heard and heeded the call of God and were able to see in the message of Christ crucified both the power and the wisdom of God. Be-

lieving Jews saw in Christ a power which far transcended their dreams of an earthly king, and believing Greeks found in him a wisdom far surpassing that of their philosophers. The reason these "called" see the power and the wisdom of God in the gospel is stated in vs. 25: **Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.** The gospel, thought by men to be foolish and weak, outranks in wisdom and power the highest thoughts and the strongest acts of men.

In vs. 26 Paul calls upon his readers to note the fact that the church in Corinth was composed mostly of plain people. The gospel had not appealed to many wise after the flesh, nor to many of the mightily powerful, nor to many who were of aristocratic or noble birth. True, some from the higher ranks had become Christians, but in the main the church was made up of the humble people. This forcefully illustrates the truth Paul is emphasizing, namely, that God's method is a contradiction to the wisdom of men. If human wisdom had been devising a message, it doubtless would have concentrated on something that would appeal to outstanding men. God's method was the opposite: he chose foolish things, weak things, base things, and despised things (vss. 27, 28). The things which God chose are not those things which elevate men in the world. It will be noted relative to **foolish things** that Paul adds **of the world**, indicating that these things are foolish according to the world's standard of judgment. Moreover, God has called and transformed men who were weak, base, and despised. "Base," the opposite of "noble," indicates the low-born. To all of these Paul adds **and the things that are not**, meaning things that on the surface have no value and men who are "nobodies" to the world. All of these God has chosen that every occasion of boasting might be taken from men and **that no flesh should glory**. The very things God uses to fulfill his purpose are of such nature as to preclude human boasting.

Paul has called the attention of the Corinthians to the character of their membership, and has discussed the divine principle behind such constituency. Now, in vs. 30, he returns to the Corinthians, declaring that God is the source of what they are and that Christ is the sphere in which they live. All of the power and wisdom of the world are ruled out. Christ was made unto us wisdom from God, and the fact that he made possible **righteousness and sanctification and redemption** for man shows the extent of God's wisdom revealed through Christ. Therefore, let him who **glories glory in the Lord.**

The Unpretentious Gospel (2:1-5)

Knowing that a misunderstanding of the gospel message was a basic cause of the wranglings at Corinth, Paul continues his thought by reminding the Corinthians of his preaching (2:1-5). His method of preaching conformed to what he said about the nature of the message. He had set forth the simple gospel in an unpretentious manner; he preached not as an orator, in **excellency of speech**, nor as a philosopher, of **wisdom**. In contrast, he had determined to know only "Christ and him crucified." All that Paul preached he related to this central theme. He felt his own insufficiency, preaching in weakness, fear, and trembling. He avoided **persuasive words of wisdom**. Philosophic terms, show, and display are absent. He relied upon divine aid, **demonstration of the Spirit and of power**, rather than upon human devices.

Wisdom for the Mature (2:6-16)

Paul proceeds to show in vs. 6 that he does not mean to say there is no wisdom at all in the gospel; in fact, it embodies the highest wisdom, **a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought**. The wisdom of this world is self-destructive, and those who rely upon it are building upon a sandy foundation. However, one must have a measure of maturity to see the wisdom in the gospel. The Greek *teleios*, translated "perfect" in the KJV and "fullgrown" in the ASV, indicates maturity as opposed to infancy. It does not indicate those without flaw but those who have reached a certain aim or goal.

The gospel preached by Paul was no afterthought with God, but something he had foreordained (vs. 7). The word "mystery" in this verse does not refer to something that is mysterious or a puzzle, but something man cannot know of himself, something that can be known only by revelation. This is something the rulers of the world had not known; if they had known, they would not have killed Christ. Jesus himself said, "They know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). A combination of statements from Isaiah is found in verse 9; the quotation is expository, not exact. The statement is to the effect that men had never heard, nor seen, nor had the human mind ever imagined the glories of the gospel age. The quotation is sometimes applied to the glories of heaven, and while the things it says are true of heaven, the writer did not have that specifically in mind. The idea is that men would never have dreamed of the way God has revealed whereby he saves man.

However, as Paul says in vs. 10, God has revealed these great truths through the Spirit. What former generations would never have imagined is now a matter of divine revelation. The Holy Spirit, the agent of this revelation, is fully competent to make such a revelation for he penetrates and comprehends the deep things of God. Paul assures his readers, vs. 11, that as a man's spirit knows what goes on within that man, so the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God.

The "we" in vss. 12 and 13 refers to the apostles. They had not received the spirit of the world, the spirit that caused the rulers to kill Christ and the world to reject the wisdom of God that had been revealed through the gospel; the Spirit they received was from God. This was the Spirit that knew the mind of God and it was given to them in order that they might know the things of God. The description Paul gives of the "words" they employed in teaching is interesting: negatively, they were not words supplied by the wisdom of men; positively, they were words given by the Holy Spirit. Surely, no more emphatic claim for inspiration could be found. The "things" the apostles received were of the Spirit and the "words" they employed were of the Spirit. Hence, in the revelation they gave, they combined "spiritual things with spiritual words."

The subject of "foolishness" is brought up again: according to vs. 14, the things of the Spirit are not received by the "natural" man, for they are "foolishness" to him and he cannot understand them. In view of Paul's discussion in chapter 1, it is evident that the "natural" man is the worldly-wise man whose horizon is bounded by the interests of this life. In such a man there is a complete absence of spiritual discernment. It is the spiritually-minded man who has the ability to discern things spiritual for, according to vs. 15, such a man has ability to discern or judge all things. He is able to recognize the spiritual and to place material things in their proper place. He is able to discern the true status of the "natural" man, and he himself is judged of no one, that is, the natural man knows nothing about the spiritual man and knows nothing about the wealth he possesses. In proof of this Paul asks, **For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him?** Then he adds, "But we have the mind of Christ." Surely, no one knows the Lord's mind; no one is able to instruct the Lord. Then it follows that no "natural" man is able to evaluate properly or to understand the "spiritual" man, the man who has the mind of Christ.

Chapter Three

Misunderstandings about Preachers

(Chapters 3 and 4)

Co-workers With God (3:1-9)

Having discussed the nature of the gospel message, Paul in chapters 3 and 4 turns to the nature of the work of those who proclaim that message. Paul believes that the basic causes of the factions at Corinth are a misconception of the message and the nature of the work of those who deliver it.

Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of their state of infancy while he was with them, a state that prevented his speaking "as unto spiritual." He had fed them with milk, suiting his instruction to the capacity of the hearers. Of course, all must be infants at first and no one is to be criticized for needing milk at the beginning of his spiritual development. But Paul says, **Not even yet are ye able**, and here he finds fault. They should have by this time made sufficient development that Paul could have unfolded something of the deeper riches of the gospel. The writer to the Hebrews made the same criticism of his readers (Heb. 5:12).

In vs. 3 Paul asks two questions, the answers to which are evident, in pressing his charge of carnality. In view of the jealousy and strife among them, could they deny the charge? Paul lists these two vices together as works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). The divisions among the Corinthians were a standing witness to their carnality. Paul becomes more specific in vs. 4 as to what he means by **walking after the manner of men**: to say, **I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos**, is to be guilty of walking in such manner.

Some questions are in order regarding the men whom the Corinthians were making party heads: "What then is Apollos? and what is Paul?" Paul's answer is: "Ministers" (vs. 5). The Greek word is the same that is rendered "deacon" in some passages as 1 Timothy 3:8. The word designates a servant and shows the

folly of elevating preachers too highly. Further, they are ministers through whom the Corinthians came to believe. The word "through" shows that the preachers were instruments; and each as the Lord gave to him shows that they were able to do what they had done only as the Lord worked through them. Paul seeks to divert the attention of the Corinthians away from himself and Apollos and to center it upon God.

Paul uses an agricultural metaphor to illustrate the work of preachers (vss. 6-9). Paul planted — through his efforts the church at Corinth came into existence; Apollos watered — he had instructed the converts; but behind their work was God who giveth the increase, and to whom should be all honor and praise. Man can plant the seed, but only God can put the germ of life within it; man can nurture the tender plant, but only God can make it grow. Therefore, neither the planter nor the waterer is anything; it is God who is important. The planter and the waterer are one, there is unity between them, and they work toward the same goal. How foolish to separate them and pit one against the other when they are one instrument in God's hand! God is the one who judges the work of each and rewards each according to his own labor. When men exalt one man above another, they usurp the authority of God. Of himself and Apollos Paul continues: we are God's fellow-workers. Not only do the two men work together, but they are workers with God — laborers with God in the work of the kingdom. To the Corinthians Paul adds: "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building." A field or tilled land is the meaning of husbandry; this is the metaphor Paul has just developed. Reference to the church as God's building is an introduction to the metaphor he is about to discuss.

God's Building (3:10-17)

In beginning the subject of God's building, Paul states that he himself had laid the foundation. For this he claims no credit, for he did it "according to the grace of God which was given" to him. God gave to Paul what he needed for such work and this enabled him to proceed as a wise master builder. Paul had laid the foundation by preaching Christ who is the only true foundation. When others came to Corinth they did not have to go back and lay the foundation all over again. Their work was to build on that foundation and each must take heed how he buildeth thereon. Two classes of material may be built into the structure:

one class is described as "gold, silver, costly stones"; the other as "wood, hay, stubble." Every teacher must do his best and must teach the truth of God as it is in Christ. However, even though this is done, there will be incorporated into the building some materials that are weak. If we return for a moment to the metaphor of husbandry, we can see that the most faithful sower will sow some seed upon rocky soil or upon soil in which thorns will appear. However, this is not the fault of the sower. Neither is it the fault of the builder if some of the materials turn out to be wood, hay, or stubble. The day will come when it will be made manifest just what type of material each person in the church is. The day of trial by fire could have reference to a day of persecution or to some other sort of hardship, or it could have reference to the day of judgment. Peter speaks of "the fiery trial" (1 Pet. 4:12) and of trial "with fire" (1 Pet. 1:7) when writing to Christians about persecutions. At any rate Paul contemplates a time when the durability of a teacher's converts, his works, will be tested. If his converts endure, he shall receive a reward. The joy of knowing that these have endured will at least be a part of that reward (cf. Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:19). But knowing that his converts have not endured will mean a great loss to the teacher; he is grieved when those who began the race fall by the wayside. However, such will not cause the faithful teacher of the word to be lost. He will be saved, yet so as through fire, that is, in spite of the trial caused by the loss of his converts and any other trials he may have undergone.

As to the type of building the church is, Paul teaches with a question of mild rebuke that it is the temple of God. The community of believers, the church, is God's dwelling-place, and God dwells through the Spirit in the church (cf. Eph. 2:22). Paul intends this fact to be a strong incentive against destroying the church by discordant factions such as were at Corinth. The certainty of the punishment of such is expressed in the words, **Him shall God destroy.**

The Lowly Place of Preachers (3:18—4:13)

Paul now returns to speak of the futility of worldly wisdom, obviously regarding this subject as a matter of importance to the Corinthians. He calls upon any man who prides himself upon his worldly wisdom to become a fool in the eyes of the world that he may be wise in the sight of God. To God, the wisdom of the

world is foolishness. A quotation from Job 5:13 teaches that God turns the wisdom of the worldly wise to their own confusion; a quotation from Psalm 94:11 says that God knows the vanity of such wisdom. No one, then, should glory in men.

All things are yours, says Paul, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. Why should one limit and impoverish himself by claiming only one of these? God gave all of these men for the benefit of the entire church. But Paul goes further with this list of possessions which the Corinthians could claim: the world, life, death, things present and things to come. The true Christian sees the world as the handiwork of God and uses it as God intended; he regards life as a gift from God and an opportunity to glorify his Creator; he sees death as a conquered enemy and as gain; he regards the present as a stewardship entrusted to man for his good and for God's glory; he regards the future as the sphere in which his fondest hopes will be realized. He looks upon all these things as provisions for his happiness by a beneficent God. Yet the Christian does not look upon all this in a selfish way, for he realizes that he belongs to Christ and that Christ is God's. When the Corinthians see all of this, their bickering will vanish. Wherefore, let no one glory in men.

Paul tells how he and the other inspired preachers are to be regarded: as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. A steward is one entrusted with the oversight of another's property. His main business is to handle aright that which is entrusted to him. Faithfulness or trustworthiness is what a master looks for in a steward (vs. 2). And the important thing with a steward is that he be approved by his master. So, Paul says that a critical examination of him by others is a small item to him; Paul does not even judge himself (vs. 3). Human judgment is fallible and a man's approval of himself does not mean that the Lord approves him (vs. 4). Paul is not saying that having a good reputation or a good conscience is not important; in other passages he says that he sought both. But he is saying that one could have both and still not be justified before God, that the important thing is to have the Lord's approval. Men are to refrain from premature judgments. When the Lord comes, he will make manifest what is now hidden from human view; then the praise which is due from God will come to each one (vs. 5). The admonitions of Paul in this section were being violated by the Corinthians when they elevated either him or Apollos and criticized the other who perhaps was being elevated by another group.

Paul has been using his own name and that of Apollos, but he does this for the sake of the Corinthians and expects them to make a wider application and not to go beyond the things which are written nor to be puffed up one against another (vs. 6). In further rebuking their pride, he asks three pointed questions (vs. 7) the answers to which are evident. Who had made them to differ? What did they have that they had not received? Why were they glorying over what they had received as if it were due to some merit in themselves? These questions cut the ground away from under human boasting. When Paul states in vs. 8 that the Corinthians were filled, rich, and reigning without the apostles, he is using irony and sarcasm. This describes the state in which the Corinthians imagined themselves. They were filled with self-satisfaction and intellectual pride. There is a significance in the word "already"; it implies that their imagined state is very premature. The phrase, *without us*, is also very significant. Paul is chiding them as if to say, "You have achieved this eminent position *without us* lowly apostles!" What crushing irony! Then Paul expresses a wish that they did reign, that their imagined state were true, that they really had what they thought they had. If this had been the case, they would have included the apostles in their thinking; the apostles would thus have shared with them in their reign.

Paul comes to the actual plight of the apostles in vs. 9, borrowing the language of the arena and the gladiatorial contests. He thinks of all the world and even angels as spectators while the lowly apostles were brought into the arena to die — the grand finale of the show. In vs. 10 Paul resumes his tone of irony in contrasting further the imagined state of the Corinthians with the actual state of the apostles. He emphasizes the vain imaginations of his readers. He depicts in vss. 11-13 the sufferings of the apostles which they had been undergoing and which they were undergoing *even unto this present hour*. The word "offscouring" refers to what is removed from a filthy object by cleaning. In striking contrast to the vile treatment received by the apostles is the attitude exemplified by them: they blessed, endured, entreated, carrying out the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5:44).

