

WRITER

The apostle Paul was the writer of this letter. He identified himself as the writer in 1:1 and 16:21 (See "Writer" in intro. to Rm). With the aid of Aquila and Priscilla, Paul established the church in Corinth and Achaia, and thus, he writes in this letter instructions to correct some problems among the new disciples as they continue to develop spiritually (See At 18:1-3). Throughout the centuries there has been little question concerning Paul's authorship of both 1 and 2 Corinthians. The church of the 2nd century accepted the Pauline authorship of the letter, and thus, there is today no reason to doubt the fact that he actually wrote both letters.

DATE

In 16:8 Paul wrote, "*But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.*" When Paul left Corinth in Acts 18 on his second mission journey, he, Aquila and Priscilla, went on to Ephesus, where he left the couple to continue proclaiming the gospel in the city (At 18:19-23). Therefore, we would not conclude that the statement of 16:8 was written from Ephesus on the Acts 18 visit of the second mission journey, for Paul stayed only a short time in Ephesus on this visit.

The only other time Paul was in Ephesus when he could have written this letter would be his third mission journey. The 16:8 statement, therefore, was made on his visit to Ephesus on his third mission journey. It was made in view of the fact that he was on his way to Corinth, both to finalize the correction of specific problems among the disciples (4:14-21), as well as to pick up the special contribution the Achaian disciples made for the famine victims of Judea (16:1-4). He tarried in Ephesus because of a great opportunity for evangelism that opened up to him, which opportunity probably referred to his teaching in the school of Tyrannus for two years wherein all Asia heard the gospel (16:9; At 19:8-10). The date of the writing from Ephesus would thus be around A.D. 54,55.

It would have been a year or two later that he wrote the second letter. The Christians in Corinth were only five or six years in the faith.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Corinth was located on an isthmus that connects Peloponnesus with the mainland of Achaia. The city of Corinth was the political capital of the province of Achaia (At 18:12). It was a Roman colony, and thus a center of trade because of its location. Its residents consisted of Jews who had migrated there for trade. The Romans who lived there had come for political and military reasons. Greeks also lived in Corinth who had moved there from the countryside of Achaia. Therefore, the city was a center of great economic wealth and trade among those of many different cultures.

Corinth was also a religious center. The temple of Aphrodite was located in the city. At one time in the history of the Aphrodite temple worship, the temple itself housed around one thousand women priestesses or temple prostitutes. Fornication was a part of the temple worship. As a result, the religious fornication of the priestesses played a significant role in the sociological behavior of the Corinthians. Since fornication was an accepted religious practice, it was thus an accepted sociological practice among the Corinthians.

It is often assumed that the existence of the church in Corinth resulted from the preaching of Paul on his second mission journey. We must keep in mind that Aquila and Priscilla recently arrived in the city when Paul arrived (At 18:1-3). We do not know if they were Christians when Paul arrived. If they were, then they as disciples lived in the city shortly before Paul arrived. In this letter Paul claimed to have baptized only a few of those to whom he wrote (1:14-16). It was around A.D. 51 when he came to the city on this journey after leaving Macedonia (At 18). He stayed for a year and a half (At 18:11,18). Throughout his stay in Achaia, he supported himself with Aquila and Priscilla, by making tents (See comments At 18:1-3).

In the second letter, Paul clarifies the fact that he is not writing exclusively to the disciples in the city of Corinth,

but to all the disciples in all Achaia (2 Co 1:1). Some have assumed that Paul first wrote this letter to the disciples in Achaia shortly after his first visit. It is assumed that this is the letter to which he refers in 5:9. We do not know specifically what happened to this letter. It could have been lost, or its contents may have been incorporated within the contents of the letter to which we now refer to as 1 Corinthians. While he was in Ephesus on his third mission journey, he stayed for two years (At 19:8-10). It was possibly around the end of this stay in A.D. 54 or 55 that he wrote 1 Corinthians. Later on his third journey in A.D. 56 or 57, he wrote a third letter which is referred to as 2 Corinthians. Since we have only the documents of 1 and 2 Corinthians, therefore, some Bible students feel that the contents of the first letter were actually grafted into either 1 or 2 Corinthians, which is the most probable answer to the missing material.

THEME

The theme of the letter surrounds the effect the gospel should have on the life of those who have believed and obeyed it. The grace of God that was revealed through the incarnation, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and kingdom reign of Jesus should touch the innermost behavioral values by which every person should direct his or her life (See comments 15:1-4,10; 2 Co 4:15). Christians are those who are living the gospel on a daily basis. It was Paul's personal response to the gospel that led to his proclamation of the gospel to others (15:10). His life was an example to everyone who would claim to be living the gospel. It is for this reason that he admonished the Corinthians, "*Be imitators of me even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Co 11:1). He thus expected the Corinthians to respond to the gospel as he had in his life. Therefore, Paul does not view the gospel as simply events of history to believe, or an intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus is the Son of God. He expects the gospel to be the motivating power by which one's life is controlled and directed (See Ph 1:27). It is to be the foundation upon which one lives. Since the Corinthians were failing in some areas, he wrote this letter.

PURPOSE

This is the most problematic group of disciples that is discussed in the New Testament. Paul had received reports concerning their sectarian attitudes that encouraged them to denominate into different groups. He had learned of their immoral practices and confusion over miraculous gifts that resulted from their arrogant attitudes. He had heard of their problems concerning sexual immorality, and that some denied the resurrection. A host of problems had infiltrated the disciples in the province of Achaia. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, sought to leave for posterity this inspired manual for the correction of typical problems that in one way or another seem to plague novice disciples throughout the world. Paul wrote this document on Christian behavior in order to correct doctrinal problems and the behavioral practices that invariably result from erroneous beliefs. Some of the disciples in Achaia had asked Paul questions concerning what they were experiencing among themselves. Paul answered their questions, and thus, gives to us a document by which to answer some of the most common challenges of our discipleship.

In dealing with the problems of the Achaian disciples, Paul developed his letter around sections of inspired answers that were meant to direct the behavior of the disciples. The letter can thus be outlined according to his instructions. (1) He first dealt with the sectarian attitudes of the disciples that were dividing them by their loyalty to different personalities (1:1 – 4:21). (2) He approached the immoral problems that prevailed among the members (5:1 – 6:20). (3) He instructed them concerning the responsibilities of the husband and wife in their relationship in the bond of marriage (7:1-40). (4) He corrected concepts they had concerning the liberty that Christians have in Christ with reference to their relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ (8:1 – 11:1). (5) He gave instructions concerning the purpose and atmosphere of fellowship that must be maintained when they came together in assembly (11:2-34). (6) He corrected problems related to the use of miraculous gifts in order to fulfill their purpose for edification (12:1 – 14:40). (7)

He corrected an attack against the fundamental teaching of the bodily resurrection (15:1-58). (8) And finally, he concluded with a discussion concerning contributions for the famine victims of Judea and his future plans (16:1-24).

Throughout all these instructions, Paul leaves us with a document by which we learn the Holy Spirit's direction for godly living in societies throughout the world that have given themselves over to ungodliness. 1 Corinthians was directed to all the disciples in the province of Achaia (See 2 Co 1:1). The disciples were at the most five to six years old in the faith when these instructions were written. The writing of the letter, therefore, helps us understand what God expects from disciples concerning their spiritual growth within five to six years after obedience to the gospel.

We study this letter in order to determine the responsibility God places on each disciple concerning spiritual growth and leadership. If spiritual growth does not occur, then one is not a candidate for heaven. Spiritual growth is the sign of a submissive heart to the will of God. All those who seek to transition into heavenly dwelling must have a submissive heart. The disciples of Achaia, therefore, are a good example of how new converts struggle in submitting to the principles of Christianity. The fellowship of the church is the opportunity to learn how to submit to others. The letters of 1 & 2 Corinthians are instructions on how leadership should guide others in their struggles to grow up in Christ in order to be candidates for eternal dwelling.

Introduction

(1:1-9)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1:1 *Called to be an apostle:* Paul was personally called by Jesus, and thus, he qualifies as a Christ-sent apostle (See At 9:1-6; see comments Gl 1:1). He had all the responsibility of apostleship as the other Christ-sent apostles, which responsibility was important in reference to his

corrections of the problems among the Corinthian disciples. He wrote with the authority of the word of Christ. **Will of God:** Paul was chosen to be an apostle for a specific purpose (At 9:15,16; 2 Co 1:1). **Sosthenes:** Sosthenes is possibly Paul's stenographer who actually wrote the letter under the Holy Spirit's dictation through Paul.