A Personal Appeal (4:14-21)

Having discussed two basic causes of the factions, a misunderstanding of the nature of the gospel message and a misunderstanding

ing of the place of preachers, Paul makes a concluding appeal to the Corinthians to end their factions. He assures them that his motive in writing as he has is not to shame them but to admonish them as his beloved children. He wants them to know that love has motivated his writing. He has great affection for them; it was he who had begotten them through the gospel. He pleads for them to follow his example and says he has sent Timothy to them to remind them of his ways and that they might better be imitators of him. Of course, Paul expected Christians to imitate him only to the extent that he followed Christ (cf. 11:1). However, some among the Corinthians were puffed up and said that Paul would not dare return and face them. Paul affirms that he will come speedily if the Lord will, and when he comes he will test not the oratory but the power of the puffed-up boasters. He would know whether they possessed the power of God; this, not mere words, is the true test of those who profess connection with the kingdom of God. Now, in what spirit shall Paul make his visit? The Corinthians may have their choice: Paul will come either in a spirit of severity or in a spirit of gentleness, depending upon the spirit of the Corinthians.

Chapter Four

Scandal in a Young, Weak Church

(Chapters 5 and 6)

Scandal in the Church (5:1-8)

To Corinthianize" had come to mean to live an immoral life, and the general moral tone of the pagans was indeed low; however, Paul declares that such a case as was reported to exist in the Corinthian church did not even occur among the heathens. One of the members of the church had taken his father's wife. All scholars seem to agree that reference is made to the man's step-mother, and since Paul does not deal with her at all, it is safe to assume that she was not a member of the church. The church should have been grief-stricken over this sin, but they had continued in their puffed-up, boastful attitude, and had complacently accepted the matter without taking any action. Paul rebukes them sharply for being so unconcerned when discipline should have been administered. In contrast with the negligence of the Corinthians who were living where the sin was, Paul says that he, though absent from Corinth, had already reached a decision as to the procedure to be followed. As to this procedure Paul now instructs the church: when they were gathered together, they were "to deliver such a one unto Satan." This evidently has reference to withdrawal of fellowship by the congregation. When Paul said, *Ye being gathered together, and my spirit*, he wanted them to be assured of the fact that he would be spiritually present with them as they carried through with this unpleasant task. Paul hopes that the man, having been delivered over to Satan, having lost the fellowship of Christian friends, will be brought to his senses. The punishment was not vindictive; it was to bring about repentance. Note the depth of feeling brought out in Paul's instructions: the Corinthians should have been grieving; the congregation was to gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus; Paul himself would be there spiritually at the time

of the public discipline; in their action the Corinthians would have the power of our Lord Jesus to help them; the discipline was to be exercised in order that the man might be saved.

Discipline is necessary, not only for the salvation of the offender, but for the good of the church. We here see another reason why the boastful, glorying spirit of the Corinthians was not good. It was inappropriate, so inopportune. Paul asks, **Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?** Leaven is here used as a symbol of evil, and the idea is that sin has a way of spreading in an unseen, pervasive, way. Once again the church is urged to purge itself of evil in the words, **Purge out the old leaven.** Having been cleansed by the blood of Christ, Christians are unleavened, that is, they have been made free from corruption. The purging out of the sinful influence was in order that they might be a new lump. Paul's mind goes back to the Passover feast. The Israelites were to cast all leaven from their houses before the feast. With them leaven stood for an evil and corrupting influence. Now, in his application, Paul says that our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed for us, and he exhorts that the feast be kept, not with old leaven, but with the **unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** By his reference to keeping the feast (vs. 8) Paul is describing the Christian life in which we appropriate Christ by faith as a continuing festival. This should be a strong incentive for all Christians to cast all evil leaven from their lives.

Explanation of A Previous Letter (5:9-13)

Paul had written a letter to Corinth previous to this one. The providence of God did not see fit to preserve for the canon everything written by Paul, but this in no way argues against the completeness of the canon. There was no point in preserving the letter since it was superseded by this longer and more detailed epistle. Evidently, instructions in the earlier letter had been misunderstood. Paul had told the Corinthians not to keep company with fornicators. Now he says by way of explanation that he did not have reference to fornicators of the world. **Not at all** means "not in all circumstances"; Paul realizes that a certain amount of association with fornicators of the world is necessary. However, this should not be a close and intimate association. To fornicators Paul adds, **or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters.** This shows that the command concerning fornicators rests upon a general principle which is applicable to other sinners such as those

listed here. It would be necessary to leave this earth if one were to avoid all contacts with people of this kind.

Having discussed the significance of his command in a negative fashion, Paul now turns to a positive explanation: If any man that is named a brother be a fornicator. He also adds, "or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner." Believers are to have no social contact with such as these who are named brethren; they are not even to eat with them, that is, they are not to sit down at the table and eat an ordinary meal with them. Such action would imply to them approval of their conduct and would also give the impression to the world that Christians condone such conduct. This explains why a measure of association with unbelieving sinners of this type is permitted, but prohibited with those who are named brethren. However, the ultimate end of this apparent harshness, that of restoring the erring, must be kept in mind (cf. vs. 5).

In vss. 12, 13 Paul disclaims his right to judge or discipline outsiders; such is to be left in the hands of God. The question, Do not ye judge those within?, refers to disciplinary action, the type of judgment of which Paul has been speaking. This type of judgment is necessary if sinners within our midst are to be saved and if the leaven is to be removed which would otherwise contaminate the whole lump. In concluding the chapter, Paul returns to the case with which he began in vs. 1 and says, Put away the wicked man from among yourselves. This is another call to the church to discipline the man who had taken his father's wife.

Taking Brethren to Court (6:1-11)

Certain members at Corinth were taking their disagreements before pagan tribunals for settlement. Paul's use of the word "dare" shows he considers this a reckless act which indicates a lack of the shame they should have felt in such action. Paul indicates further that the proper way to settle such difficulties would be to go before the saints. To emphasize the thought that the church should be able to judge trivial matters that pertain to this life, Paul calls attention to the fact that the saints shall judge the world and even angels. In what way Christians will be associated with Christ in judgment is not clear; perhaps the thought is that their lives will stand as a confirmation of the verdict rendered by Christ. Jesus once said that the men of Nineveh would stand up in the judgment and condemn the people

of the generation to which Jesus preached, "For they repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matt. 12:41). Paul likely has a thought of this kind in mind. In vs. 4 he emphasizes the folly of the Corinthians with a question: **Do ye set them to judge who are of no account in the church?** In other words, he is saying that the Corinthians are selecting unrighteous men for their arbiters, men who are not held in high esteem by the church, men who count for nothing among the saints. The Corinthians should have been ashamed to go to pagan courts; Paul says he is writing to move them to shame (vs. 5). The Corinthians, taking pride in their wisdom, must have felt a sting in the question: **Cannot there be found one wise man who shall be able to decide between his brethren?** In vs. 6 Paul names two improper acts: first, **Brother goeth to law with brother;** second and that before unbelievers. However, as vs. 7 indicates, for Christians to have lawsuits at all is a loss to them. Disagreements should be settled long before they reach the stage of a lawsuit. It would be better to suffer wrong or be defrauded than to go to law with brethren before the unbelievers. However, according to vs. 8, the Corinthians were not willing to suffer wrong; on the contrary, they were actively wronging and defrauding. There was a spirit of retaliation rather than that of willingness to suffer.

After accusing the Corinthians of doing wrong and defrauding their brethren (vs. 8), Paul reminds them that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God** (vs. 9). It is at this very point that men so often deceive themselves, thinking they can sin without punishment; hence, Paul warns, **Be not deceived.** He then proceeds to delineate various sins which may be regarded as sins of the unrighteous, though the list is not exhaustive: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. These sins suggest something of the low moral standards in Corinth. And some of the church members had been true Corinthians. Paul says, **such were some of you** (vs. 11). However, they had been washed, justified, and sanctified. The washing away of sins by the blood of Christ occurs when one is baptized (cf. Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). Justification refers to the verdict of acquittal pronounced by God at the time of baptism. Sanctification refers to the process by which God sets people apart unto himself as holy ones. But this was through no merit of their own; it was in the name of Christ, upon the merits of his atoning work, and it was in the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit was the divine person

through whom God revealed the gospel by which they were saved. This shows the great power of the gospel. Since it could save such as these, then none need ever despair. The connection of this part of the discussion with the theme with which Paul began the chapter seems to be this: Paul wants to recall these former sins so that they might see that they are reverting to their former way of life by doing wrong to one another, defrauding one another, and going to heathen law courts. He does not mean that they have returned all the way to their former conduct but he does indicate that they are on their way.

Christian Liberty and Pagan License (6:12-20)

In saying, **All things are lawful for me**, Paul is stating the principle of Christian liberty, a statement which he later repeats in 10:23. Of course, by **all things** Paul does not mean to include things which are forbidden by God, but, as the context shows, he has reference to matters of indifference such as foods. However, this liberty can be abused as Paul shows when he adds **But not all things are expedient**, that is, not all things are advisable or helpful. Not all things promote or aid the accomplishing of our spiritual goals. Many things which we have a right to do would, if done, bring harm to others or injure our influence. It is also possible, according to Paul, to be brought under the power of things which, within themselves, are lawful. If the person ceases to be the master and the thing begins to dominate him, then he becomes a slave and no longer has freedom. A gluttonous man, for example, is a slave to appetite.

Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats was evidently another well-known and oft-quoted statement. Apparently the Corinthians were quoting and misusing it. True, God made foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods. But, says Paul, time and death will change both and bring them to nought. **The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.** Likely some at Corinth were saying that one bodily function is like another, that sexual hunger is much like hunger for food, and that, therefore, fornication is not wrong. Paul refutes this by declaring that there is a higher mission for the body than gratification of sensual desires. Man's body was not created to be used for fornication. It was created to be used for the glory and honor of God. There can be no parallel between food and digestive organs and the body and fornication, for fornication involves not

only the entire bodily powers, but the mental constitution as well – in fact, the entire personality. And not only is the body for the Lord, but the Lord is for the body. He is concerned with its welfare; it is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And death does not end the Lord's interest in man's body; the same God who raised up Christ will also raise us up through his power. The body of the Christian is destined for immortality. Further, according to Paul, **Your bodies are members of Christ.** This is true because Christians are members of the body of Christ which is the church (cf. 12:20, 27). **God forbid!** is Paul's strong and indignant rejection of the idea of taking members of Christ and joining them to a harlot. For a man to join himself to a harlot is to become one body with her; each time he joins himself to a harlot he becomes one with that harlot. True, this is an illegitimate unity, but a unity nonetheless. Such a person, of his own volition, descends to the plane of the harlot in her filthiness. Many men who patronize harlots look upon such with an attitude of disgust; in reality they become one with the harlot. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, which refers to the legitimate union in marriage, to prove the oneness of flesh in an illegitimate sexual union. The sexual act surely does not make the person one with the harlot in the sense of joining them together as husband and wife; more than the sexual act is required to make a marriage. In vs. 17 Paul points out the opposite result when one joins himself to the Lord: he and the Lord become one in spirit.

After all Paul has said, how appropriate his warning in vs. 18: **Flee fornication.** One is not to hesitate, consider, and parley where this sin is concerned; he is to flee the very thought. The great example of Joseph must be remembered in this connection (Gen. 39:12). Paul goes ahead to show that fornication is a sin against the body in a sense that is true of no other sin. **Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.** There are other sins which are committed by means of the body and which injure the body, but they do not desecrate the body like fornication does. The relation of fornication to one's body is unique; the sin strikes at the very roots of a man's being and is against his very personality. No other sin desecrates the person *within* as does the sin of fornication. In 3:16 Paul has referred to the church as the temple of the Spirit; here he reminds each individual Christian that his body is a temple of the Spirit. This should serve as a strong motivation against fornication for no Christian should want to desecrate the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. The Christian, having

been purchased with the blood of Christ, is not his own — does not belong to himself. He is not, therefore, to take that which belongs to God and desecrate it by sinful union. On the contrary, he is to use his body as an instrument whereby he glorifies God.

Chapter Five

Marriage—Commands and Advice

(Chapter 7)

The Sanctity of Marriage (7:1-7)

In chapter 7 Paul begins to deal with matters about which the Corinthians had written. He says that a state of celibacy is good (vs. 1). As noted in previous sections, some were evidently advocating that the body is unimportant and that man may do as he wishes with it. Evidently there were some who went to another extreme, advocating that the body is evil and that all the natural instincts and desires should be denied. They would thus advocate celibacy as the excellent state. Paul agrees that such a state is morally excellent. He is not contradicting Genesis 2:18 which affirms that it is not good for the man to be alone. As later portions of chapter 7 will show, Paul is allowing celibacy as a good state only for certain individuals and under certain circumstances. He is not recommending it as a universal rule. In fact, he goes on to say that "because of fornications" each is to have a companion in marriage (vs. 2). Paul knows something of human nature and he also knows something of the environment in which the Corinthians were living. He is looking at the matter in a highly practical way and sees fornication as a result of abstaining from marriage. Some accuse Paul of placing marriage on too low a level, but other passages show that Paul's view of marriage rises far above the physical (cf. Eph. 5:23-25).

In verses 3 and 4 Paul points out certain obligations in marriage. Neither partner has the power over his own body to refuse the marriage privileges to the other; each is to consider the needs of the other. Some have suggested that some rigorous advocates of asceticism were advocating total sexual abstinence even by those who were already married, but this cannot be

known with certainty. However, it is clear that Paul regards sexual relations as a normal part of marriage and does not place such a discussion on a low and sordid level. He commands that neither partner deprive nor defraud the other except in cases where one may wish to devote a season to prayer, but even here the abstinence must be by mutual agreement. Paul is not hereby suggesting that there is anything about sexual relations in marriage that would be incompatible with prayer, but he recognizes that in a time of self-discipline and in long and earnest prayer it may be helpful to set aside all bodily interests. Paul himself had a gift from God that enabled him to have a great degree of self-mastery, and his personal preference under the present conditions is that all men might be as he; however, he recognizes that all do not have that gift.

The Unmarried and the Widow (vss. 8, 9)

After discussing the general principle, Paul comes to specific cases. First, he considers those who have no marriage tie: the unmarried and the widows. Some might tell these that there was something wrong about their state; Paul assures them that it is a state of moral goodness. He does not tell them to remain unmarried; the decision is theirs to make. However, **Let them marry** (vs. 9), is a conditional command — they are to marry if they have not the gift of continence. Even during that season of unusual distress to contract marriage was preferable to burning with sexual desire.