1:2 The church of God: This was the community of believers who belonged to God throughout Achaia. Paul notes in the second letter that he is addressing the disciples throughout all the province of Achaia (2 Co 1:1). It is significant to notice that this reference to the one church should be understood in the context of the division that prevailed among the disciples of Achaia (vss 10-13). Though they were divided among themselves over loyalty to different personalities, Paul still referred to them as one body. It is also important to understand that disciples of Achaia were meeting throughout the province in the homes of the members. This is the historical setting of the epistle, and thus, understanding this helps us to better understand the instructions that Paul gives in this letter in reference to the organic unity of the global body of Christ. **Church:** The church to which the Achaian disciples belonged was a universal body. The word "church" (*ekklesia*) would possibly better be translated assembly in this context. The *ekklesia* in Achaia was not autonomous from the worldwide body of Christ. The disciples were the presence of the *ekklesia* who resided in the province of Achaia, but were a part of the universal assembly of Christ. **Sanctified:** Every member of the body has been immersed for the remission of sins (At 2:38; 22:16). The church is thus in Christ (Rm 6:3) and of God. Because the church is of God, it is cleansed by the blood of Jesus (At 20:28; Hb 2:11; Jd 1). **Saints:** Because the church is sanctified, every member is a living saint (Rm 1:7; Ep 4:1; 1 Th 2:12; 1 Pt 2:5,9). The term "saint" refers to those who are living, and thus, they are living the godly life in the midst of unbelievers in the world. **In every place:** Not only is this letter directed to the saints who lived in Achaia at the time of writing, it is directed to all Christians throughout the world of all time. Though the disciples in Achaia had some unique problems, the

Holy Spirit addressed the one universal body in order to deal with the organic function of the worldwide body. The disciples who lived in Achaia were members of the same body that existed in all the world.

1:3 Grace: God's acceptance of the Achaian saints, in view of their prideful and divisive attitudes, exemplifies the grace of God toward His flock (See Rm 1:7). God accepted them, though they were struggling with divisive attitudes to accept one another (Compare comments Rm 14:1,2; Ph 4:2,3). They were still part of the universal church of God. Though Paul will pronounce some judgments upon the disciples, he is patient with them until they correct some sinful practices and beliefs among themselves.

1:4 Thank my God: God's grace had been extended to the saints in Achaia through Jesus (Rm 1:8; Ti 2:11). Every evangelist thus thanks God for the fruit of his labors, for it is God who extends His grace to those who obediently respond to the gospel (Compare Rm 6:3-6; see comments 2 Co 4:15).

1:5 You were enriched: Their lives were enhanced by their obedience to the gospel (See comments Jn 10:10). The gospel is the historical event upon which we emotionally stand (See comments 15:1-4). With their obedience to the gospel, came the miraculous gifts for their edification. Their lives were enhanced by the miraculous gifts that came into their lives by the laying on of Peter and Paul's hands (See comments At 8:18). Through the gift of prophecy, they preached and taught the word of God that was revealed to them.

1:6-8 Confirmed in you: When Paul first came to them, the preaching of the gospel was confirmed by miraculous works from God (See comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4; 2 Co 12:12). The truth was thus established in their minds because they witnessed the power of God working through Paul. **Not lacking in any gift:** Not only was the word of Paul confirmed by the miracles of God, it was also confirmed in them through their possession of miraculous gifts that came from the laying on of Peter and Paul's hands (12:8-12; At 8:18; 2 Co 12:13). They personally witnessed the work of God in their lives, and thus,

they were confident that God was working through them (See comments Hb 6:4-6). Their problem, therefore, did not center around a lack of faith, but a misguided use of miraculous gifts that was based on pride and sectarian attitudes among the disciples. **Waiting:** Reference here could be to the end of time, which end should be desirous of Christians as Peter proclaimed (See 2 Pt 3:13). Christians are to be "*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God*" (Ti 2:13-15; 2 Pt 3:12; see Rm 8:19,23; Ph 3:20; compare 1 Th 3:13). However, in view of the phrase "to the end" in verse 8, reference here may be to the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. This end of Israel was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus (See comments Mt 24), and thus, was another confirming work of God to manifest that Jesus was sent from Him (Jn 3:2). The destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, was God's proof that He had validated Christ over Judaism. When the early evangelists went forth to preach, they certainly taught the disciples the consummation of national Israel that was to take place in fulfillment of the prophecies of both Old and New Testament prophets and Jesus. This message was of particular interest to the Jewish Christians. Jesus reaffirmed the prophecies of the prophets in Matthew 24. The Jewish Christians were thus to stay away from Jerusalem, for its final destruction would mark the end of national Israel (See comments in intro. to Hb). **Blameless:** The word here refers to one who is without accusation. They would be without accusation because they stood justified through the blood of Jesus (See Ph 1:6; Cl 1:22; 2:7). **Day of our Lord:** This is taken from Old Testament prophetic language wherein the day of the Lord was a time of the Lord's judgments on Israel and the surrounding nations. In this context, the destruction of Jerusalem would be a day of the Lord in time in God's judgment again on national Israel. However, in a secondary sense, reference could also be to the final day of the Lord at the end of time (2 Th 1:10; 2 Tm 4:8).

1:9 God is faithful: God will bring about that which He has promised (10:13; Dt 7:9; Is 49:7; 2 Co 1:18; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 3:3). **Fellowship of His Son:** Because of the Corinthians' obedience to the gospel, they came into a covenant rela-

relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See 15:1-4; Rm 6:3-6). Their immersion into Christ brought them into an eternal relationship with God (See comments Mt 28:19,20). They were thus partakers of the divine nature through Jesus (See Jn 15:1-8).

Reply To Reports From Chloe

(1:10 – 6:20)

Outline: (1) Sectarian attitudes (1:10-17), (2) Power and wisdom of God (1:18-31), (3) Preaching the crucified Christ (2:1-5), (4) Revelation and inspiration (2:6-16), (5) Carnal thinking Christians (3:1-4), (6) Fellow workers in Christ (3:5-15), (7) The temple of God (3:16-17), (8) Be not deceived (3:18-23), (9) Servanthood versus arrogance (4:1-5), (10) Puffed up with self (4:6-13), (11) Follow me (4:14-21), (12) Purifying the church (5:1-13), (13) Lawsuits and brethren (6:1-11), (14) Belonging to God (6:12-20)

SECTARIAN ATTITUDES

The following verses portray the sectarian attitudes and denominational behavior that began to separate the disciples of Achaia from one another. Therefore, it is necessary for every Christian to be able to identify what was happening among these disciples in order to guard against divisive behavior. It is important to understand how sectarian attitudes and denominational behavior begin to splinter disciples into different groups. Though the disciples in Achaia, at the time of Paul's writing, had not digressed to the point where they were meeting as groups that had little to do with one another, their division was certainly moving in this direction. Therefore, we must view the epistles of 1 & 2 Corinthians as Paul's attempt to stop the dividing of the disciples into autonomous groups that were independent from one another. Because the disciples were meeting in different homes throughout the province, Paul wanted every disciple to feel a part of the whole body throughout the world. It was against the very nature of the organic body to be divided regardless of their meeting in different homes throughout Achaia. Any division would weaken the fellowship of the body of Christ. All that we read in 1 & 2 Corinthians, therefore, must be understood on the foundation of how all the members must relate to one another in their

freedom and fellowship in Christ. We are individually set free in Christ, but we are not free to exclude other disciples by withdrawing within ourselves.

1:10 This verse is the foundation upon which the principles that Paul teaches in 1 & 2 Corinthians are based. As we venture through his instructions, we must keep in mind the organic principle of unity with which he here introduces the instructions of the two letters. ***I urge you, brethren:*** As an evangelist, Paul's plea was to them as brethren. The situation demanded of Paul that he beg them to cease from their divisive behavior. ***Name of our Lord:*** Paul pleaded with them on the foundation that they had all been baptized in the name of one Lord. The fact that all Christians have submitted to one Lord is the foundation upon which unity must prevail (See 1 Jn 1:3). The body is organically one because each member is connected to the one Lord. It is only when men begin lording over the flock of God that division after personalities begins (See comments At 20:29,30; 1 Pt 5:1-4). The nature of the church in any region should be according to Paul's admonition of the Philippian disciples whom he exhorted to stand fast in one spirit for the sake of the gospel (See comments Ph 1:27). ***Speak the same thing:*** Unity is not based on speaking the same thing in the same way, but speaking the same fundamental teachings through the liberty of saying such in different ways. When Christians allow liberty of expressing fundamental teachings, then unity prevails over personalities and opinions. The "speaking" is not so much in reference to words, but also in speaking through "body language." They spoke with their behavior that they were united. As opposed to separation in reference to personalities and opinions, they were to participate in one another's lives. ***No divisions:*** Paul does not refer to differences of opinion. He is not saying that disciples must be cloned into using the same words of speech in order to be identified as one body. He is not affirming that the individual disciples be regimented into unity by the codification of traditions in order that every member be subjected to a catechism of regulations of men to which all must conform. Paul makes this statement in the context of the sectarian spirit that

prevailed among the Achaian disciples. He will define this in verse 12. Therefore, he pleads with them to abandon their party spirit for the sake of the unity of believers in an atmosphere of liberty (See comments At 15:10; Gl 5:1,2). Disciples must learn to treasure fundamental truth while allowing liberty in areas of opinion. Unity is a blessing from God because of our common obedience to the gospel. There is thus unity in the diversity of gifts and function. Growth in Christ necessitates learning the liberty of Christ that frees us from the structures and traditions of man-made religions. Christian maturity is characteristic of those who have learned not to use personalities, opinions or traditions as an occasion for division. Christian maturity is in allowing freedom to exist among those who seek to be united in love (Jn 13:34,35).

Perfectly joined together: The misunderstanding of some was manifested by their efforts to submit every disciple to accepted traditions, opinions, interpretations and behavioral practices. Some had taught that in order for members to be perfectly joined together, every member must be regimented into obeying the accepted opinions of certain men or accepted traditions. However, the fallibility of humanity argues against this understanding of what Paul means. There can be no atmosphere of being “perfectly joined together” as long as men seek to divide over personalities and members who seek to invade areas of liberty with dictates of humanly devised opinions and traditions. The church is perfectly joined together throughout the world when every member understands and practices freedom of expression that is based on allowing freedom in matters of opinion. At the same time, unity prevails when disciples maintain a firm stand on matters of teaching that pertains to salvation. If brethren seek to establish unity upon the basis of a codified list of legal practices and opinions that are foreign to the Scriptures, then their very actions define the sectarianism that Paul is here discussing. When different groups of disciples establish as tradition their own unique codes or methods of work, denominationalism among the disciples has occurred.

Same mind ... judgment: It is the work of every disciple to seek the answer to the prayer

of Jesus in John 17:20,21 concerning oneness of those who believe on Him (See comments Jn 17:20,21). It is the nature of the true Christian, therefore, to be seeking reasons upon which unity can be established, not points upon which division can happen. This can happen only when disciples maintain a true understanding of the freedom that they have in Christ (See comments Cl 2:20-22).

1:11 Revealed to me: The household of Chloe did not report these matters in the context of slandering brothers. On the contrary, what they reported was true. The report was made to Paul in an effort to call on Paul to aid in the problem. Paul subsequently responded by the writing of this letter. **Brethren:** At this time in their division, Paul still affirmed that they were brethren. Their division had not yet digressed to the point of disfellowship from the apostle. Though their case of divisiveness was acute, we must learn from the example of Paul. He did not seek to disfellowship these disciples because of the doctrinal and behavioral problems that are identified throughout this epistle. Those brethren who are quick to withdraw themselves from others who would behave and believe after the manner of the Achaian disciples have not yet learned the mercy and patience by which God works with new members of the body. In this context we must remember that the Achaian brethren were at the most five to six years old in the faith. Therefore, at this time of writing, God was still patient with their struggles to grow, though there would be a time when action was to be taken. In the context of this stage of their growth, the inspired epistle was written to be the Spirit's judgment to correct error that would certainly reap the "rod" from the apostle Paul upon his impending visit (4:21). Therefore, Paul writes to challenge them to correct their problems before he arrives (See 16:5-7; 2 Co 13:1-10). When he arrived, he would have to inflict the discipline of the rod. **Disputes:** There were quarrels among them. In the context of these statements, they were quarrelling over things that had no reference to biblical matters. In other words, the subject of their quarrelling in this context was not over matters of doc-

trine, but the personalities Paul here lists. It was the quarrelling that was wrong, not Paul, Apollos or Cephas.

1:12 *I am of...*: Herein is manifested the sectarian attitudes of the Achaians that was moving them toward sectarianism. They were calling themselves after different personalities. They thus became the "Paulite church," the "Apollite church" and the "Cephite church." Paul adds sarcasm here by saying that if they continue to do such, the Paulites, Apollites and Cephites would not only separate themselves from one another, but also from those who are the true church of Christ. In other words, any individual disciple cannot practice sectarianism and at the same time be considered a part of the universal church of God. Therefore, if one belongs to Christ he has no right to separate himself from others who also belong to Christ (2 Co 10:7). Fellowship is the gift of God to all those who have been immersed into a covenant relationship with Christ (See comments Gl 3:26,27; 1 Jn 1:3). Fellowship is broken only when God says it is broken. And God severs fellowship only when one violates a fundamental teaching or practices immoral behavior (5:11). When one manifests a sectarian attitude in the flock of God, therefore, he is violating the gift of God's fellowship which all who are in Christ have received as a result of their freedom in Christ.

1:13 *Is Christ divided*: The answer to the question is obvious. Christ is not divided. If one would divide Christ, then he is not of Christ. If one affirms that we have a right to join the church group of our choice, then he has manifested that he does not understand the oneness of the body, either locally or universally. Since Christ is not divided, neither can His body of members be divided.

Crucified ... baptized: In order for one to be of Christ, two things must occur: (1) Christ had to have been crucified for the one who is giving allegiance to Him, and (2) one would have to be immersed into the name of Christ. Christ has been crucified. Only those who have been immersed into Christ, therefore, belong to Christ (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Therefore, if one has not been immersed (baptized) he cannot claim to be of Christ.

1:14-17 *Lest anyone should say*: Paul possibly fol-

lowed the example of Jesus who did not personally baptize (Jn 4:2). Paul baptized the first converts, and then, he allowed them to do the baptizing of others. On his initial visit to Corinth, he remembered having baptized only Crispus (At 18:8), Gaius (Rm 16:23), and Stephanas (16:15). **Did not send me to baptize:** Paul was not sent by God to personally administer baptism as a legal act of law. He was commissioned to preach the gospel. The natural response to the gospel, however, is immersion for the remission of one's sins (At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6). Because of their sectarian attitudes, the Achaians were taking pride in the fact that certain personalities had baptized them. Paul's argument is that it does not make any difference who does the baptizing. One's salvation does not depend on anyone other than himself. There is no such teaching in the Scriptures concerning "baptismal authority," that is, one must be officially designated to baptize people. There is no teaching that says that the validity of one's baptism depends on the one who does the act of baptizing. **Preach the gospel:** This is the work of those who go forth for Jesus. They go forth to preach the death of Jesus for the sins of humanity, His burial, and His resurrection for hope to those who respond to the lordship of Jesus (15:1-4; See At 2:36-38). It is the response of people to the gospel that leads people to be immersed in order to be of Christ. **Not with wisdom of words:** Paul did not preach in order to exalt himself by use of intellectual philosophies or eloquent words. The power of his work was not in his presentation, but in that which he presented. He did not seek to distract from the glory of the cross by his own ability to present the gospel (2:1,4,13). His point in this context, therefore, is to confront the practice of the Corinthians' glorying in personalities. He states that such glorying is contrary to the glory that should be given exclusively to Jesus for His crucifixion and who He now is, for it was through Jesus that all of us have come into a covenant relationship with God (Mt 28:19,20). **Be made void:** In other words, if one's glorying is in the prideful skill of one's presentation and abilities, then his emphasis is not on the cross, but on himself. Such a person is not of the nature of one who would be a candidate for

heaven because the gospel has had no transforming effect on his character. Disciples must continually keep in mind that discipleship is not about one's self, but about giving glory to God through Jesus Christ. It is about expressing this glory of God through one's ministry to others.