Marriages Between Christians (vss. 10, 11)

Paul has a command from the Lord for Christians who are married. Neither husband nor wife is to depart from the other. Marriage is to be permanent and neither is to bring about its termination. The expression, **should she depart**, shows that Paul expected some separations to occur; however, in such cases there can be no marriage to another. If, for some reason, a state of separation is brought about, there are two alternatives: either remain unmarried or be reconciled to the lawful companion. Paul does not mention the exception allowed by Christ in Matt. 19:9. However, when discussing a rule it is not necessary always to discuss exceptions, and Paul is here discussing the rule.

Christians Married to Unbelievers (vss. 12-16)

The next group addressed by Paul are those married to unbelievers. Concerning these, Paul cannot appeal to a direct statement from the Lord, that is, to something Jesus had said during his personal ministry. So, he prefaces this section with the words, **But to the rest say I, not the Lord.** This does not mean that Paul is merely giving his personal opinion; he is speaking with apostolic authority, guided by the Holy Spirit. What he says is just as authoritative as what Jesus had personally spoken. He deals, in vss. 12-14, with cases in which the unbelieving partner is content to dwell with the Christian; in such cases the believer is not to depart. It seems that Paul contemplates cases in which the influence of the Christian is predominant — predominant to the extent that the unbeliever is content to dwell under such influence. This passage is somewhat difficult but what Paul says is in order to convince Christians who were married to unbelievers that they ought to continue with them. Some Christians, remembering such rigid rules as were laid down in Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9, might feel that a certain contamination attached to such marriages. However, Paul assures them that the union is holy — it is a sanctified union. What Paul says about the unbeliever being "sanctified" does not mean that the person is a Christian, for he is still an unbeliever and is said to be sanctified. Paul may have in mind the fact that the unbeliever is sanctified, set apart, in connection with the believer and so the marriage is a sanctified one and the believer is not contaminated by having an unbelieving companion. The marriage is sanctified in the sight of God. If this were not the case the children would be unclean, that is, illegitimate. But now they are holy, that is, the offspring of a union that is hallowed. Or it may be that Paul has in mind the fact that the unbeliever is under the influence of the Christian to the extent that he is set apart, sanctified, separated, from the heathen vices. If this be the case, then "sanctified" is to be taken in a relative sense to mean that he is set apart from heathendom to such degree that the children of the union are not contaminated by the heathen influences. Thus the children are "holy" and not "unclean." Regardless of the view adopted, it is quite clear that Paul is intending to encourage such marriages to continue by assuring the Christian that such a union is perfectly legitimate. However, this passage should not be used as an endorsement of a Christian marrying an unbeliever, for it is evident that these

mixed marriages were the result of one of the parties being converted after marriage.

Next, in vss. 15 and 16, Paul deals with cases in which the unbelieving partner is not content to dwell with the Christian. In fact, Paul contemplates a case in which the unbeliever refuses to dwell with the believer and takes the initiative in separating himself. Paul has clearly told the believer not to take such initiative. But in this case, where the unbeliever deserts, what then? The believer is to accept the unbeliever's decision. But what is the meaning of not under bondage in such cases? Several views are held on this: (1) Some hold that Paul cannot mean the deserted believer is free to re-marry for this meaning would contradict what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9. They point out that desertion is not fornication, and cannot be grounds for remarriage. Some maintain that not under bondage means the believer is not under bondage to try to hold the marriage together; others maintain that Paul means that the deserted believer is not under bondage to give up his faith in Christ in order to hold the marriage together. (2) Others say that Paul is allowing freedom from the marriage to the believer and is allowing remarriage on the presupposition that the one deserting will commit fornication. They say this, remembering Matthew 19:9, and feeling that the passage under study must not be construed in a way that will give it a meaning different from what Jesus said in that passage. (3) Others hold that Paul is saying that the deserted believer is free from the marriage to the one who has deserted and that the believer is thus free to remarry. They do not feel that this in any way contradicts what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9 for Paul has said that he, Paul, not Jesus, is speaking to those in this sort of marriage. This means that Jesus, in Matthew 19:9, did not speak on such mixed marriages. This third view is held by the present writer.

But God hath called us in peace is a further argument made by Paul in appealing to the believer to accept the heathen partner's decision. To try to maintain a union with an unbeliever who objects to such would be to bring about the very opposite of peace. In such cases the only way to preserve the peace in which the Christian was called in salvation is to accept the decision of the heathen partner. But some might argue that even though the heathen is determined to end the marriage, the Christian should resist that determination on the ground that by so doing he might

ultimately win the unbeliever to Christ. Paul argues against this; he says the possibility is too uncertain and that the certain strain is not justified by such uncertain results. He asks, **How knowest thou... whether thou shalt save...?** The possibility of saving such an adverse unbeliever who is determined to separate himself from the Christian is very remote. It is true that Peter envisioned the possibility of a believing wife winning her unbelieving husband (1 Pet. 3:1), but he is speaking of cases in which the unbelieving husband had no interest in dissolving the marriage.

The Christian and Status-Seeking (vss. 17-24)

In vss. 17-24, Paul sets forth the principle that each Christian is to lead the life that God assigns to him. He has already, in the previous section, shown that the believer in marriage is not to seek a dissolution of the marriage union with the unbeliever; if such disruption occurs, it must be upon the initiative of the unbeliever. For the Christian the rule is, **As God hath called each, so let him walk.** Certain Gentiles might think it advantageous to appear to belong to the Jewish race. But Jews need not try to appear as Gentiles, nor Gentiles as Jews. Racial status has no place in the church. If a slave became a Christian, he should not let the fact of his slavery trouble him. If, however, the opportunity to become free arises, the slave should make use of this opportunity. A slave should not be unduly worried about his slavery, but he could obtain freedom if it became available. However, the outward state is not so important: though a man be a slave, he can consider himself a free child of God, having been liberated from the bondage of sin. In a similar vein, the free man who becomes a Christian becomes at the same time a slave of Christ. Human status is nothing; the important thing is **keeping the commandments of God.** Whether circumcised or uncircumcised, slaves or freedmen, **Ye were bought with a price.** This price was the blood of Christ which was shed for all. Because of this, all Christians belong to Christ. Because of this they are not to be **bondservants of men** (vs. 23). This does not have reference to the type of literal slavery Paul has been discussing, but rather is a prohibition against slavishly following human judgment in these and other matters. It is a warning against reverting to the old bondage wherein they had been ruled by the worldly ideas of men. The epitome of Paul's instructions regarding these matters is: **Let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God** (vs. 24). And Paul

is desirous that the Corinthians not think these instructions to be specially devised for them; he says, **And so ordain I in all the churches** (vs. 17). Becoming a Christian did not mean that a man was to seek a change in all of life's relationships.

Concerning the Unmarried (vss. 25-35)

In vs. 25, Paul begins to deal with another question asked by the Corinthians. It pertains to advice for the unmarried. On this Paul has no word personally spoken by Jesus while he was on earth, but he can give judgment as an inspired apostle — **As one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy.** First, Paul says that he holds that it is good for one to remain as he is **by reason of the distress that is upon us.** If one is married, he should not seek to be loosed; if one is unmarried, he should not seek a wife. Just exactly what **the distress that is upon us** was is not known. The word "distress" is a strong word indicating intense pressure and is the same word used by Jesus in Luke 21:23. It likely refers to persecution of some sort which was upon them, and, of course, the days of the intense pagan persecutions were drawing near. Emphasis must be given to the fact that the expression, **the distress that is upon us**, is very significant in properly assessing Paul's teachings in much of this chapter. For instance, what he here says about remaining unmarried is not universal law for all times; it is advice in view of the time of distress. That it was to be considered as advice is seen in Paul's saying that it would be no sin if one did go ahead and marry (vs. 28). His advice was for the purpose of saving them from tribulation in the flesh. In days of distress the tribulation would be extremely great in connection with the bearing and rearing of children and other family duties and obligations.

The uncertainty of this life and the transitory nature of matters pertaining to earthly life are emphasized by Paul in vss. 29-31. Marriage, weeping, rejoicing, buying, using of the things of this world (not a reference to worldly, sinful things) — all of these or a part of them may be the experiences of Christians. But Christians should regard them and use them for what they in truth are: they are a part of **the fashion of this world which passeth away.** Surely, such activities are not to take precedence or to interfere in any way with a Christian's relation to God. The time is rapidly approaching when those who had possessions will be as though they never had them, and when those who had certain experiences

will be as though they never had them. The Christian must realize that this earth is not his home, that he is merely a pilgrim here and his citizenship is in heaven. Things of earth are to be used in such a way that they are subservient to the spiritual.

Paul's concern for Christians is that they be free from such cares as would interfere with the highest type of service for the Lord (vss. 32-35). The unmarried man has cares about serving the Lord; he has no family problems to consider. The married man has cares about serving the Lord and, in addition, he has cares about the welfare of his wife. Paul shows that there is the same difference between married and unmarried women. **Things of the world** in vss. 33, 34 are not to be understood as worldly or sinful things but as things pertaining to this life in the maintaining of a home. Paul does not intimate in either case that those who are married are not also careful for the things of the Lord; he is insisting that marriage involves a set of cares that the unmarried do not have. This would especially be true in a time of distress such as he has mentioned in vs. 26. In such a time, those who had the ability to live the Christian life without marriage would be able to serve the Lord with less distraction than those who were married. In vs. 35, Paul reassures the Corinthians that what he is saying is for their own advantage and that he does not intend to **cast a snare** upon them; he is not throwing a noose of legal requirements about them and saying that it is sinful to marry even in view of the distress that was upon them. He is merely recommending a course of action that would be to their advantage. Paul's advice must ever be considered in context; he is not recommending celibacy as the best course for all Christians at all times.

Responsibility of Fathers (vss. 36-38)

In vss. 36-38 Paul discusses the responsibilities of fathers to their daughters. He presents the case of a father who feels that he is acting improperly in withholding his daughter from marriage. **If need so requireth**, that is, if the daughter wishes to marry and marriage seems best in her case; and if she be past the flower of her age, that is, having reached maturity; if these conditions exist, the father does not sin in giving his daughter in marriage. But if there is no necessity and the father is able to act as he thinks best, then he does well in keeping his daughter within his household. Paul states that in the first instance the father does

"well"; in the latter he does "better." Two considerations must be kept in mind: first, in the latter instance there is not the need or the desire for marriage on the part of the daughter; second, "the distress" is still before Paul's mind when he says the second father does better. However, Paul still leaves the question of marriage a matter to be decided in each individual case. The word "daughter" is not in the original—only "his virgin." However, the context makes it evident that Paul is considering the responsibility of fathers to daughters. Some commentaries and some of the more recent translations give to the passage an interpretation that is indefensible when they consider the man in the passage as the one who is betrothed to the virgin. In vs. 38 a word is used twice which means "to give in marriage." How could one betrothed give in marriage the one to whom he is betrothed? Other insuperable objections could be urged against this interpretation.

Widows (vss. 39, 40)

In the last two verses of chapter 7 Paul deals with the subject of widows. He states, first, God's rule which is that a wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth. He does not mention the exception stated by Jesus but, as stated above, it is not always necessary to discuss exceptions when stating a rule. Paul goes on to say that in the event of the death of the husband the woman is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. If a Christian widow chooses to marry, she must marry in the Lord, that is, in harmony with the Lord's teachings regarding marriage. On the phrase in the Lord see also Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:18. Paul, however, says that in his judgment she will be happier if she does not remarry. Likely he still has in mind the circumstances connected with the distress which he has previously mentioned. However, in giving such judgment, Paul is aware that he has the Spirit of God.

Chapter Six

Brethren — Weak and Strong

(Chapters 8 and 9)

Another question asked by the Corinthians in their letter concerned the eating of meats which had been sacrificed to idols. This was a very great problem to the Corinthians, and it is difficult today to realize just how much of a problem it was. In the individual sacrifices the officiating priest received a part of the animal for himself; and part of the animal was taken by the man who brought the sacrifice, and he would often give a feast in the temple precinct for his friends. At times the feast would be in his own home. There were also public sacrifices on the part of the state. In these instances a part of the animal was burned as sacrifice; the priests received a part of it, and at times various officials in the government received portions; a feast usually followed the ceremony. Some of the meats were sold by the priests to the markets and were there sold for food to the public. The prevalence of idolatry in Corinth made this a real problem for the Christians.

Meat Offered to Idols (8:1-13)

Concerning things sacrificed to idols Paul says that we all have knowledge. It is likely that the Corinthians had said something in their letter to the effect that they were well informed regarding this matter. However, as Paul says, something else is to be considered besides knowledge, namely, love. The one who proceeds upon the basis of knowledge only is puffed up, inflated with pride. But he who proceeds upon the basis of love will consider the edification of others. One mark of true knowledge is humility, as Paul indicates in vs. 2. Human knowledge, even at its best, is very imperfect; and he who prides himself upon his knowledge shows by such conceit that he really does not have the knowledge he should have. In contrast, the one who loves God is known, that is, he is recognized and acknowledged by God as belonging to him (vs. 3; cf. 2 Tim. 2:19).

In vs. 4 Paul resumes the thought introduced in vs. 1, and designates that which "we know": that there is only one God and an idol is nothing. We know there is no reality to the gods which the heathen worship; there is no reality which corresponds to these idols. Jehovah is the only true God and this we know. Yes, says Paul, there are many reputed gods and lords, but to us there is one God and one Lord (vss. 5, 6). All things are of God; he is creator. "We unto him" indicates that Christians live for or unto God. That Christ was the agent in creation is expressed by **through whom are all things**, and **we through him** indicates that Christians have their relationship to the Father through Jesus, pointing to Christ's work as mediator.

In vs. 7 Paul reminds the Corinthians that not all have this knowledge of which he has spoken, not even all the church members. Some Gentiles among them had, before conversion, engaged in idol worship and attended heathen feasts. These cannot now engage in such without violating their consciences; they may realize that there is only one true God, but they have been so accustomed to eating these meats in connection with heathen worship that somehow they cannot eat without feeling a connection with the idol, and so they "eat as of a thing sacrificed to an idol." There is still some sort of a superstitious idea connected with the idols and idol meats which a person has who for long years has been connected with them. True, as Paul brings out in vs. 8, one's relation to God does not depend upon eating food or not eating food. If it were a mere question of eating meat, it would be entirely a matter of indifference. However, there is a principle involved that goes deeper: consideration for the weak and the effect our conduct may have upon him. If eating meat sacrificed to idols should become a hindrance to the weak, a stumbling block, then the Christian, though he has knowledge, will refrain. Paul explains this more fully in vs. 10: if a Christian participates in a feast in the temple of an idol, a Christian who has knowledge and whose conscience is not thereby defiled, he may by such conduct cause a weak brother to be emboldened to participate in such feasts. This weak brother's conscience will become defiled if he does eat and he may even be led back into idolatry. In this way a brother perishes, is lost, by another brother pursuing the pathway of "knowledge" and exercising his "rights." The weak brother is just as important in God's sight as the other; Christ died for him as surely as for the other (vs. 11). In reality, then, the sin goes deeper than against one's brother — it is a sin against

Christ (vs. 12). In the concluding verse of the chapter Paul states his own determination which he hopes will be adopted by all Christians: that he would be willing to desist from eating meat forever if such eating would cause a brother to stumble.