POWER & WISDOM OF GOD

1:18 *Preaching of the cross:* This is the message of the evangelist. It is a message to the unbeliever. Preaching is to the unbeliever and the message is the cross. However, the message of the sacrificial work of God on the cross, and the humble servitude that such stimulates in one's life, is considered foolishness by the intellectually proud of this world (See At 17:18; 2 Co 2:15). ***Are perishing:*** Those who reject humble obedience in response to the cross remain in a state of condemnation (Mk 16:16). They are condemned because they have no atonement for their sins. Since one cannot be saved on the merit of good works (Rm 11:6; Ep 2:9,10), then the disobedient are in the process of perishing with the world because their chance for salvation is drawing to a close (At 17:18). But those who are of a humble heart, and thus, respond to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11), will be saved by the power of the gospel (vs 24; Rm 1:16). The power for salvation, therefore, rests in the cross and not in the efforts of man.

1:19 Paul's quotation of Isaiah 29:14 is meant to emphasize the point that God will eventually bring down those who stand on the abilities of their own intellect, wisdom and performance of good works. Those who would trust in their own abilities, whether religious or intellectual, will eventually perish. They will perish because they trusted in themselves and not in God. However, true wisdom is manifested in the humility of the person who submissively responds to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11).

1:20 When one understands the insignificance of the wisdom and intelligence of man in comparison to God, then he knows the answers to Paul's questions of this verse. In comparison to the wisdom of God, all human

wisdom is foolishness. The work of God through the cross proclaims as foolish, man's efforts to devise his own systems of redemption (2:6,8; 3:18,19; compare Jb 12:17; Is 33:18; 44:24,25; Mt 13:22; Rm 1:22). The conclusion to Paul's argument is that man has no chance of salvation that is based on his own abilities. Salvation is based on the cross, and thus, all who would be saved must flee to the cross (At 4:12).

1:21 *Did not know God:* The wisdom of this world is limited to this world. It is thus not within the power of the worldly wise of this world to understand the wisdom of God that was revealed through the cross (Compare comments At 17:22-31). Without God's special revelation through the inspiration of the apostles, no man would have ever known the purpose of the incarnation and crucifixion (See comments Ep 3:8-13). ***The foolishness of preaching:*** The "foolishness" about which Paul here speaks refers to the message, not the preaching, though some might consider the preaching foolishness. However, the preaching is the medium through which the message is made known to the world (See comments Rm 10:13-15). According to the world, the message was foolishness. According to the thinking of the world, it was this "foolishness" that was preached. But it was through this "foolishness" that God would save the world. It was this message, the preached gospel, which men considered foolish. The proud thus stumble over this message (See Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21; Rm 1:20). However, those who have a humble heart will accept the message through their obedience to the gospel. They are not ashamed of the humble beginnings of the gospel, for it is God's power unto their salvation (Rm 1:16).

1:22 *Jews require a sign:* As many today, the Jews sought for a miraculous signal from God because they wanted to walk by sight and not by faith (See Mt 12:38; 16:1; Mk 8:11; Jn 2:18; 4:48). ***Greeks ... wisdom:*** The Greeks trusted in their own intellectual abilities in order to arrive at truth. However, their intellectual self-sufficiency and pride led them to reject the gospel. The action of a lowly Jew dying on the cross for the salvation of mankind was simply foolishness to them.

1:23 To the Jews: Though many miraculous signs of God were given through Jesus (Jn 3:2), the Jews could not accept the humble origins and nature of Jesus as the Messiah. Their pride led them to stumble over the message of a crucified Messiah (See Is 8:14; 53; Lk 2:34; Jn 6:60; Rm 9:33; Gl 5:11; 1 Pt 2:8). Their hope was for a glorious king on earth who would lead them in rebellion against their oppressors, the Roman Empire. They envisioned a glorious restoration of Israel as it was in the days of David and Solomon. What they failed to understand in the prophecies was that the coming of the Messiah meant the consummation of national Israel. What they believed was God's final plan was actually God's means to an end. The end was in Christ and the spiritual Israel of God, the church. National Israel was only the means by which God brought the Savior into the world (See comments Gl 3:26-29). **To Gentiles:** Because the Greeks pridefully trusted in their own intellect, they also could not accept the humbleness of the Savior who was crucified on a cross outside Jerusalem (2:14). The proud Gentiles could not accept Jesus because His teachings contradicted the intellectual arrogance of their teachings that were based on philosophical pride, social haughtiness and immoral conduct.

1:24 Those who are called: When one has a submissive nature, he will respond to the gospel. Since the humility of the heart allows the gospel to affect the humble, they submit to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by immersion (Rm 6:3-6). Therefore, the gospel is the power of God unto their salvation because of their humble nature (Rm 1:16). They are the called because they are those who humbly submit to the call of their Creator (2 Th 2:14). Their obedience manifests the wisdom of God because their humble character is manifested through their obedience (See Cl 2:2,3). Since it is only those of this character who will be candidates for heavenly dwelling, then God's wisdom is revealed through His plan to call on people to submit to what the world considers to be the foolishness of the humble cross of Jesus.

1:25 Though Jesus appeared weak and foolish on the cross, His supposed weakness, and what the world

considered foolishness, actually revealed the wisdom and power of God to conquer the power of darkness (Cl 2:14,15). Therefore, in reference to the spiritual struggle between the forces of good and evil, the work of the cross far exceeded the wisdom of men. Since men of the world do not understand the raging war of the spiritual struggles between God and Satan, they could never have invented the plan of the cross as God's victory over Satan. If God had not revealed the purpose of the cross, men through the wisdom of this world could never have understood the death of a carpenter's son on a cross to be the eternal plan of redemption for the salvation of man (See comments Ep 3:3-5).

1:26 Not many wise ... mighty ... noble: Paul lists those who are less likely to humble themselves to the message of the cross. Those who excel in the wisdom of the world, or are in influential positions, or have great material possessions, usually do not obey the gospel (See Jn 7:48). They do not obey simply because their focus in life is on that which is of this world. They view obedience to the gospel as a step toward taking their minds off worldly things. They are right. When one turns to the cross, his focus must turn from the world to that which is above this world (Mt 6:24; Cl 3:1,2; Js 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15). However, those who have their security in that which is of this world will find it difficult to place their faith in God (1 Tm 6:10,17-19; see Mt 11:25). Therefore, by identifying the nature of those who will not submit to the gospel, Paul has identified those who will submit.

1:27 Weak things: God used those things the world considered weak, despised and insignificant in order to accomplish the salvation of man (Ps 8:2; Mt 11:25). He did such in order to provide a test that must be passed by all those who would seek eternal dwelling. It is a test to determine the characters of those who are qualified for dwelling in eternity with others. Therefore, those who would humbly submit to the lowliness of the cross through obedience to the gospel have qualified themselves for heaven (See comments Rm 6:3-6).

1:28 Bring to nothing: Paul's revelation of God's plan in this context helps us understand that God never in-

tended that the world as it is should be the final dwelling of His creation. The world was created only as an environment in which the characters of the redeemed would be tested and proved for candidacy for eternal dwelling. If one does not have the ability to focus his mind on things that are above this present world, then he does not have the ability to dwell in heaven. If one cannot emotionally, intellectually and spiritually transcend in thinking to that which is heavenly, then certainly he is not of a mental attitude that can dwell with God and the all saints for eternity.

1:29 No flesh should boast: Herein is the test for eternal dwelling. God requires a humble attitude of mind that is necessary for eternal life. The arrogance of man works contrary to the mental and spiritual attitudes that God requires for salvation. It is for this reason that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jr 4:6). Every person, therefore, must humble himself before God (1 Pt 5:5,6). No one who trusts in his own religious, material or physical accomplishments of this world is a candidate for eternal dwelling with those who do not trust in the things of this world (Rm 11:6; see comments Ep 2:8-10).

1:30,31 But of Him: Every Christian is in Christ by the power and work of God, not man. It was the wisdom of God that was revealed through Jesus who brought to us justification (righteousness), cleansing from sin (sanctification), and redemption by His blood for eternal dwelling. Therefore, righteousness (Jr 23:5; 33:16; Rm 4:25; 2 Co 5:21; Ph 3:9), sanctification (1:2; Jn 17:19) and redemption (Ep 1:7) are all from God, not from man. **Boast in the Lord:** Our glory is not in our works in the Lord, but in the Lord Himself (Jr 9:23,24; 2 Co 10:17). It was the Lord who accomplished our salvation, and thus, our glory is based on the grace of God who delivered us from the futility of our own efforts to save ourselves (See comments Gl 6:14). The church, therefore, does not seek its glory in what it does through good works. The church seeks to bring glory to God through good works (See 2 Co 4:15).

Chapter 2

PREACHING THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

2:1 Excellent speech ... wisdom: When Paul first went to Corinth (At 18), he did not resort to the abilities of men in speech or wisdom in order to appeal to the Corinthians (1:17; 2 Co 10:10). His preaching focused on the gospel (15:1-4). The appeal and power of his preaching was in the gospel, not in his own abilities to preach the gospel (Rm 1:16). Those who have the ability to lead people through skillful speech, therefore, should caution themselves. They must focus the minds of the people on the message, not themselves as the messenger.

2:2 Jesus Christ and Him crucified: Every preacher in his evangelistic work among the lost of the world should focus on this subject. Preaching the gospel among the lost helps prevent preachers from preaching the philosophies and religions of men. In his evangelistic outreach to the Corinthians, Paul focused on preaching the sacrificial death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (15:1-4; see comments 1:23; 15:1-4; Gl 6:14). This was his message to the unbelievers. Preaching, therefore, is a means of communicating the message of the gospel to unbelievers, not the believers, for the believers already know the message.

2:3 Weakness: When he preached in Corinth, Paul realized his own emotional inabilities because of the circumstances in reference to his life (2 Co 4:7; 10:10). **Fear ... trembling:** Though Paul's faith was in God, he was anxious for his life when he preached in the city of Corinth on his initial visit. Because of the hostility of the environment, the Lord had to come to him in the night in a special vision in order to comfort him (Compare At 18:9,10; Rm 16:3,4).

2:4 Demonstration of the power of the Spirit: Paul's proclamation of the gospel came as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not through his skill to deliver great speeches to the people (Compare 2 Pt 1:16). What he spoke was confirmed by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit (Mk 16:20; Rm 15:19; 1 Th 1:5; Hb 2:3,4).

2:5 Because the Spirit worked in a miraculous manner through Paul, the faith of the Corinthians was not based

on the intellect or abilities of Paul. Their faith was based on God who miraculously revealed Himself through Paul, and thus, confirmed the message that Paul preached, that it was from God, not Paul (See 2 Co 12:12; see comments 1 Th 1:5).

REVELATION & INSPIRATION

2:6 In the following verses, Paul explains the method by which God worked in him to reveal the mystery of salvation to the Corinthians and all men. **Perfect:** The inspired wisdom that was given was spoken to those who were receptive because of the humility of their hearts. Paul's definition of the mature, therefore, depicts those who are receptive to the message of their Creator. One thus judges himself spiritually immature when he or she rejects the gospel. **Wisdom of this age:** In contrast to the crafty speeches of great speakers who focus on wisdom that originates exclusively from this world, Paul's message originated from God (See comments Gl 1:11,12). **Brought to nothing:** All that is of the world, and focuses on worldly things, is coming to an end (Compare Is 14; 2 Pt 3). But the word of the Lord will continue throughout eternity (Ps 102:25,26; Is 51:6; Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:23-25; 2 Pt 3:10).

2:7 The wisdom of God: The New Testament apostles and prophets were given the word of God through inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pt 1:20,21). In this context, specific emphasis is on the mystery of salvation that was revealed directly from God (Ep 3:4,5; 6:19; Cl 1:26). This was the plan of God to save men. It was in the mind of God before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8).

2:8 Because of their envious hearts, the Jewish religious leaders did not know the wisdom of the cross. It was not because God did not reveal Jesus to them (See Lk 23:34). If their envious hearts had not clouded their minds, then they would have recognized that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God. If they had recognized the sonship of Jesus, then they would not have crucified Him (Mt 27:33-50; Jn 16:3; At 3:17; 1 Tm 1:13).

2:9 Paul's quotation here of Isaiah 64:4 and 65:17 is for the purpose of calling our attention to the marvelous

mystery of the plan of redemption that was in the mind of God before the creation of the world (See comments Rv 13:8; 17:8). In the foreknowledge of God, God knew the fallibility of man. The fall of Adam was thus foreknown (Rm 8:29,30). And since the fall was foreknown, there was of necessity the foreplanning of the plan of redemption that would deliver man from his fall into sin (15:20,21).

2:10 Through His Spirit: Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God revealed to the apostles the plan of redemption for all men. The revelation was precious to those who had obedient hearts (Mt 11:25; 13:11; 16:17; see Gl 1:12; Ep 3:3-5). The revelation of the plan, therefore, depended on the work of God to reveal such, but also on the hearts of humble people who would recognize the work of God through the cross. Those who have a rebellious heart will not recognize the work of God through the cross. Therefore, they do not accept the message of the gospel to be from God. **Deep things of God:** The things that were revealed were "deep" because they could not have been discovered through the intellectual abilities and wisdom of man. They had to be revealed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to those who were searching for truth and deliverance from sin (2 Tm 3:16,17; see comments Jn 14:26; 16:13). Therefore, it was only by direct revelation from God that the apostles could have known the mystery concerning the incarnation of Jesus and the salvation that was provided through the cross. When Jesus was crucified at Calvary, the apostles first understood the death of Jesus to be only an unfortunate termination of their hopes that Jesus would be their Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression (See Lk 24:21). It was not until the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, that the purpose of the crucifixion was revealed to them (See comments At 2:29-36). In other words, if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire the minds of the apostles, the crucifixion would have gone down in history as just another execution of another of the thousands of Jews who were crucified on crosses by the Romans. It was through revelation that the event of the cross that the apostles

experienced was linked with the eternal plan of redemption.

2:11 *What man knows:* No one can know the thoughts of another unless one's thoughts are revealed through communication. ***Spirit of man:*** See comments 1 Th 5:23. ***The things of God:*** No one could have known the mind of God if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal God's mind to man. It is beyond the ability of the mind of man alone to comprehend the true nature of God. Though we can reason from observation of the created world that God exists, we cannot understand the character and plans of God unless such is directly revealed to man (See comments Rm 1:20). God has thus revealed Himself through the inspired words of revelation, and also through Jesus. We study the Bible in order to understand God.

2:12,13 *Not the spirit of the world:* The gospel was not invented by the skillful intellect of spiritual men (See comments Gl 1:11,12). ***Words ... the Spirit teaches:*** The Holy Spirit identified the crucifixion of Jesus as the work of God. It was not just the execution of another Jew. Since the Spirit identified the cross as the work of God, therefore, Paul here affirms that the preaching of the cross is the work of the Spirit to communicate the plan of redemption to the world. It was the work of the Spirit to inspire the apostles to identify the cross as the eternal revelation of God to save all men. In doing this, the Spirit connected all that Jesus had taught the apostles to God's eternal plan of redemption (See comments Jn 14:26; 16:13). The knowledge of the purpose of the cross, therefore, was through the revelation of God. By inspiration of the Spirit, that which was revealed was recorded for us to read in these very words of Paul. Inspiration is the work of the Spirit to guide men to record the revelation of God. There is thus a difference between revelation and inspiration. All Scripture is the result of the inspiration of the Spirit, but not all Scripture is revelation from God. Certain historical facts and people were known by the inspired writers. However, it was by inspiration that the writers knew that these personalities and historical facts should be recorded in Scripture.

Therefore, all Scripture is inspiration. People, places and events that were personally known by the inspired writers are revelation only in the sense that the Spirit wanted such people, places and events recorded in the Bible for all to know.