Though the question of eating meats that have been sacrificed to idols may seem remote to the present age, the teachings of Paul in chapter 8 have a significance that is extremely important for Christian living. A principle is set forth that is good for all time: the principle of considerate love. Knowledge is good, but alone is not sufficient. It must be combined with love, a love that is willing to forego certain personal rights for the salvation of others.

A Living Illustration (9:1-27)

In chapter 9 Paul appeals to his own conduct as an illustration of the principle for which he has been pleading in the previous chapter. He had foregone certain rights, not only certain rights of a Christian, but also those of an apostle who had seen the Lord. He points to the Corinthians as his "work" or his product (vs. 1). Some were questioning Paul's apostleship, but Paul asserts that surely he must be an apostle to the Corinthians; they were the seal or the certificate, living proof, of his apostleship.

Perhaps Paul has heard of some who questioned certain procedures or it may be that he only contemplated such possibilities (vs. 3). Certain rights which he had foregone were no argument against his apostleship but were merely a surrendering of personal rights for the good of others. Considering the question of "rights," Paul had the right to eat and drink at the expense of the Corinthians; he had the right to lead about a Christian wife at the expense of the churches; he had a right to abstain from manual labor (vss. 4-6). Others of the apostles and brothers of Jesus (cf. Matt. 13:55) had availed themselves of these rights. Here were definitely some things to which Paul had a right, but of which he had not availed himself. He had not, therefore, asked the Corinthians in the preceding chapter to follow principles which he was not willing to follow.

To establish the rights of which he has just spoken, Paul appeals to illustrations: he mentions a soldier, a keeper of a vineyard, and a tender of a flock to show that men in other realms of life receive support from their work (vs. 7). But an objector might say that these are only human illustrations; Paul anticipates this and asks, *saith not the law also the same?* He then quotes from

the law (Deut. 25:4) which forbade the muzzling of an ox while he was at work threshing the grain. This shows, as do many other Old Testament laws, God's concern for animal life. But Paul sees more in it than that: God's concern extends much farther and, in fact, the care for oxen is not God's primary concern. The scripture concerning oxen was written for the sake of man because **he that ploweth ought to plow in hope**. When God gave to man the law concerning the treatment of oxen, he had a basic principle in mind, the principle that workers shall partake of the fruit of their labors. Paul goes on to show that since he had labored in spiritual matters in Corinth he would have been entitled to share in their material things (vs. 11). Others had partaken of this right in Corinth; was not Paul even more entitled to such support than they? However, Paul and his helpers had not accepted such support while in Corinth; rather, they were willing to bear all things, that **we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ** (vs. 12). This means that they were willing to endure whatever hardships were necessary; they felt that taking support from the church at that stage would have been a hindrance to the spread of the gospel. It would have put a club in the hands of opponents who were looking for some accusation to bring against Paul. Had he taken money, some might have been led to think he had mercenary motives.

But Paul has not finished establishing the fact of a right which, for the salvation of others, he had voluntarily laid aside. He points to the priesthood of the Old Testament in which those who were engaged in working with the temple ate of the **things of the temple** (vs. 13). A part of each sacrificial animal was given to the priests (cf. Deut. 18:1). In keeping with the same principle, the Lord has ordained that **they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel** (vs. 14). Yet, after establishing this right, Paul again reminds the Corinthians that he had not used the right; nor are his words to be taken as a subtle attempt to get something from them now. He would rather die than follow a course which would enable someone to make his glorying void (vs. 15). There were those who might preach and find in it a cause for glorying. But Paul feels that he cannot glory in preaching the gospel for it is something he must do and woe unto him if he does not preach! (vs. 16). Paul is not saying that he is not willing to preach the gospel, but the Lord took the initiative in calling him to be an apostle. It was not that Paul had been a follower of Jesus and had voluntarily decided to preach; Jesus appeared to him and

commissioned him to preach. Though Paul did it willingly, it was not something he had decided to do of his own choosing. So, he says that if he were doing it of his own will he would be entitled to reward and he could have gloried in such work; but that was not the case. Rather, Paul began his ministry because it was the Lord's will, and thus he considered it as a stewardship entrusted to him; therefore, it is not something in which he can glory (vs. 17). However, Paul is determined to have some cause for glorying. What shall it be? Just this, that he will preach "without charge" and not take advantage of all his rights (vs. 18). Paul felt he had to preach, but he did not have to preach without charge; herein was his cause for glorying. Here, again, is the heart of the discussion begun at 8:1 — the willingness to forego rights.

In vs. 19 Paul reveals the extent of the abandonment of his rights and his ultimate purpose in so doing. It was not merely that he might have something in which to glory, but it was in order to win more souls for the Lord. Though he was literally free of all men, dependent on no man, yet he had made himself subservient to all — had voluntarily become the servant of all men. Paul became "as a Jew" to Jews and "as under law" to those under law. He accommodated himself to Jewish customs and practices when he could do so without the sacrifice of principle (cf. Acts 16:3). Why did he thus do? It was in order that he might gain them. Paul is careful to say that he himself is not under the law (vs. 20). On the other hand, when Paul was dealing with Gentiles, those without the Mosaic law, he accommodated himself to their customs and manner of life. He explains, **not being without law to God, but under law to Christ**. Though he was not under the Jewish law, Paul recognized the fact at all times that he was a servant of Christ and under God's law. When accommodating himself to Jews or to Gentiles, he always remembered that he was a Christian and never sacrificed principle. When among weak Christians Paul respected their scruples and avoided offending them in order that he might win them to greater maturity. As a summary, Paul says, **I am become all things to all men** (vs. 22). Paul so earnestly desired the salvation of all men that he was willing to adapt himself to every class and race. Great love and humility were necessary for him to do this. Also, great wisdom was necessary in order to avoid going to extremes and transgressing the will of Christ.

Paul has spoken repeatedly of his actions which were done with the salvation of others in mind. In vs. 23 he says that he does all

these things that he himself might partake of the blessings of the gospel. Yet even here he includes others by the expression, "joint partaker." In vs. 24, thinking of a race, Paul urges his readers to run putting forth all effort just as participants in an athletic contest put forth their best. Paul is still thinking of the athletic events when he says that all participants exercise self-control. Yet the crown they sought was a mere wreath that would soon wither; but the crown for which the Christian hopes is the crown of life, an incorruptible crown (vs. 25). How much more should the Christian exercise self-control in all things! This is what Paul determines to do: **I therefore so run** (vs. 26). He still has the figure of a race in mind, and he does not run uncertainly but with a full consciousness of what he is doing and where he is going. And now Paul shifts from the runner to the boxer, and declares that he does not flay the air aimlessly. In his use of these athletic contests Paul depicts the Christian life as one of strenuous determination and effort. The idea of boxing is carried into vs. 27 where Paul declares that he "buffets" his own body. The word he uses literally means "to hit under the eye." He deals his own body a knockout blow and brings it into bondage lest he, after having preached to others, should be rejected. He knows that he must continue his mastery over the flesh. He still has a battle even after years of service in the kingdom. But he is determined to win the victory. Of course, all that Paul here says about self-control is applicable to abstinence from things which are wrong within themselves; but in the immediate context he is still thinking primarily of the Christian's conduct in matters where love and consideration for others are stronger motivation than personal rights.

The Lord's Table, the Jewish Altar, the Pagan Temple

(Chapter 10)

Lessons From Israel's History (vss. 1-13)

In chapters 8 and 9 Paul has considered the possibility of a weak brother's being led to return to idolatrous worship through the practice of the stronger brother. In the closing vss. of chapter 9 he has shown the possibility of a Christian being finally lost, pointing to himself as being in such danger. In chapter 10, he now appeals to an actual case in history of a people losing the favor of God — a people who once had richly enjoyed that favor. There is significance, too, in the fact that this very case involved certain idolatrous practices. The case to which Paul appeals is that of the Israelites who came out of Egypt.

Paul refers to the Israelites of the Exodus as **our fathers**, and says they were **under the cloud and passed through the sea** (vs. 1). The reference is to the Israelites crossing the sea while the waters were parted and the cloud overshadowed them. Since the people were **in the cloud and in the sea**, covered by the cloud and the sea, this incident can appropriately be called a **baptism** (vs. 2). Moreover, it was unto Moses since it brought them into a new relationship unto him, severing them from any control of Pharaoh and placing them under the leadership of Moses. These same people ate the manna in the wilderness; Paul designates the manna as **spiritual food** because it was supernaturally given (vs. 3). In like manner, Paul speaks of the water which God gave as **spiritual drink** since it, too, was supernaturally provided (vs. 4). Instances of God's bringing water from a rock instantly come to mind (cf. Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:8). This is likely the reason Paul speaks of

Christ in this connection as a spiritual rock. He sets forth the great truth that the pre-incarnate Christ accompanied the Israelites in their journeys and that he was in reality the source that supplied the water they drank. Wherever the people went there was a spiritual source behind the sustenance which was provided for them. Note the recurrence of the word "all" in the first four verses. Paul is desirous of emphasizing the fact that these blessings were not confined to only a part of the Israelites and that all of them were recipients of the same blessings.

In marked contrast with the "all" of vss. 1-4 is the expression, most of them in vs. 5. With most of those who came out of Egypt God was not well pleased, and they died in the wilderness. Paul declares there is a lesson in this for Christians when he says, these things were our examples (vs. 6). One lesson from this example is that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Another lesson is a warning against idolatry (vs. 7). The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play has reference to the idolatrous celebration in connection with the worship of the golden calf (cf. Ex. 32:6). Paul also pleads against fornication in view of Israel's example (vs. 8). The particular reference is to the incident related in Numbers 25 in which the number that perished was said to be 24,000. Since Paul gives 23,000 as the number, some have supposed a contradiction. However, it is likely that both references use round numbers and that the exact number would be somewhere between the two. It was not at all unusual for the Hebrews to deal in round numbers. There is no discrepancy between the two accounts. Going further, another warning of Paul is against making trial of the Lord; he cites the example of Israel making trial of the Lord and perishing "by the serpents" (cf. Num. 21). In this incident the people made trial of the Lord by complaining of the food they had and asking why they had been brought out of Egypt. Then there is a plea against murmuring and this is also emphasized in Israel's example (cf. Num. 14:2; 16:11). To murmur or complain is a grave sin against God and is surely a symptom of a lack of faith. In connection with these various warnings, think of the condition in Corinth. Lust, idolatry, and fornication were prevalent there, and Christians were surrounded by temptations of this nature. Trying God and murmuring against his teachings — such teachings as Paul has been conveying in this epistle — were also real dangers to the Corinthian church. Paul's appeal to Israel's example is appropriate in every respect. In vs. 11 he repeats the statement that these historical

events are examples for us and says that they were recorded for our admonition. Paul speaks of Christians as being those upon whom the ends of the ages are come. They lived in an age in which the ends or goals of all preceding ages find their fulfillment and consummation. Paul continues, wherefore, that is, in view of the example from the history of Israel, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (vs. 12). No one should feel self-sufficient or self-confident; every Christian should constantly take heed and be on guard. But Paul does not wish to produce a spirit of despair and hopelessness in the Corinthians by reminding them of Israel's tragedy and by these urgent warnings. He therefore offers some words of encouragement. The Corinthians had not been subjected to any temptation except such as man can bear (vs. 13). The word used by Paul signifies "human" temptation, the thought being that the temptations they had were such as come to human beings and were such as could be borne by human beings. Nothing exceptional had happened to the Corinthians. But when facing temptations, Christians must not rely upon their own strength alone; they must rely upon God, and God can be depended upon for he is faithful. He will not permit the Christian to face a temptation beyond his ability to resist. There are boundaries beyond which God will not allow temptation to go. The Christian who relies upon God will always find a way of escape from temptation. God can be depended upon to provide a way for the Christian to be able to endure the temptation. Whether or not the way God provides is accepted is left up to the individual. There is much encouragement in this passage, for it assures the Christian of the help of a faithful God.

The Lord's Table and the Table of Demons (vss. 14-22)

In view of the example from Israel's experience and the facts Paul has brought out regarding temptation, his admonition is: flee from idolatry. Yes, the Christian may expect God's help, and he must not tamper with a thing so dangerous as idolatry; he must continue to flee from it constantly (vs. 14). Paul appeals to the Corinthians as sensible people to see the wisdom in what he is saying (vs. 15). In vs. 16 Paul speaks of the Lord's Supper; the connection with his warning against idolatry will soon be apparent. He speaks of the cup as the cup of blessing which we bless because of the prayer of thanksgiving in connection with it. "Communion" means a sharing or a participation; in partaking of

the cup there is a participation of the blood, a sharing in the blessings brought by that blood; in the bread there is a participation in the body of Christ. In vs. 17 the thought is emphasized that though the church is composed of many members still it is one, for it partakes of the one bread. The wording of the KJV and the ASV to the effect that Christians "are one bread" is not warranted by the original. Paul rather says that the many are one because they are partakers of one bread (cf. RSV).

In vs. 18 Paul appeals to the practice of fleshly Israel and teaches us that those who ate of the sacrifices thereby became participants with the altar and that for which it stood (cf. Deut. 12:27). To eat was to engage in the act of sharing in the communion with the altar. Paul sees an analogy between the feast of the Lord's Supper and the feasts of the temple services in that in both instances there is fellowship with the divine Being which was back of each. This does not mean, of course, that Paul is approving of the temple services for the Christian dispensation; he merely refers to them in illustrating his point. Paul is also hastening on to show that there is something analogous between the ideas of partnership and fellowship involved in these two feasts and the idolatrous feasts of the heathen. However, the analogy is not true of every factor since the unseen powers connected with these heathen feasts are not divine. So, in vs. 19 he seeks to clarify by a series of questions. Does he mean to say that idols are real beings and that sacrifices offered to them are offered to beings which have an actual existence? Is this what Paul is claiming? No, this is not the case, as Paul shows in vs. 20; for even though the gods which the heathen worship do not exist at all, still there is a realm of evil beings which do exist, and all worship that is not directed to the true God is necessarily devoted to evil powers even though the worshippers do not intend it to be so. Since this is true, one cannot engage in worship at the Lord's table and also at the table of demons. It is impossible thus to divide one's allegiance (vs. 21). To attempt to worship Jehovah while at the same time engaging in idolatrous worship results in provoking the Lord to jealousy, and surely no one would wish to provoke to jealousy the God who is so infinitely higher and stronger than man (vs. 22; cf. Deut. 32:21). Paul has already stated in 8:7 that some of the members of the church were eating as of a thing sacrificed to an idol. He now shows the impossibility of continuing this and remaining in the favor of God.

Strong and Weak Consciences (10:23–11:1)

Paul has settled the question about attending idol feasts: those whose conscience is thereby defiled and who eat as unto an idol must realize that they cannot do this and continue to eat at the Lord's table. Conceivably a strong Christian might be able to eat the literal food without engaging in idolatrous worship, but he should refrain out of deference to the weak. Furthermore, from what Paul has said about the table of demons, it can be seen that eating at these feasts would prove dangerous to the strong Christian himself since it places him in a group of worshippers who are in close contact with the demonic forces. There is a danger that such practice will lead him into alliance with such forces.

In vs. 23 Paul repeats a principle that he stated in 6:12 regarding the eating of meats. By "all things" he means to include all things within the category he is discussing. But there are lawful things which do not benefit, are not expedient; there are things which, though lawful, do not edify others. In matters of liberty the Christian should not seek to promote his own selfish interests, but should seek the best interests of others (vs. 24). And now Paul proceeds to give instructions concerning matters that are entirely different from participation in idolatrous feasts. If a Christian is buying meat in a market, he is not to be so concerned about its previous use; he is to buy and eat without going into the matter. The Christian knows that the Lord supplies the meat regardless of the use some heathen may have made of it. The earth and all upon it belong to the Lord (vss. 25, 26; cf. Ps. 24:1). Or if an unbeliever should invite a Christian to a social meal, the Christian may go; it is not necessary that he make inquiries about the food that is set before him (vs. 27). However, he should desist from eating if some weak Christian whose conscience would be offended reminds him that the meat has been sacrificed to an idol. He should forego the eating for the sake of the conscience of the other (vss. 28, 29). In further elaborating on the statement, **conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other's**, Paul asks, **why is my liberty judged by another conscience?** In other words, the conscience of the strong Christian does not enter here at all; his conscience is not burdened just because of the scruples of another. He still has the liberty even though another has scruples. He is foregoing his liberty merely for the sake of the other, not because of his own con-

science. The thought is continued in vs. 30: if a Christian can do a thing conscientiously, a thing which within itself is right, and even does it with thankfulness, why should he be slandered? What right has any person to revile such a Christian for his conduct? It can be seen here that, even though Paul is insisting that the strong brother should forego the eating out of deference to the conscience of the weak brother, he is at the same time warning the weak brother against censorious judging in such matters.

By way of conclusion regarding the question of eating meats, Paul states a summation principle: **whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God** (vs. 31). He specifically mentions eating and drinking, but adds to these activities anything a Christian may do. In all things, even in the ordinary affairs of life, the Christian should seek to glorify God. One particular way in which the Christian glorifies God is by giving **no occasion of stumbling** to others (vs. 32). All of the actions of the child of God should be of such nature as to help to draw others to Christ. Paul made this a rule of his own life; he became "all things to all men" (cf. 9:22). He disregarded his own personal advantage and sought the good of the many (vs. 33). Since Paul so diligently followed this rule, he can well appeal to the Corinthians to be imitators of him (11:1). However, even in this plea he points to Christ as his own example and shows that he wishes to be imitated only to the extent that he himself is an imitator of Christ. Christ is surely the perfect example of one who gave himself for the good of others.

Chapter Eight

The Meaning of Custom; the Meaning of Worship

(Chapter 11)

The Custom of Veiled Women (11:2-16)

From 11:2 to 14:40 Paul discusses matters pertaining to the congregational meetings; the first matter discussed pertains to women and the wearing of veils. Paul begins this section with a word of praise: the Corinthians remember Paul and continue to appreciate him; they are holding fast the traditions, that is, the precepts he had taught them orally (vs. 2). The fact that they had written him a letter in which they asked several questions further bears out their remembrance of him and their respect for his teachings. How could Paul commend these brethren for holding fast the traditions he had delivered and yet criticize them so severely as he does in certain portions of this epistle? In answer to this question, it should be pointed out that many of the admonitions of this epistle deal to a great extent with new areas. This seems to be true of the problem concerning veils, a subject with which Paul now deals. He begins by appealing to high and lofty principles: he would have his readers know that the head of man is Christ, that the man is head of the woman, and that God is the head of Christ. By reminding man that Christ is his head Paul discourages any sort of tyrannical dictatorship on the part of man over woman, at the same time showing that the relationship of man and woman should be one of love and consideration.

In vs. 4, Paul declares that a man praying or prophesying with covered head dishonors his head; such a practice indicated effeminacy and brought dishonor upon the man himself. This was a custom which reflected important attitudes in Paul's day and, of course, Paul's advice is for the Corinthians to observe the custom. In vs. 5 the teaching is that a woman who prays or

prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head, that is, that she brings shame upon herself for she appears as a man and thus disregards the headship of man in so doing. The dishonor to the woman is the same as if she shaved her head. Prophesying done by women is to be understood in the light of the restriction in 14:34; Paul does not have reference to women prophesying in the public assembly, but to such occasions in which they might employ this gift. Paul presses the point further in vs. 6 where he insists that since it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then it should also be acknowledged by her that it is a shame to omit the veil. Paul's reasoning is that if a woman insists upon going part of the way in defying custom, the defiance of which brought shame upon her head, then she should go ahead and go the rest of the way. It may be that some of the Corinthian women were throwing aside the veil as a declaration of independence; however, none of them would consent to having their heads shaved. Paul insists that to omit the veil is the same, and uses the argument to persuade the women to continue wearing the veil. Furthermore, man should not have his head veiled **forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God** and the act of covering his head would seem to obscure the reflection of the glory of God; but since **the woman is the glory of the man** and the veil symbolizes her subjection to man, then for her to discard the veil would be a denial of her role (vs. 7). Man was the direct creation of God and woman was derived from man (vs. 8). Nor was man created for the woman, but rather the reverse was true (vs. 9). And because this is the case, a woman should have the sign of authority on her head, that is, the veil. **Because of the angels** implies the presence of unseen angels in assemblies where praying and prophesying were done. However, Paul is not emphasizing a slavish subordination of woman; in fact, man and woman are mutually dependent. In creation, woman came from man; since that time all men have been born of woman (vss. 11, 12). Paul next appeals to the Corinthians to use their own judgment as to the correctness of what he teaches (vs. 13). He expects them to see the impropriety of a woman praying to God unveiled. They know what is deemed proper and what is deemed improper. Paul next appeals to nature as teaching against a man's having long hair (vs. 14). By "nature" Paul seems to appeal to an instinctive feeling, a native sense of propriety, as opposed to what is learned by instruction. Another meaning of "nature," according to Thayer, is: "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has

become nature." It is possible that the word in this context has the latter meaning and that the sense of propriety to which Paul appeals had been developed by long practice. Paul goes ahead to say that long hair is a glory to a woman, giving to her womanly distinction and beauty. Any custom, such as a veil, which accentuates the principle suggested by nature, must be proper.

The principle lesson of vss. 3-15 which is relevant for all times is that the fact of distinction between man and woman, a distinction rooted in the fact of creation, must be recognized. Woman must ever recognize the headship of man, and both man and woman must recognize that "all things are of God" (vs. 12). In Paul's day the veil had come to symbolize womanly modesty and was a badge of her subjection. Paul teaches the Corinthian women to respect the custom because of its symbolism and because of what the discarding of it indicated. The early Christians found the veil in use and were to respect its significance. The fact which it symbolized is ever true; however, Paul is not legislating regarding women wearing a veil to the extent that he is making it a law for all times and for all peoples.

In vs. 16 Paul ends the discussion by saying, if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. If, after all the arguments advanced by Paul in favor of the woman wearing the veil, someone still wants to insist on her discarding the veil, then he should know that nowhere in the churches is the custom of women praying unveiled to be found. The churches everywhere were following the course prescribed by Paul in this passage.

The Lord's Supper (17-34)

Paul began the section concerning the veiling of women with a word of praise, but he cannot praise the Corinthians as to their treatment of the Lord's Supper. Their assemblies were not for the better but for the worse (vs. 17). Paul had heard that factions at Corinth were evident even at the time they came together. Paul says, I partly believe it. He is not willing to believe everything he hears, but he can't help believing part of it (vs. 18). Factions are regrettable but at times unavoidable; some good comes from them in that those who are true and faithful are openly manifested to be such (vs. 19).

In vs. 20 Paul tells the Corinthians that when they assemble it is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper, and he proceeds to tell them why in vs. 21. The Corinthians were bringing food and

were eating their own meal in advance of the Lord's Supper; the rich brought much, the poor little or nothing. Instead of properly dividing the food so there might be enough for all, groups ate together in a manner that excluded the poor, while they themselves had plenty and some of them became drunk. This made the observance of the Lord's Supper an impossibility. It is likely that this meal prior to the Lord's Supper was an abuse of the *agape* or love feast (cf. 2 Pet. 2:11; Jude 12). If the Corinthians were coming together to satisfy hunger and thirst, they should realize that they have homes in which they could do this rather than coming together and eating in such a selfish fashion that the poor who had no food were put to shame. Such conduct was treating the church with despite. Paul expresses his bewilderment in the question, "What shall I say?" Then he very strongly declares that in this instance he cannot praise them (vs. 22).

Paul had not been present at the institution of the Lord's Supper, but the Lord revealed to him the details of that night. In vss. 23-25 he recounts the facts of the Lord's taking the bread and the cup, giving thanks, and giving to his disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of me. These are not details which Paul is revealing to the Corinthians for the first time; he had before delivered the same to them. As to the words, *this is my body*, it is certain that when Jesus instituted the feast on the night of his betrayal, the disciples, when taking the bread, did not understand that they were receiving the literal flesh of Jesus, for they could behold his body standing before them. There are many instances of such usage of symbolic language in the teachings of Jesus: "I am the door" (John 10:7); "I am the vine" (John 15:5); and there are many other examples. The memorial aspect of the Lord's Supper is emphasized in this passage; Christians eat in remembrance; the entire act is a memorial act, not that they are merely doing something to cause them to remember. Jesus speaks of the cup as the new covenant in my blood because of the fact that the "New Covenant was sealed with his blood" and he saw that covenant in the blood.

In addition to the aspect of commemoration, there is that of proclamation: *Ye proclaim the Lord's death* (vs. 26). By the proper observance of the Lord's Supper, Christians proclaim to others the act it commemorates, and this proclamation is to be done *till he come*. The Lord's Supper is to be observed in his kingdom until the second coming of Christ. There is thus an element of anticipation in the observance.

In vs. 27 Paul emphasizes how serious it is to partake unworthily or in an unworthy manner, saying that he who does so **shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord**. This has reference to the manner in which the Lord's Supper is eaten and has no reference to whether the person who partakes is himself worthy. The Corinthians were observing the feast unworthily, as Paul has already shown. Any person who partakes in a spirit of levity, or with any other improper attitude, becomes guilty of partaking unworthily. This is a sin against the body and the blood of the Lord. It is not a mere profaning of the symbols but also of that which they symbolize.

Rather than to be guilty of the sin of partaking unworthily, **let a man prove himself and so let him eat. . . (vs. 28)**. Each one is to undergo a thorough self-examination, an examination of his attitudes and motives, in order to avoid eating unworthily. Each one is to search his own heart to see that he be in the proper state of mind. Paul does not contemplate a refusal to eat as a result of such examination; rather, he expects such a self-discipline as will result in eating worthily. The Lord's Supper is not a mere feast; one must "discern" the body of the Lord when eating, and if he does not, **he eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself** (vs. 29). **For this cause**, that is, because of failing to observe the Lord's Supper in a proper manner, many of the Corinthians were in a spiritual condition that is described as a weak, sickly, and sleeping condition (vs. 30). In such cases, discerning oneself and eating properly will prevent the judgment of the Lord (vs. 31). When God's judgment of disapproval rests upon one, he is chastened by the Lord and this chastening is for the purpose of preventing his eternal condemnation (vs. 32). God is chastening these people through these strong words of rebuke and admonition which Paul is directing to the Corinthians. Persecutions and other types of suffering which God permits may also be regarded as chastenings (cf. Heb. 12:3-11).

In vs. 21, Paul had said that the Corinthians were each eating "before other his own supper." They were eating in groups and disregarding other groups who had no food. As a result of such disorderly eating of the meal, they were unable to eat the Lord's Supper when they came to it. So, Paul says in vs. 33 that when they come together to eat — evidently referring to the meal they ate before the Lord's Supper — they are to **wait one for another**. They are not to make of the meal a hurried affair; they are to wait until all are present. They are not to eat gluttonously; this is not

a meal for the purpose of satisfying hunger. If they are hungry, they should satisfy that hunger at home so that the *agape* feast can indeed be a feast of love and fellowship. Then when they come to the Lord's Supper, they can eat acceptably and their "coming together" will not be "unto judgment" (vs. 33). The *agape* feast was no part of the worship and certainly was not mandatory. Its abuse was hindering the worship, and Paul's instructions relative to it were intended to correct such abuses. There were other matters which Paul did not include in this letter, but he promised to correct these when he should visit Corinth (vs. 34). If one were guessing, he might be tempted to suppose that Paul may have discouraged the love feast at such a time. It is known that the love feast in such close proximity to the Lord's Supper did not endure. Justin Martyr describes the Lord's Supper in about A.D. 150 and makes no mention whatever of the *agape* feast.

Chapter Nine

Varieties of Gifts in the Church

(Chapter 12)

Evidently the Corinthians had asked Paul some questions about spiritual gifts; his discussion of this subject begins with 12:1 and continues through 14:40. In the early church, there were those who received spiritual gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (cf. Acts 8:17, 18; 19:16). These gifts were necessary in the days of the infancy of the church when as yet the body of perfectly revealed truth was incomplete. They were temporary measures designed for a special purpose. The church in Corinth was having problems in connection with spiritual gifts, and Paul seeks to correct these abuses.

Diversity (vss. 1-11)

First, Paul sets forth the test by which his readers could distinguish the true utterances of the Holy Spirit from the spurious claims of heathen priests and other impostors. Paul is eager that the church be informed (vs. 1). He reminds the Gentiles among his readers that before their conversion they had been led away unto dumb idols (vs. 2). The fact that the idols were "dumb" is emphasized in contrast with the fact that God's Spirit speaks. **Howsoever ye might be led** suggests the idea that they were, in their ignorance, repeatedly and continually being led by various teachers. The confession of Jesus as Lord was the supreme test of the leadership of the Spirit. No man, speaking by the Spirit, can say that Jesus is anathema; and no man can say with full meaning that Jesus is Lord unless he is led to do so by the Spirit (vs. 3). This struck at the heart of the contending voices of that day; devotion to Christ was the supreme test.