2:14 *The natural man:* This is the uninspired man. In contrast to the Greeks who trusted in their philosophical intellect, and the Jews who trusted in their heritage, the inspired man trusted in the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. ***Foolishness to him:*** Paul here contrasts the natural man, who considered the gospel foolishness (1:20-25), with the spiritual man whom God used in order to reveal that the cross was the plan of redemption of God for man. Because the natural man is proud and arrogant, he does not receive the message of the gospel. He cannot because he trusts in those things that are of this world (See comments 1:26-30; compare comments Mt 16:23). ***Spiritually discerned:*** Because the mentality of the natural man originates from the world, he will first of all not recognize that the gospel event of the cross and empty tomb were the work of God to save man. Second, since he does not recognize the gospel event as the work of God, he will not consider humbling himself before the crucifixion of Jesus on a cross.

2:15 In contrast to those who pride themselves in the wisdom of this world, the apostles first received and accepted the revelation of God that the cross was more than the crucifixion of another Jew. It was in fact the work of God to bring into action the eternal plan of redemption. When this message was preached, spiritually minded men accepted the cross by humbling themselves before God in obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3-6). ***Judged by no one:*** Since the message of the cross was revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, the apostles cannot be judged by the intellectual standards of this world. The cross refers to things of God. Such things cannot be judged by those things that are of this world. And thus, those who have obeyed the gospel are also not judged by the standard of the things of this world.

2:16 Paul asks who would be so presumptuous as to judge God. Since no man can judge God, then certainly

no one can judge those through whom God has worked by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes these statements in the context of those in Achaia who were questioning his apostleship. There were those arrogant disciples who accused that he was just another man preaching a message that was the result of his intellectual abilities and clever speech. By affirming his inspiration, Paul begins in this context with his defense of his apostleship. Those arrogant members who trusted in their own intellectual abilities needed to understand that what he spoke was delivered to him by revelation of God and preached by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See comments Gl 1:11,12).

Chapter 3

CARNAL THINKING CHRISTIANS

3:1 The past tense of the verbs in verses 1 & 2 indicates that Paul's initial delivery of teaching after he preached the gospel had to be "milk" because they did not have the spiritual background or maturity upon which the "meat" of the word of God could be taught. Corinth did not have the spiritual background as other areas where the gospel was preached to spiritually minded Jews (See At 17:11). The rebuke here is that they were still not ready to receive the meat because of their carnal thinking. **Carnal ... infants in Christ:** The Corinthians, in general, had not grown in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (Hb 5:12; 2 Pt 3:18). They were "puffed up" and divisive in their relationships with one another. They had every sign of still being carnal in their attitudes, and thus, they were unable to discern a message that could be understood by spiritually minded people. In this sense, therefore, they were babes in Christ. Paul's point is that the spiritual maturity of a Christian will determine one's ability to understand and apply the word of God. If one is driven by selfish ambition, arrogance and worldly thinking, it will be difficult for him to understand the servant nature of being a disciple.

3:2 Milk and not with meat: The pride, that led to divisions among the disciples in all Achaia, made it difficult for them to digest the weightier matters of truth.

In their divisions over personalities, and the issues that referred to salvational matters, their minds were unable to discern, and thus focus on the weightier matters of Christianity (Compare comments Mt 23:23,24). They had not grown to the point of recognizing Satan's work to divert their attention to focus on nonessential issues that lead to division (See comments Ti 3:9-11). Since the Corinthian Christians were at this time from five to six years old or less in the faith, these exhortations of Paul reveal to us that God expects Christians by this time to have grown out of the attitudes and actions that are characteristic with babes in Christ. Those who have been Christians for longer than this, and yet, continue to divide over personalities and issues of opinion that have no reference to salvation, manifest their immaturity (See comments Hb 5:12-13). There is a time in one's spiritual growth in Christ, therefore, when he ceases being a babe in Christ to being a cantankerous, ill-tempered and divisive person. With babes, patience must be exercised in order that they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. With cantankerous and divisive brethren, exhortation and rebuking must be carried out in order that they repent of their divisive attitudes and practices (See comments 2 Tm 2:23; Ti 3:9-11). The brother who creates division over non-biblical issues is warped and sinning (Compare comments Rm 16:17,18; Gl 5:1,2).

3:3 Carnal: Paul's judgment is direct and true. Though they had been Christians for only a few years, God had expected that by this time they would have grown out of the childishness of arrogant and divisive attitudes. This statement of Paul is thus God's measuring rule by which we would judge ourselves. If we maintain the attitudes and actions of the Corinthians who had been Christians for only a few years by the time this statement was made, then we are judged by God to be carnal. The presence of carnality, therefore, is revealed through envy, strife and divisions over senseless issues. Those who would behave after this manner among the disciples are behaving as men with worldly minds. They are not spiritual. They are carnal, and thus immature.

3:4 It is here that Paul gives an example of how to

identify the nature of those who are carnal minded (See 1:11,12; Gl 5:20). In this case, they were dividing over their allegiance to personalities. However, the division may have gone beyond the personalities to taking sides with the particular opinions that were expressed by either Paul, Cephas or Apollos. In matters of opinion, Paul, Cephas and Apollos had a right to give their opinions. In chapter 7 Paul gives his opinion on some matters concerning marriage. He gives his opinion in this letter in reference that one not marry in times of distress in which the church was at the time of writing (See comments 7:25,26,36). He simply expressed his opinion, not a mandate to be obeyed. Cephas and Apollos may have expressed a different opinion on this or other matters. The disciples throughout Achaia, therefore, were possibly dividing over the opinions of the great men who had worked throughout the province. Their carnal thinking, therefore, was manifested in exalting one personality above another. In these matters of division, Paul identifies as carnal the divisive practice of promoting personalities to substantiate one's particular party. In matters of revealed truth, every inspired worker spoke the same message. If one sought to divide over the inspired spoken message, then he was accusing the Spirit of revealing a different message through different individuals. But those things that were revealed through the Spirit were not contradictory, regardless of the speaker. If two speakers spoke contradictory messages, but claimed to be speaking by the same Spirit, then one or both were self-deceived

FELLOW WORKERS IN CHRIST

3:5 *Who ... but servants:* Paul, Apollos and others were only instruments through whom the gospel and truth were communicated throughout Achaia (At 15:4; Rm 15:16; 2 Co 3:3,6; 4:1; 5:18; 6:1; Ep 3:7; Cl 1:25; 1 Tm 1:12). God's instruments in evangelism should not be used as the occasion for division. Therefore, Christians should not call themselves after the evangelistic instruments by which God seeks to communicate the gospel to the world (Compare Rm 10:14,15). If Paul refused, in this context,

to allow men to call themselves after him, then certainly no other servant of God should allow God's sheep to be called after himself (See comments At 10:25,26).

3:6 I have planted: Paul was the first to preach the gospel in the province of Achaia (4:15; 9:1; 15:1; At 18:4; 2 Co 10:14). **Apollos watered:** After Paul, came Apollos who edified and strengthened the disciples (At 18:24-27). These two evangelists, therefore, worked in two different ministries in order to establish the church in Achaia. Paul was the church planter. Apollos was the church builder. In church planting and growing, there are those who have the skills to plant. There are those who have the skills for edification and growth. Every evangelist should consider his God-given gifts in reference to these two fields of work in order to accomplish the work of God to prepare men for heavenly dwelling. **Increase:** Credit for the increase in conversions of the lost and spiritual growth of the saved must be given to God. Since God is the author of the message of the gospel, and the truth by which members are edified, then it is He who should receive all credit for our spiritual growth. The evangelists are only messengers that God uses in order to deliver to man the means by which they can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (See comments At 20:32; 2 Pt 3:18).

3:7 It is man's work to plant and nourish the seed of the kingdom. However, the fruit is produced by God. No man can claim credit for the fruit of the seed because he only planted or nourished the seed (Compare 2 Co 12:11). All credit must go to God for the increase because it is He who originated the plan of redemption.

3:8 Are one: As evangelists, Paul and Apollos had the same goal. They sought to convert and nourish. The result of their work should not minimize the labors of either. Therefore, it is wrong to cause division by comparing either the personalities or labors of the evangelists. Carnal thinking is manifested when Christians exalt and compare the efforts of one evangelist with another. It is also carnal when an evangelist compares his particular ministry, in a competitive manner, with that of another. Each evangelist has different gifts, and thus, each works in different areas of ministry. God never meant

that every evangelist be cloned into the exact same ministry in order to take the gospel to the world and edify the church (See comments ch 12). **Reward according to his own labor:** We would not presume that degrees of reward are here assumed by Paul. Emphasis is on receiving the reward as a result of the labor. The reward is not based on the meritorious abilities of one evangelist over another. Paul is not promoting a competitive manner by which evangelists labor in order to receive greater prizes in heaven. Such an interpretation would argue against the very argument he is making in the context. He is simply stating that those who labor in their particular areas of ministry will be rewarded because of their faithful labor (Rm 2:6).