The gifts were different but they all came from the same Spirit (vs. 4). These gifts may also be thought of as "ministrations," services employed for the benefit of others, and they are all to be attributed to the same Lord (vs. 5). Or they may be thought

of as diversities of workings or energies and forces, but it is the same God who manifests his divine power through these gifts in all who possess them (vs. 6). Each member of the Godhead is thus said to be involved in these gifts; the terms "gifts," "ministrations," and "workings" are different ways of viewing the gifts, and with each of the terms Paul connects a member of the Godhead. And these gifts, declares Paul, are given to the individual to profit withal or, as the RSV has it, for the common good (vs. 7). The purpose of the Spirit was not the gratification of the one who possessed the gift, but in order that the whole church might be edified. In vss. 8-10 Paul further emphasizes diversity by enumerating various gifts: the word of wisdom refers to the gift whereby one might be able to utter words of wisdom; the word of knowledge refers to the gift whereby one is able to impart knowledge to others; faith has reference to a special gift whereby one was enabled to perform supernatural deeds; gifts of healing has reference to the healing of various diseases; workings of miracles seems to be a broader designation than "healings," indicating other types of miraculous works; prophecy referred to the ability to communicate specific messages from God; the gift of discerning the spirits was the ability to determine whether a prophet was true or false; tongues refers to an endowment whereby the recipients could speak in languages they had never learned; the gift of interpretation enabled the possessor to interpret the tongues to those in the audience who did not speak those tongues. But, though there were diversities of gifts, there was unity of source (vs. 11). It is the same Spirit to whom all these gifts are to be attributed. The Spirit divides to each one severally even as he will. Paul is here saying that it is the Holy Spirit who decides which individual receives a particular gift. The common source of these diverse gifts indicates that they were to be used harmoniously for the accomplishing of a common good; the bestowal on each individual according to the discretion of the Spirit should eliminate all boasting, envy, and friction.

Unity in Diversity (vss. 12-31)

That there can be unity in diversity Paul illustrates by referring to the human body; the body has a multitude of members, yet is one organic whole. That is the way it is in the church or, as Paul says, so also is Christ (vs. 12). To emphasize further the unity of the church Paul refers to the variety among those who had been baptized into the one body: whether Jews or Greeks,

whether bond or free. However, regardless of racial or social status, they now comprise one body, having been baptized into that one body (vs. 13). The phrase **in one Spirit or by one Spirit** points to the Holy Spirit as the invisible agent or administrator of baptism. Jesus, during his ministry, is said to have made and baptized more disciples than John, **although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples** (John 4:1, 2). Jesus, having taught his disciples to baptize, is said to do the baptizing although it was actually performed by the disciples. Likewise, when the Holy Spirit teaches men through the gospel to be baptized in water for the remission of sins, they are said to be baptized by the Holy Spirit even though the baptism is performed by men. Furthermore, those thus baptized **were all made to drink of one Spirit**, that is they became partakers of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit took up his abode in them when they became children of God. When men follow the directions of the Spirit in being baptized, they then receive the gift of the Spirit, that is, the Spirit as a gift (cf. Acts 2:38). This "gift" which all Christians everywhere receive, even today, is not to be confused with the "gifts" of the Spirit, gifts bestowed by the Spirit, which belonged to the church only in its state of immaturity. These gifts had occasioned much disturbance in the church at Corinth, and Paul is writing to impress upon the members the fact that the body is one even though there are many members with various gifts. The fact of baptism and the subsequent reception of the Spirit are offered in support of the affirmation that the body is one.

Resuming the thought of the human body in vs. 14, Paul says it is not one member but many. The Corinthians must realize that many and diverse members are necessary. The foot remains a foot and a very important member even though it cannot be a hand; the ear remains an ear and very important though it is not an eye (vss. 15, 16). It seems that some of the Corinthians felt inferior when they compared their abilities with those of others; likely some even complained of their lack of ability. Every member of the body is necessary; if the body were one member, how would other functions be performed? If all the body were an eye, how could there be any hearing? (vs. 17). And with the human body still in mind, Paul says that the setting of the various members in the body was the work of God; God created the body as it is and assigned to each member its function. There could be no body at all if the members **were all one member**. However, they are not one member — they are many; but they are only one body

(vss. 18-20). The application to the church is obvious: it has need of the various members, and no member is to feel that he is not a part of the body merely because he cannot do what other members do.

Another danger was that highly gifted members would feel important and that they had no need of those with gifts which they deemed not so important. Paul continues his illustration of the human body to correct this error, imagining the members of the body speaking to one another (vs. 21). No one member can say that it has no need of another member; no one can disdain or scorn another. Application to the spiritual gifts is at once apparent: no person, regardless of his gift, should belittle the gift of another nor feel his own independence of that other. Again, still referring to the physical body, Paul says that even the members which seem to be more feeble are necessary (vs. 22). The fact that certain members seem to be more feeble does not prove their inferiority; there are organs of the body which are little known and seldom mentioned but are vital nonetheless. Continuing in vs. 23, Paul calls attention to another fact: a person bestows more abundant honor upon the parts of his body which he deems to be less honorable, for example, the care he bestows upon his finger nails or the care with which he clothes certain parts of his body. The fact that he considers certain members less honorable does not cause him to scorn or neglect them; on the contrary, this very fact causes him to bestow honor upon those members. Paul continues in the same verse: **and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.** Those parts which, by nature, lack in comeliness are given more care in the matter of clothing than those which are by nature comely. In fact, as vs. 24 states, those parts that are comely have no need of such attention. The arrangement of various members of the body so that they differ among themselves in that some seem to be feeble, some are considered less honorable, and some are actually uncomely or unpresentable — such arrangement is not by accident but is God's arrangement for he tempered the body together; he harmoniously blended the members into a single body. But God compensated for what certain members lacked in certain ways by granting them honor in some other way. And his purpose in such arrangement was the prevention of schism and the promotion of mutual concern (vs. 25). There is such unity in man's body that all members suffer when one member suffers, and all members rejoice when one member is honored (vs. 26). An aching finger can cause a sleepless night for the entire body;

but if a finger is adorned with a beautiful ring, the entire person is pleased. In fact, it is impossible for one member to be in pain and the rest of the body to be at peace at the same time.

Though Paul has been speaking of the human body, the application to the church is obvious. Paul urges this fact upon the Corinthians by telling them that they are Christ's body and **severally members thereof** (vs. 27). What therefore has been said about the different members with their various functions — mutual dependence, the absence of schism, unity, and mutual concern — all of these facts are to be applied to the church, the body of Christ. Paul expects this application to be made especially at Corinth where there was discord because of the various spiritual gifts.

Paul has stated, in vss. 18 and 24, that it is God who arranges the different parts of the natural body; likewise he declares that **God hath set some in the church** (vs. 28). The spiritual gifts were not gifts chosen by the individual but were bestowed according to the will of God. Then Paul proceeds to enumerate various gifts which God has bestowed and the fact of variety is again evident. First in rank are the apostles, those immediately called by Christ to be witnesses and instruments through whom he would reveal his truth; next were the prophets who were inspired so that they could set forth the word of God; and last, there were the teachers who were gifted in instruction relative to truths which had been revealed. The order or rank is probably not to be pressed insofar as the gifts following these three are concerned, but it may be significant that tongues, so highly valued at Corinth, are mentioned last. **Helps** seems to refer to certain abilities used in ministering to the needy; **governments** describes abilities to lead and direct. All of these offices and works enumerated in vss. 28 and 29 were gifts of the Spirit. Paul's series of questions in vss. 29 and 30 impress upon the Corinthians the fact that not any one gift is possessed by all members. Just as the physical body is not composed of one great ear or eye, so the body of Christ is not composed of members having the same function. In vs. 31, Paul admonishes his readers to desire the greater gifts, such as that of prophecy, which can edify the church. This indicates that, even in the case of supernatural gifts, it was in order for a Christian to desire certain gifts and that there was something he could do to qualify for the reception of such. However, Paul promises to show unto them a **most excellent way**. This he does in the following chapter.

Chapter Ten

In Praise of Christian Love

(Chapter 13)

Chapter 13 is not an interruption in Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts; rather, it is a continuation for in this chapter he points out how these gifts are to be sought and used; indeed, how all of life is to be lived.

Life Without Love (vss. 1-3)

First, Paul declares that if he should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, his speech would be as the sound of a brass gong or the clanging together of pieces of metal if he were devoid of love (vs. 1). Continuing in vs. 2, Paul mentions the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and faith; the affirmation is made that without love the person who might have any of these gifts is nothing. Paul imagines the possessing of these gifts to the superlative degree: *all mysteries. . .all knowledge. . .all faith.* . . . It is quite natural that Paul, showing the supremacy of love, should first of all contrast it with those gifts which were receiving so much emphasis at Corinth. The gift of tongues was being emphasized out of proportion to its importance, and it is noticeable that Paul mentions this gift first in his contrast. The thought is not that a person exercising such a gift as that of prophecy without love would not benefit others but that so far as his own standing before God is concerned, he is "nothing." Further, in vs. 3, Paul turns to contrast love with self-sacrifice, supposing a case in which one gives all his goods to feed others or in which he suffers martyrdom. Again, Paul ascends to the superlative in his use of *all my goods*, and in his speaking of one's giving his body to be burned; he does this in order to bring out the contrast more forcibly. Even if one should perform such deeds of self-sacrifice, he would not be profited if he were not motivated by love in these acts.

A Picture of Love (vss. 4-7)

Having shown love's importance, Paul feels the necessity of making clear what he means by love. In doing so, he does not give a definition as would be found in a dictionary; rather, he personifies love and shows how it manifests itself – what it does and what it refrains from doing. He feels that an understanding of love will go a long way toward correcting the discords in Corinth.

Love is longsuffering in that it endures with patience the injuries and insults that may be heaped upon it by others. But love is not merely passive; it is also kind and reaches out to others in a spirit of friendliness and with deeds of helpfulness. Not being envious, love is never made unhappy over the prosperity of others. It vaunteth not itself, it is not boastful. It is not puffed up, not inflated with pride or arrogance. It always acts toward others in a way that is proper, not behaving itself unseemly. True love, seeking not its own, is ever unselfish. While treating others with kindness, love is never provoked by the unkind treatment which it may receive at the hands of others; it is not touchy or irritable, not enraged by injury or insult. It does not take account, does not keep a record, of the wrongs it suffers. Love grieves over unrighteousness and never rejoices in it; it finds its rejoicing "with the truth." It beareth all things, it endures wrongs, troubles, afflictions, etc. It believeth all things, it is trustful and confident of others, not suspicious; it is ever ready to look for and see the best, not the worst, in others. It hopeth all things in that it anticipates with optimistic expectation the repentance and recovery of those it hopes to win. It endureth all things in that it perseveres through all kinds of adversity and ill treatment.

Love Will Endure (vss. 8-13)

Love never faileth, but will always exist. However, the time was coming when spiritual gifts would cease. Paul mentions only three of these gifts: prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. However, what he says of these three typical gifts would also be true of all the others. By knowledge he must refer to the gift bestowed by the Spirit in the early church for knowledge, as the term is generally used, will never cease. Love is thus seen to be superior to these miraculous gifts in that it is permanent, while they are temporary. Further, those with the supernatural gift of knowledge knew only "in part," and those with the gift of prophecy prophesied "in part." This means that the revelation of truth during the

days of spiritual gifts was only partial. Revelations were made through prophets only upon certain occasions in those days of the infancy of the church. **But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.** The Greek word from which our word "perfect" comes means "full-grown" or "mature." It has reference to a goal that is reached. Paul considers the days of spiritual gifts as the process by which the goal of maturity was being reached; he declares that when the state of maturity should be reached, **that which is in part shall be done away.** When that goal was reached, when maturity was attained, and when the body of truth had been fully revealed, then the partial ceased. There was no further need for spiritual gifts. Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in Eph. 4:11-15 is similar to this passage. In that passage he looks forward to the day of coming to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God and to the time of a perfect man and a cessation of childhood. In the passage now under consideration, Paul refers to childhood and manhood, saying, **When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.** Spiritual gifts belonged to the childhood stage of the church; they would be discarded when the time of perfection, maturity, came. The perfect law would then have been revealed, the faith would then have been delivered, and the church would have this body of truth by which to be guided. Those who claim the presence today of such miraculous gifts as were possessed by the early church should note that Paul considers the presence of such gifts an evidence of immaturity. In vs. 12 the words "now" and "then" occur twice; it seems more in keeping with the context to consider "now" as referring to the time when Paul was writing and "then" as referring to the time of maturity when the perfect revelation would be complete. In the days when knowledge was "in part," that which was seen or apprehended was comparable to looking through a dark glass; in the days when revelation would be complete, the perception would be much clearer — like seeing an actual face. **Now I know in part, declares Paul, but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known.** In contrast with the "in part" of the days of spiritual gifts, Paul anticipates the day of knowing God's complete and perfect will; he anticipates a day of knowing God's will even as he himself had heretofore been known fully by the God who was to reveal that will. He anticipates a time when all knowledge, which, over a period of years, was gradually being revealed

through apostles and prophets, would be in a body and accessible to all.

Having shown conclusively that love surpasses the spiritual gifts which belonged to the days of infancy, Paul, in the closing verse of this chapter, lifts love to its highest pinnacle by showing that it surpasses even faith and hope. Some things must be discarded after childhood has ended, but even after adulthood is attained, faith, hope, and love abide. Yet love is the greatest of this impressive trio. Paul does not explain why love is the greatest. Several reasons could be suggested: the fact that love is of the very nature of God shows its supremacy. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). Also, love outranks faith and hope in its motivating power. It is the mightiest power in the world. The greatest of deeds without it are meaningless; the smallest with it become beautiful and meaningful.

Chapter Eleven

Spirit and Order

(Chapter 14)

Which Gifts Edify (vss. 1-25)

Paul has dealt with the diversity of spiritual gifts and the unity of those who possess those gifts. He has shown that love is superior to all things and that any gift without love is valueless to its possessor. He is now to deal with the use of certain spiritual gifts in the assemblies.

Following after love is to be the main pursuit of the Christian, but this does not exclude the usefulness of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians are urged to desire such gifts; they should prefer the gift of prophecy over other gifts (vs. 1). The gift of prophecy enabled men to speak words directly inspired of God. Paul's desire to emphasize this gift is due, in part, to the exaggerated emphasis the Corinthians were placing on tongues.