3:9 Laborers together: Every member of the body must remember this point. We work together, not against one another (Mk 16:20; At 15:4; 2 Co 6:1). And because we work together, the body is edified (See comments Ep 4:11-16). **God's field:** The heart of every man is the field wherein the seed of the kingdom is planted. **God's building:** The universal church is built on the foundation of the sonship and messiahship of Jesus (See comments Mt 16:18,19; see 1 Co 3:6; Ep 2:20-22; Cl 2:7; Hb 3:3,4; 1 Pt 2:5). Paul's metaphor emphasizes the fact that the spiritual result of fellow workers belongs to God, for it is based on the foundation of the work of God through Jesus.

3:10 Grace of God: Paul credits the power of his ministry to the favor of God. He did not work on his own. He labored as a result of God's choosing him for the purpose of preaching the gospel (See comments At 9:15; compare 1 Co 15:10). **Laid the foundation:** Paul laid the foundation in Achaia by preaching the messiahship and sonship of Jesus (Mt 16:18,19). Those who obeyed the gospel were subsequently built upon Jesus (vs 11; 4:15; Ep 2:20; 2 Tm 2:19; 1 Pt 2:6). **Take heed:** If one builds on his own abilities or personality, then that which he builds has an unstable foundation. The sectarian mentality of some disciples can be traced to those who built the church around their own personality, and not Jesus. The fruit of one's construction may not manifest itself until years after the evangelist is gone. If one has built upon the founda-

tion of his own personality, then the fruit will be division among the disciples with succeeding personalities that will come to minister to the disciples. If a church group is built around a single personality, then the fruit of such would be separation from other disciples who are either built on Christ or another personality. In either of the preceding cases, sectarianism among disciples, and thus the work of the laborer, is manifested to be self-destructive.

3:11-13 No other foundation: If disciples are built solidly on Christ, then there is fellowship among all disciples in all the world (See Ep 2:20; 1 Pt 2:4). Jesus Christ is the source from which all fellowship flows. Therefore, when Christians are focused on Jesus, they are naturally brought together into fellowship with one another. **Gold, silver, precious stones:** This is that group of disciples who are able to stand the test of carnal spirits and trying times. They are spiritually strong because they are built on Christ. They are the good soil in which the seed of the kingdom has been planted. **Wood, hay, straw:** These are those disciples who have been built upon the foundation of personalities, opinions and traditions. In times of trial, they are easily consumed. **The day will declare it:** There are three possibilities as to what "day" Paul has in mind. First, this could be the day of persecution and trial. Second, it could refer to the day of God's judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This would be the day of judgment in time when the righteous of the kingdom would shine forth as the people of God. Third, it could also refer to the last day wherein the final judgment will result in a separation of the righteous from the unrighteous (Mt 25:46). Here, reference is to those of the church, and thus, regardless of the day of judgment, it will be manifested whether a work is "wood, hay, straw" or "gold, silver, precious stones." The results of each day of judgment will be the same. The fiery trials of persecution will weed out those who are built on personalities and opinions (See comments Mt 13:20,21). The destruction of Jerusalem will signal that God is with His people. The fiery judgment of Jesus' coming will weed out the unrighteous (2 Th 1:7-9).

3:14 Receive a reward: Since the reward is here stated to be in the future, the day of testing would possibly be an in-time judgment of one's work. If disciples, who have been firmly planted in Jesus, endure through the fiery trials of life, then the evangelist will receive a reward in the end.

3:15 Work is burned: Paul had built on the solid foundation of Jesus. However, because of the carnality of the Corinthians, they had digressed his work to squabbles over personalities and opinions. Though the Corinthians might fall away, Paul would still receive his reward for his labors. Though the loss of those for whom he had labored would be a great disappointment, he would not lose his reward. Therefore, one's salvation is not dependent on the faithfulness of another. Regardless of the end result of an evangelist's labors, the evangelist will be saved because he did the faithful work of evangelism and edification.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

3:16 The temple of God: Paul's metaphor here is taken from the Old Testament. The temple of Jerusalem represented the presence of God with Israel, though God does not literally dwell in temples that are made with the hands of men (See comments At 17:26-28). The temple simply illustrated that God was working in Israel to carry out His eternal purpose of the cross. In this context, Paul affirmed that the disciples throughout Achaia were parts of the temple of God. The existence of Christians was God's evidence to the province that God was working. **Spirit ... dwells in you:** The members of the body in Achaia, therefore, were the manifestation of the work of the Spirit in the province as men and women humbly lived changed lives (See 6:19; 2 Co 6:16). Their witness of God in the city was not built around their assemblies, but in their godly behavior with one another.

3:17 Defiles the temple: There were some disciples in the province who were defiling the body by their divisive attitudes and practices (See 1:12). The word "defile" here means to defile unto the point of destruction. **God will destroy him:** Those who endanger the sheep of God

will be dealt with by God (2 Th 1:7-9). It is a serious matter to manipulate or endanger the flock of God in any way. Those who work in a divisive manner in order to denominate the sheep by calling them after personalities and party opinions will be harshly dealt with by God (See Pv 6:17-19; At 20:28-31; Rm 16:17; 1 Pt 5:1-4; 3 Jn 9,10). **Holy:** Christians have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and separated from the world (Ep 1:7). They are thus a spiritual house and a holy priesthood (See comments 1 Pt 2:5,9).

BE NOT DECEIVED

3:18 Fool ... be wise: The wisdom of this world puffs up (Pv 3:7). Those who are intellectually proud, therefore, must humble themselves in order to accept the humble nature of the gospel (Js 4:6,7; 1 Pt 5:6,7; see comments Mt 5:3-12). From what Paul states as a problem with some in Achaia, there seems to be the presence of a spiritual arrogance as Gnosticism. This false religious philosophy promoted the belief that an encounter with one's inner self gave him special insight to discern spiritual things. The fundamental world view of this belief promoted an arrogant "spiritual" attitude in those who claimed to have greater inner awareness over those who were considered by them to be less spiritual. Whether Paul's context surrounds those who took pride in the wisdom of the world, or the "spiritual" wisdom of the Gnostics, the point he makes applies to both parties. One must humbly submit to the message of the cross in order to be considered wise in the eyes of God (1:23,24). It is not one's intellect, but submission to God, that brings him into a close relationship with God.

3:19 Wisdom of this world: When one seeks to compare the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God, the wisdom of man becomes insignificant and foolish. Man's greatest intellectual achievements are only elementary matters in comparison to the wisdom and knowledge of God. Therefore, one would certainly be arrogant to claim that he is spiritually above accepting the wisdom of God as revealed through the cross. **Catches the wise:** God knows, and thus, will condemn those who have re-

fused to submit to the cross because of their intellectual arrogance (See Jb 5:13). The occasion of the cross gives each man the opportunity to judge whether he is wise or foolish. Those who are truly wise accept the cross. Those who are puffed up in their own intellects will reject the cross.

3:20-22 *The Lord knows:* The omniscience of God allows Him to know the innermost thoughts and motives of all men (Ps 94:11). Since God knows all things, one should be very cautious about boasting. We may be boasting out of pride, and not a humble heart. One should not boast in the accomplishments of either Paul, Apollos or Cephas. One does not know the heart of man as God, and thus, one may boast in one who has an unrighteous heart. ***All things are yours:*** God has revealed all things that pertain to godliness (2 Pt 1:3). All things had been revealed to them that were “*profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (2 Tm 3:16,17). Therefore, they needed nothing in reference to their salvation other than what God had given them. The world could offer them no wisdom or knowledge that would be beneficial toward their salvation. It was foolish, therefore, for them to seek the knowledge and wisdom of men in order to merit their salvation (Compare 2 Co 4:5). All things of the world are given to the Christian for the purpose of bringing him into eternal glory (See Mt 5:4; Jn 10:10; 1 Pt 1:3). Since all the Achaian disciples had received all things necessary for belief and behavior, then not one of them, or any group among them, could exalt themselves over the others. In reference to their blessings, they had all things in common.