Consideration for fellow Christians is the first motive to which Paul appeals in showing why one should desire to prophesy rather than to speak in a tongue. It can be seen just here how chapter 13 fits into the discussion: he who has love will desire the good of others, and this desire will prompt him to desire a gift that will promote their good. The misuse of tongues at Corinth is at once apparent: no one understood, and so the speaker was in reality addressing God alone (vs. 2). Paul is describing an ordinary situation at Corinth. He does not mean for "no man" to be taken absolutely, for he speaks in vss. 27, 28 of the possible presence of an interpreter and, of course, a man who spoke that particular language could understand. But as the tongues were being used at Corinth, or rather misused, the audience in general did not understand the languages being spoken. In spirit in vs. 2 refers to the spirit of the speaker: the tongues were an activity of the man's spirit which was being acted upon by the Holy Spirit. Such speaking did not profit the audience. In contrast, one who prophesied spoke unto others in a way that they understood, and his

message was one of edification, and exhortation, and consolation (vs. 3). Prophecy edifies the church, but **He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself** (vs. 4). This is so because the church does not understand the particular tongue being spoken. It was possible for one who spoke in tongues to have, in addition, the gift of interpretation (vss. 5, 13). In such instances, the speaker could be edified and the hearers could also be edified. In cases where the speaker did not have the gift of interpretation, the knowledge that the Holy Spirit was using him as a medium through whom to speak would result in his personal encouragement and edification even though he did not understand the language. Paul's main point, however, is that the audience receives no profit in such cases. But tongues are not to be disregarded as of no importance. Paul could wish that all the Corinthians were able to speak in tongues, but he would rather they have the gift of prophecy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues. However, Paul recognizes the possibility of the one who speaks in tongues having the gift of interpretation, and in this case he, too, would benefit others (vs. 5).

Since Paul intends to visit Corinth, he asks them to suppose that he should come unto them **speaking in tongues** (vs. 6). What profit would such a visit be? Paul recognizes that his visit would be fruitless unless he speaks by way of revelation, knowledge, prophecy, or teaching. Profit would come to the Corinthians if Paul should exercise any one of these four gifts. In any of these gifts the subject matter would be understood and would result in edification. Tongues not understood by the hearers would be so much sound with no meaning. Paul borrows an illustration from the world of music: there is no meaning unless there is a distinction in tones; sounds must be made which are understandable (vs. 7). Another illustration is from military life: the proper signal must be given on the trumpet if the soldiers are to know what to do (vs. 8). Paul makes the application in vs. 9: they will be speaking into the air if they speak in tongues not understood by the hearers. There is a wide variety of languages in the world (vs. 10), and no language is without significance — it means something to somebody. But Paul, imagining someone speaking to him in a language that he, Paul, does not understand, says they will be barbarians to each other. Both the speaking and the hearing will be in vain (vs. 11). In view of all this, the Corinthians, being zealous of spiritual gifts, should seek such gifts as will result in the edification of the church (vs. 12).

Since one who speaks in a tongue that is not understood by the audience cannot, by the use of such language, edify the audience, he should pray for the additional gift of interpretation in order that others may be edified. If one not having the gift of interpretation should pray in a tongue that he does not understand, he knows he is praying and uttering words with meaning, and in this sense his spirit is impressed. But there are no distinct thoughts as to what he is saying; his understanding is barren; he does not know what he is saying, nor does the audience. This is why he should pray for the additional gift of interpretation (vs. 14). In vs. 15, Paul asks, **what is it then?** He is asking what conclusion should be reached from what he has said. He answers by expressing his own determination to pray and sing with both the spirit and the understanding. The inner man will then be praying or singing, but the mind or spirit will also be able to join in the act because it will be done in a language that the speaker knows. A prayer of thanksgiving expressed in a tongue not understood by the listeners is not a prayer to which they can give their assent, even though the one who prays the prayer is praying in his own spirit (vss. 16, 17). Paul is grateful that he has the gift of tongues; in fact, he is more richly endowed with the Spirit than all the Corinthians. However, in the assembly he had rather speak a short sentence with his understanding than thousands of words in a tongue, the reason for this preference being that he might instruct others (vss. 18, 19). Paul, of course, is contemplating a language which both he and the listeners understand.

So far as the use of tongues was concerned, the Corinthians were acting like children; Paul admonishes them to stop such childishness. However, there is a sense in which Christians should be as children: in malice they should be as babes, **but in mind be men** (vs. 20). The Greek word here translated "men" is the word which in some passages (e.g., 13:10) is translated "perfect" (cf. also James 3:2). Tongues were not as profitable as other gifts and the exaggerated emphasis upon them indicated an interest in something that was more showy and amusing than other gifts; hence, the admonition regarding childishness. In vs. 21 Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:11, 12 in order to introduce another point regarding tongues. In this passage Jehovah threatens to speak to the people **by men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers**. The people had failed to heed the prophets of Jehovah who had spoken to them in their own language; Jehovah will next speak to them through their conquerors, the Assyrians. However,

the barbarous speech of these foreigners failed to bring repentance to the obdurate hearts of the people. In this case, the tongues of foreigners were a sign to unbelieving Judah. From this Paul draws an analogy in vs. 22: tongues are a sign to unbelievers. Paul is here contemplating the proper use of tongues as at Pentecost (Acts 2), in which case the use of tongues arrested the attention of unbelievers. Prophecy, however, was primarily for the believers; it imparted instruction in a language they could understand; it was a sign of the gracious presence and provisions of God's Spirit. Tongues, when properly used, would convince unbelievers who spoke those languages that God was working through the speakers. Such use of tongues, however, was not needed for the church. Prophecy would not produce the same effect upon unbelievers as would tongues, but it served mainly to instruct those who had already been brought to faith. Paul thus states plainly God's original design for both tongues and prophecy; the trouble was the misuse of tongues by the Corinthians. It seems that all the Corinthians wanted the gift of tongues, and Paul, in vs. 23, supposes an assembly of the church in which all speak in tongues. If unbelievers who do not speak these tongues should enter the assembly, what effect will it have upon them? Such decorum will surely not produce faith; on the contrary, the Christians would be accused of madness. But did Paul not say in vs. 22 that tongues are a sign for unbelievers? Yes, but he was there thinking of the proper use of tongues, in which case the unbeliever understood the tongue. Now, in vs. 23, he is thinking of the improper use of tongues, in which situation the unbelievers do not understand. But Paul supposes a similar assembly in which there is prophesying instead of tongues (vss. 24, 25). What if an unbeliever enters this assembly and hears the prophesying? He is able to understand what is being said, he is convicted, and will be led to worship God. Instead of saying the Corinthians are mad, he will declare God to be among them. The contrast here is the effect of a tongue not understood by the believer versus the effect of prophecy which is understood. All of this brings out in a most forceful way just how immature the Corinthians were in their emphasis on tongues.

Worship Is to Edify (vss. 26-40)

In vs. 26, Paul gives a picture of the church assembled at Corinth with various members having each a part to contribute

to the service. The word "each" is to be understood as referring to those who have a gift to use in that particular service, not to every person present. The various items such as psalm, teaching, etc., are to be understood as exercises of some particular spiritual gift. The guiding principle in the use of these gifts is: **let all things be done unto edifying.** Those speaking in tongues are not to take up an excessive amount of time; if speaking in tongues is done at all, no more than three are to speak at any one service. These are to speak one at a time and only if there is someone to interpret. If no interpreter is present, the one who has the gift of tongues is to remain silent (vss. 27, 28). No more than three prophets are to speak at any one service; their teaching is to be tested by others who have the gift of discernment (vs. 29). If one prophet has the floor and a revelation is received by another, the first is to yield while the latter makes known his revelation to the audience (vs. 30). In vs. 31 Paul assures the prophets that all may prophesy under the conditions he here specifies: one must speak at a time and not more than three at any service. A prophet can wait until another has finished or he can even wait until the next assembly, for **the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets** (vs. 32). Further, such orderly procedure is to be expected in an assembly which is of God for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace (vs. 33).

Paul urges in Corinth what was being practiced in all the churches, that the women are to keep silence. The Old Testament law is cited as teaching the same thing; this evidently has reference to the Old Testament teaching that woman is subject to man. Another reason is added by Paul, namely, that **it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church** (vss. 33b-35). This has reference to the assembly and does not prohibit women teaching in all situations. Such passages as Acts 2:18; 18:26; and Titus 2:3, 4 show that there were certain situations in which women taught with God's approval. It has never been the rule, in either the Old or the New Testament, that women occupy the role of leaders or teachers in the assembly. Paul urges that women are not to raise questions in such assemblies as he here contemplates; they are to reserve such questions for the home. In the case of married women, they could ask their husbands; however, the word translated "husbands" is the same Greek word for "men," and it may be that Paul intended it to have a broader signification than husbands, including other male members of a household. The admonition would thus apply to unmarried as well as to married women.

Paul's questions in vs. 36 are somewhat ironical, implying that in certain respects the Corinthians were acting as if the word of God had originated with them or that it had come to them only. It had surely not originated with them, nor had it come to them only. It had its origin in God and was delivered to all the churches of the saints.

Paul is aware of the fact that the things he is writing are the commandment of the Lord (vs. 37), and he says that acknowledgment of this fact is the real test of whether one is a true prophet or a spiritual person. Any who would reject Paul's writings would thereby expose the spurious nature of his claims to any spiritual gift. Paul feels there is no more he can do for any person who obstinately refuses to recognize this fact (vs. 38). There is good textual authority for rendering this verse as the RSV does: **If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.** In concluding the section on spiritual gifts, Paul urges the Corinthians to desire earnestly to prophesy; prophesy is the higher gift. However, the gift of tongues is not to be despised; hence, Paul adds, **forbid not to speak with tongues.** In all things there must be due regard for order and decency (vs. 40).

Chapter Twelve

The Resurrection—Christ's and Ours

(Chapter 15)

The Resurrection of Christ (vss. 1-11)

Paul begins this section by declaring his intention to restate the gospel which he had preached in Corinth. The Corinthians had accepted that gospel and are standing firm therein (vs. 1). Through the same gospel they are being saved — conditioned upon their holding fast the word Paul had delivered — unless it should turn out that they had believed in vain (vs. 2). In vss. 3, 4 Paul states the facts which form the heart of the gospel, facts which he had received by revelation and had delivered at Corinth: the death of Christ for the sins of man, his burial, and his resurrection on the third day. The phrase, according to the scriptures, means that the events were in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Not only did Christ rise from the dead; he also made a number of appearances, several of which Paul lists in vss. 5, 6. These historical appearances lend great weight to the New Testament claims for the resurrection of Christ. Paul refers to the fact that many of those who saw the risen Lord are alive at the time of his writing. In vs. 8 Paul says that Christ appeared to him *last of all*, referring to his experience on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 26:12-16). Paul says Christ's appearance to him was *as to the child untimely born*. The Greek from which this comes means an "abortion." Paul is thinking of his unfitness, his unworthiness, when he thinks of himself as an abortive thing. The same thought is continued into vs. 9 where Paul elaborates further upon his feeling of unfitness. The "for" of vs. 9 shows it is explanatory of vs. 8. That he had once persecuted the church was a fact Paul never forgot. The transformation that had been wrought in him was great, and he is eager to ascribe it to the grace of God; yet that grace had not been in vain for Paul had labored *more abundantly than all the other apostles*. But even his labors he attributes to the grace of God (vs. 10). However, the thing of

real importance is the truth – whether preached by Paul or by one of the other apostles. The truth had been preached by all of them and had been believed by the Corinthians (vs. 11).

Consequences of Unbelief (vss. 12-19)

Having stated the contents of the preaching of himself and of the other apostles, Paul asks how it is that some among the Corinthians can deny the resurrection of the dead in view of such proclamation (vs. 12). Just what individuals among the Corinthians were advancing this idea is not stated, nor is it indicated how the matter came to Paul's attention. Evidently it was not widespread, and Paul seeks to nip the error in the bud. He answers those who deny a resurrection by pointing to the fact of Christ's resurrection; he then proceeds to show the logical consequences of such denial. The first logical consequence of a denial of the resurrection is that Christ has not been raised (vs. 13). It is not certain that any among the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of Christ; it may be that some were. At any rate, Paul feels the need for re-emphasizing the historical fact and showing that its truthfulness establishes the fact of the resurrection of others. If there were some who denied the general resurrection and yet had not gone so far as to deny the resurrection of Christ, then Paul's words would bring home to them the fact that consistency would demand their rejection of that event also. Paul then goes on to show the many consequences that must follow if Christ has not been raised (vss. 14-19). If Christ's resurrection be not a fact, the message of the apostles was void and hollow; the same would be true of the faith of the Corinthians. The apostles would thus be shown to be false witnesses, and Paul seems to attach a certain special stigma to the fact they would be false witnesses in matters pertaining to God, not mere ordinary matters concerning human beings. And if the preaching of the apostles and the faith of the Corinthians should be vain, then it must follow that they are still in a lost condition and have never been saved from their sins at all. Moreover, those Christians who died in hope of a resurrection, have perished and will never realize that hope. Christians are objects of pity, they are of all men most pitiable, if they go through life hoping for something that will never be.

The Meaning of Christ's Resurrection (vss. 20-28)

In contrast with the gloomy thoughts of what would be true if there were no resurrection, Paul turns to the positive phase of

his argument with the declaration, but now hath Christ been raised from the dead (vs. 20). With this note of triumph, Paul begins to show the blessed consequences of that great event. All of the terrible consequences advanced in vss. 14-19 are false because the original proposition is false. Christ has been raised and the consequences are the very opposite; the picture is one of hope and not of gloom. The resurrection of Christ is regarded as the firstfruits of them that are asleep. The figure is taken from the practice of offering to God a sheaf of the approaching harvest as a pledge of the rest (cf. Lev. 23:9-11). Christ's resurrection is a pledge of the resurrection of all the saints. Physical death came upon man through the sin of Adam; it is "in Christ" that all shall be made alive (vss. 21-22). The order of the dead being made alive is: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming (vs. 23). The "coming" clearly refers to the second coming of Christ. Since Paul does not mention the resurrection of the wicked in this discussion, some have concluded that the wicked will be raised at some other time; however, other passages as John 5:28, 29 and Acts 24:15 show one general resurrection composed of both wicked and righteous. Paul does not mention the resurrection of the wicked in the present discussion because it has no place in the discussion. He is discussing only the resurrection of Christ and they that are Christ's. Those raised by Christ during his personal ministry are not under consideration at this point since they died again and their resurrection was not unto eternal life.

The coming of Christ and the resurrection bring the end (vs. 24). At that time Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father, having abolished all enemies. Christ now reigns over his kingdom and will reign until all enemies are subjugated; the last enemy to be destroyed is death, and it will be destroyed by the resurrection (vss. 25, 26). The Father will have put all things in subjection to Christ except himself (vs. 27). When all things have been subjected to the Son, then the Son shall himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all (vs. 28). The picture here is that of Christ's reign having accomplished its purpose; Christ is perfect King and his rule has been made complete; he now returns the kingdom to the Father. This does not mean that the Father does not now reign, nor does it mean that the Son will cease to reign in eternity. It rather indicates a termination of distinctive offices so that the eternal triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — shall be all in all. The picture here drawn is that of the Son in relation

to his incarnation and redemptive work, having completed that work, voluntarily turning all over to God. But God is triune, and the Son shall share the eternal reign which belongs to the Godhead. There will be no mediatorial arrangement. All authority shall be exercised by God as God, and this does not exclude any one of the three members of the Godhead. No one of the three will exercise any distinct dominion.

Resurrection and Baptism (vss. 29-34)

Paul continues to explain the resurrection; but he turns now to matters of Christian experience to show that such conduct is vain and meaningless if the resurrection be not a fact. He first points out that those who are **baptized for the dead** are performing a meaningless act if the dead are not raised (vs. 29). A number of explanations of this passage have been given. Some think that Paul refers with approval to vicarious baptism, that is, the living being baptized for the purpose of benefiting the dead who had not been baptized when living. This cannot be accepted; it contradicts too many plain passages which teach personal responsibility and those which teach that judgment will be according to the deeds one did while in the body. There are other possible explanations of the passage — explanations which are plausible and which do not contradict other passages. It could have reference to those who, remembering and considering the teaching and pleas of departed friends and loved ones, remembering that they longed for their conversion, and desiring to meet them after death, obey their Lord in scriptural baptism. Or it could have reference to individuals being baptized for the dead in the sense that they are doing so to prepare themselves for that state, and in hope of a resurrection. The point Paul is making is the folly of such conduct if the dead are not raised. Moreover, why should Paul and his fellow-workers face the constant dangers which were incurred by preaching the gospel if the dead are not raised? (vs. 30). Paul's own life was so filled with dangers and sufferings that he could say, **I die daily** (vs. 31; cf. 2 Cor. 4:10, 11). Paul's intense feeling is seen here in the words with which he prefaches his claim of daily death: **I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.** It is Paul's way of solemnly declaring the truthfulness of what he is saying. His reference to fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus (vs. 32) may be taken to mean that he entered the arena and literally fought with wild beasts, or it may be taken figuratively to describe conflicts with

evil men. In either case it refers to some great danger Paul encountered in Ephesus. The phrase, **after the manner of men**, has the significance of "from a human viewpoint." The thought is this: what profit was there in undergoing such sufferings if Paul were acting purely from a human motive or from worldly motives which are common to men? If there is no resurrection, why suffer? Why not enjoy the comforts of life? Why not eat and drink, **for tomorrow we die?**

Paul brings his discussion of the reality of the resurrection to a close by the admonition, **Be not deceived** (vs. 33). He realizes the danger of deception by the skeptics among the Corinthians. A close and intimate association with such would have the tendency to turn Christians away from the faith. As Paul expresses it, **evil companionships corrupt good morals.** Paul does not believe the Corinthians are taking the matter seriously enough; he therefore calls upon them to stir from their state of lethargy: **awake to soberness righteously, and sin not** (vs. 34). Some among them **have no knowledge of God.** These evidently are the ones who are denying the resurrection. Paul's aim in telling the Corinthians this is to move them to shame; they should be made ashamed by the fact that such false teachers are in their midst, and they should proceed to correct the situation.

The Resurrection Body (vss. 35-49)

Paul replies to certain questions which he anticipates: **how are the dead raised? With what manner of body do they come?** (vs. 35). One can imagine the question being raised as to how a disintegrated body could possibly experience a resurrection. Paul addresses such an objector as **thou foolish one**, and proceeds to point to the sowing of seed and the quickening of life from that seed as an analogy. The seed is sown, it dies, and a new life emerges. The seed that is sown, regardless of the kind of seed, is not the new plant which shall come up. The main point in the analogy is that there is first decomposition, then a new life (vs. 37). In view of this wonder, why should anyone raise the question as to how the dead are raised? But Paul continues with the thought in vs. 38: **God gives a body to every seed, the body which he originally designed and concerning which he decreed that every thing should bring forth after its own kind.** In the analogy, Paul describes the sowing of the seed, the burial of the body, and the coming forth of a new life in each case. But Paul wishes to show

that the resurrection body will be a different kind of body from that which we now possess, and he calls some other illustrations into use (vss. 39-41). There is a difference of flesh among men, beasts, birds, and fishes. In creation, God was not limited to only one kind of flesh but manifested his power in wonderful diversity. Again, there are celestial bodies as the sun, moon, and stars; and there are all sorts of terrestrial, earthly, bodies all about us. However, God was pleased to make these bodies so that the glory of the celestial is different from that of the terrestrial. But there is a marvellous variety, even among the heavenly bodies and **one star differeth from another star in glory**. Paul begins to make the application in vs. 42: **so also is the resurrection of the dead**. The same God who was able to make so many different kinds of bodies with different degrees of glory among them is able to raise up the body of man and change it so that it is a different kind of body from that which was sown. The comparison is not that there will be differences of glory among the resurrected bodies, but that there will be a difference between the body that is sown and that which is raised. When all the variety in God's creation is contemplated, it can be seen that the nature of the resurrection body is a problem that can safely be left in God's hands.

In vss. 42-44, Paul sets forth a number of differences between the body when sown and when raised: corruption vs. incorruption; dishonor vs. glory; weakness vs. power; natural vs. spiritual. All will agree that there is a natural (Greek, *psuchikon*) body, a body adapted to the present life; so, it is natural to expect that there shall be a spiritual (Greek, *pneumatikon*) body, one adapted to the spirit (vs. 44b). The fact that the first man **Adam became a living soul** (Greek for "soul," *psuche*) explains the reference to the "natural" body. Christ is a "life-giving spirit" (Greek for "spirit," *pneuma*); he will be the giver of the spiritual (*pneumatikon*) body. But, says Paul, there is a certain order that is followed — first the natural, then the spiritual. As to their earthly appearance, Adam was before the incarnate Christ. The natural body of man is first, then there will be the resurrection body later (vs. 46). Adam was made from the dust by the creative power of God; Christ, of his own volition, left heaven and became a man (vs. 47). All men are like Adam in the fact that they are dust; those who are Christ's will be given bodies like his at the resurrection (vs. 48). In this life man bears the image of Adam; in heaven he shall bear the image of Christ (vs. 49).

The Great Victory (vss. 50-58)

Fleshly bodies cannot enter into the kingdom of glory (vs. 50). Hence, a change is necessary, and Paul proceeds to tell about this change which he terms a "mystery," something that can be known only by divine revelation. Not all shall die before the coming of Christ; some will be alive at the time of that great event. But all, whether living or dead, shall be changed at his coming. This change must occur before anyone enters heaven (vss. 51, 52). The divine signal which announces these momentous events is described as the sounding of the trumpet (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16). Paul speaks of this as **the last trump**. There will be no other signal a thousand years later or at any other time. As other passages show, all the dead, both wicked and righteous, will be raised at this time; however, Paul does not discuss the resurrection of the wicked in this passage. In order for the body to enter heaven, it must undergo a change: this corruptible body, one that is subject to decay, must be clothed with incorruption; this mortal must put on immortality (vs. 53). When this occurs, the passage, **Death is swallowed up in victory** (Isa. 25:8), will have been fulfilled. The two questions in vs. 55, expressing the triumphant victory, are taken from Hosea 13:14. Sin is that which gives death its sting, and the law is that which gives to sin its power (vs. 56). But God through Christ, gives victory over both sin and death (vs. 57). The "wherefore" of vs. 58 seems to look back over the entire chapter; in view of the great doctrines herein set forth, Paul exhorts the Corinthian brethren to a steadfast Christian life, assuring them that labor in the **Lord** is not in vain. The emphasis placed upon the connection between right doctrine and right living stands out here, as in so many other passages of the New Testament. It is also a fact worthy of special note that Paul sees belief in the resurrection and in immortality a ground for true ethical and moral conduct.

Chapter Thirteen

Paul Gives Some Instructions

(Chapter 16)

Collection for Needy (vss. 1-4)

The collection for the needy saints in Judea was a very important matter to Paul. He instructs the Corinthians about this collection and says he had also instructed the churches of Galatia (vs. 1). We also know that he taught other churches concerning this same collection (cf. Rom. 15:25-31; 2 Cor. 8, 9). The expression, *each of you*, indicates the individual nature of giving, and *as he may prosper* is the only indication given here as to the amount. The first day of the week is to be the time for the giving (vs. 2). Since the first day of the week was very significant, that being the day Christians met to eat the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), and since Paul seeks to eliminate the necessity for any collecting when he arrives in Corinth, it is quite clear that he means for the contribution to be made into the church treasury and not merely laid by at home as some suggest.

When Paul arrives in Corinth he will furnish letters to accompany certain ones to Jerusalem, men whom the Corinthians are to select for the purpose of carrying the money (vs. 3). If it should be deemed best and appropriate, Paul is willing to accompany the group (vs. 4). His plans are to go first through Macedonia and then to Corinth (cf. Acts 20:1, 2), and there is a probability that he will spend the winter there. The Corinthians would have the opportunity of helping Paul in whatever way help might be needed relative to his journey when he should depart from them.

The phrase, **whithersoever I go**, indicates that Paul was not certain as to his exact procedure; he had to make plans tentatively and at times had to alter those plans. Paul does not wish to see the Corinthians just now; he wishes to accomplish certain work in Macedonia and to have ample time when he does arrive in Corinth if the Lord permit (vs. 7). Paul is writing from Ephesus and expresses his intention of remaining there until Pentecost (vs. 8). This does not indicate that any significance was attached to Pentecost by the early Christians; Paul refers to it in setting a date for his departure. The reason for remaining in Ephesus for this additional period is that a great door of opportunity is opened unto Paul. The fact of **many adversaries** to which Paul refers is also borne out by Luke (cf. Acts 19:23-20:1).

News of Timothy and Apollos (vss. 10-12)

Paul has already informed the Corinthians that Timothy is coming to them (4:17). However, he expects this letter to reach Corinth before Timothy does. He urges the Corinthians to see that Timothy is not mistreated or intimidated (possibly on account of his youth). Timothy is to be respected for his work's sake; he is engaged in the same cause for which Paul is laboring. Rather than despise Timothy, the Corinthians are to return him to Paul "in peace." Paul is eager for the arrival of Timothy who would be accompanied by other brethren (vss. 10, 11). Regarding Apollos, Paul had urged him to visit Corinth with other brethren, but Apollos had seen fit to decline. However, Apollos will visit Corinth when there is a better opportunity (vs. 12). There is a strong probability that the Corinthians had asked about the collection and also about Apollos in the letter they had written to Paul. The phrase, **now concerning**, is the identical phrase used in the section in which Paul answers their questions, a phrase which prefaces Paul's answers.

Exhortations and Greetings (vss. 13-24)

Vss. 13 and 14 have five strong admonitions: the Corinthians are to be watchful, on the alert; they are to be firmly grounded in the faith; they are to behave like responsible men; they are to show strength in every situation; they are to do all things in the realm of Christian love.

Paul speaks of the house of Stephanas as having set themselves to minister to the saints. In what way or ways these people

gave themselves to such splendid work is not stated. They and others like them can surely be respected and looked upon as examples worthy of imitation. In this sense other Christians can recognize, have a high regard, **be in subjection to them**, by heeding their teaching, etc. Paul mentioned the fact in 1:16 that he had baptized the household of Stephanas, and here they are spoken of as the **firstfruits of Achaia**. Likely Paul had baptized them at some other place in Achaia and they had later moved to Corinth (vss. 15, 16). Stephanas was one of the messengers from Corinth over whose arrival Paul rejoices. Others in the group, not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, are Fortunatus and Achaicus. The reason for Paul's rejoicing is that they furnished **that which was lacking** on the part of the Corinthians. Through them the Corinthians communicated with Paul, and from them Paul learned various things about the Corinthian church. Through this fellowship the spirit of the Corinthians, as well as that of Paul, was refreshed. Both Paul and the Corinthians felt better as a result of this visit. Paul requests the Corinthians to acknowledge these men and others who are like-minded (vss. 17, 18). It is highly probable that these three brought the letter from Corinth to Paul, and also that they returned to Corinth with the epistle Paul is now writing.

Paul was at Ephesus in Asia when he wrote 1 Corinthians. He sends greetings from **the churches of Asia**. Aquila and Priscilla are specially mentioned as sending greetings **with the church that is in their house**. Evidently a group of Christians met in their home for worship. This couple lived in Corinth after being expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2); they later moved to Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19); afterwards they returned to Rome (Rom. 16:3). They are in Ephesus at the time of this writing (vs. 19). The expression, **all the brethren**, in vs. 20, likely refers to the church in Ephesus.

Having sent greetings from so many brethren, Paul admonishes the Corinthians themselves to **salute one another with a holy kiss**. The kiss was the customary manner of greeting, and Paul is urging that the greeting be sincere and holy. Vs. 21 indicates that Paul had dictated the letter to a scribe but is writing a greeting with his own hand. In vs. 22, an anathema, a solemn curse, is pronounced upon the person who does not love the Lord. It seems to be significant that Paul does not use the strong word, *agapao*, in this verse, but the weaker verb, *phileo*. The person who lacks even this lower feeling of affection is indeed to be pitied. The Aramaic expression, *Maranatha*, means, "Lord, come." This seems to be a prayer similar to that in Rev. 22:20, "Even so, come, Lord

Jesus." Paul's prayer for the grace of God to be with the readers is found in vs. 23; Paul assures them of his own personal love "in Christ" in vs. 24.

It should be added that Timothy returned to Paul at Ephesus and was with him when he left that city (Acts 20:4). Paul then sent Titus to Corinth, and Titus later rejoined Paul in Macedonia, bringing good news about the Corinthian church. The letter of Paul, the visit of Timothy, and the visit of Titus, all combined to effect a change in the Corinthian church. Timothy joins Paul in sending greetings in 2 Corinthians, and Paul expresses great relief over the news Titus has brought. The letter which has been the subject of this study had, therefore, a great influence in Paul's day; but its influence has never ceased; it continues to solve many problems for many people and enriches the lives of all who seriously read it.

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