3:23 Since we belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God, then Christians are in possession of the world that belongs to God (Compare Rm 14:8). The Christian's attitude toward the world, therefore, is not to be possessed by the world. He must understand that the world is possessed for the purpose of providing an environment to prepare him for a greater world beyond this present world (2 Pt 3:13).

Chapter 4

SERVANTHOOD VERSUS ARROGANCE

4:1 Servants ... stewards: Paul, Peter and Apollos were stewards of God in the sense that they had been entrusted with the gospel (9:17; Lk 12:42; Ti 1:7; 1 Pt 4:10). They were servants in the sense that they ministered the gospel to the world (Mt 24:45; Rm 13:6; 2 Co 3:6; Cl 1:25).

4:2,3 Trustworthy: Or, responsible. Stewards must be faithful in their ministry to care for that which has been entrusted to them. In this case, they must be faithful in preaching the gospel that had been delivered to them by God. Those who have heard and obeyed the gospel have the responsibility to share it with others. **Very small thing:** There were some in Achaia who were critical of Paul. They had set themselves up as judges concerning what they thought he should be doing. However, these self-appointed judges did not affect the decisions of Paul concerning what he knew he should be doing as a steward of God. He had not been sent out by the church of Achaia. He was not supported by them. Therefore, the judgments of those who questioned either his motives or actions were of little concern to him. He was God's man who had been chosen for a specific destiny (At 9:15). **I do not judge my own self:** Paul did not judge himself. He had been called by Jesus to accomplish a mission to the Gentiles. Since he would not rely on his own judgment, then certainly he would not be directed by the judgment of others.

4:4,5 He who judges: Though Paul did not know of any areas where he was behaving contrary to the will of God, he did not consider himself to have been meritoriously justified before God because of his behavior. God is the only trustworthy judge because He judges the heart from the perspective of grace and truth. **Judge nothing before the time:** This is Paul's rebuke of those who set themselves up as judges concerning his ministry. He exhorts that judgment should first be left to the Lord, and then, the judgment of the Lord will take place when He comes again (15:58). When the Lord does judge, there will be nothing hidden from Him (Mt 10:26). All that is in a man's heart will be made known (3:13; Rm 2:16,29;

2 Co 5:10). Paul is confident that he will be found true, faithful and pure at the final judgment. It will be then that God will give praise to the faithful stewards (See 3:8; Rm 2:29).

PUFFED UP WITH SELF

It is at this point in the letter that Paul begins to deal specifically with the central problem of some who were among the Corinthian disciples. This problem was an attitude of arrogant self-righteousness. They were “puffed up” (vs 6, 4:18,19; 5:2; 13:4). This attitude, that was characteristic of many in the church, led to the many problems with which Paul dealt in this letter.

4:6 You might learn: Paul uses himself and Apollos as examples of men from whom we should learn to model our lives. The model he wants us to understand is that we should allow our lives to be governed by the word of God. The principle he wants us to understand is that our pride should not lead us to think that we know more in reference to spirituality than that which has been written (See comments 2 Jn 9,10). When one behaves with an attitude of pride, he often goes beyond that which is written by binding where God has not bound or loosing where God has not loosed. He seeks to trust in his own religiosity, and by doing such, he pridefully trusts in his own religious inventions or thinking. **Take pride:** Those who trust in their own religious inventions often become arrogant in their relationships with their fellow disciples. They set themselves up as standards by which they judge others. When one is religiously puffed up, he always considers himself the judge of others.

4:7 These penetrating questions were asked in order to set the stage for correcting their attitudes. The arrogant attitudes of some were the foundation upon which division existed. The arrogant never have a good relationship with their fellow disciples. **Superior:** The Corinthians were the ones who were responsible for their own divisions. What spiritual gifts and blessings they had did not originate from themselves. All such things were the gift of God. “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven” (Jn 3:27; see Rm 12:3,6;

1 Pt 4:10). Therefore, they could not claim any credit for that which had been given to them through the grace of God. They received the miraculous gifts from Paul and Peter (See comments At 8:18). They could not, therefore, boast as if they had not received them from God. They had received the miraculous gifts through the medium of Paul and Peter, but their arrogance led them to judge the apostles from whom they had received the blessing. They were the recipients of the blessings of God that came through the apostles, and now they were exalting themselves above the apostles. Through their arrogant attitudes, some led themselves to believe that they had the right to be a judge of Paul and his ministry.

4:8 *You are ... full ... rich ... have reigned:* Paul is here sarcastic in reference to their attitudes. Their arrogance led them to feel overconfident in themselves and spiritually rich in comparison to one another. They thus puffed themselves up as kings. They presented themselves to be a people of chiefs and no slaves. We do not assume that everyone among the disciples manifested such arrogant attitudes. The households of Chloe and Stephanas were troubled about the situation, and thus reported to Paul. However, those who are described here were questioning Paul's apostleship, and thus his Christ-sent responsibility in these matters. Therefore, Paul rebukes the arrogant false teachers among them who boasted of having all things and of being rich with their "spiritual" arrogance. Their attitudes moved them to reign as arrogant kings among the brethren. These prideful teachers thus intimidated the members into following after teachings that were bound beyond that which was written (vs 6; 2 Jn 9,10). The fact was that they were not reigning. They were tearing down the body because of their arrogant attitudes. ***I wish:*** Paul was being very sarcastic. He desired, however, that they humble themselves to motives that were constructive. He could then join with them in building them up.

4:9 *The apostles last:* The irony of what Paul writes is revealed by his contrast of the self-righteous lives of the false teachers with the sacrificial lives of himself and the apostles who actually preached the gospel throughout

Achaia. **Spectacle to the world:** By describing the life and work of the apostles, Paul portrayed the true position and persecution that came with the life of a servant of Jesus (See Hb 10:32,33). Though they labored on behalf of the risen Christ, they were persecuted by the unbelievers. In this case, they were being arrogantly judged by some disciples who were novices in the faith.

4:10 Fools for Christ's sake: In the opinion of worldly minded people who did not understand them, the apostles were fools (1:18,21; At 17:18; 26:24). They were fools in that they suffered great persecution in order to preach the message of a Jew who was crucified on a cross in Palestine. However, the world was foolish for not accepting what they taught. The false teachers of Achaia seem to have been assuming positions and possessions in their efforts to "reign as kings." In contrast to this lifestyle, the apostles accepted persecution and poverty (2 Co 11:27; 13:9; see At 3:6; 23:2; Rm 8:35; Ph 4:12). Therefore, the proof of the apostles' sincerity was manifested in the hardships through which they willingly went in order to preach the gospel. Paul's indirect challenge to the arrogant false teachers, therefore, was that he would like to see persecution and poverty in their lives as a result of their preaching of the gospel among the nations. If their lives were worthy of the gospel (Ph 1:27), they would also be that which they judged the apostles, that is, "fools," "weak," and "dishonored" for the sake of preaching the gospel to the world. It is evident that these self-appointed judges of the apostles and evangelists were, from the comforts of their Corinthian castles, quick to launch judgments against those who were in the heat of the battle. Paul's reply to them is that they join him in the battle, and then, he would consider their judgments. It is often easy for those who are not personally involved in the war of world evangelism on the front lines to set themselves up as judges over those who are.

4:11 What Paul describes here in reference to the lives of himself and other apostles is evidence that their witness to the risen Christ is true. We cannot explain the willful suffering and persecutions through which all these men went without their having actually experi-

enced the revelation of God through Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. The picture of their lives in this verse certainly distinguishes them from the materialistic life of some religious leaders in the world today who use religion as a means for material gain.

4:12,13 Working with our own hands: Throughout most of his mission journeys, Paul supported himself by making tents (See At 18:3; 20:34; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8; 1 Tm 4:10). Herein is revealed Paul's test of the sincere evangelist. He supports himself as he preaches the gospel. Preachers who so labor should receive honor for their sacrificial work. The nature of Paul's challenge to the arrogant teachers of Corinth is that they should manifest their sincerity by supporting themselves. Paul's statement here assumes that some of the arrogant teachers were extracting support from the disciples in Achaia. His challenge to them was that they needed to get a job and support themselves as he did. **Being reviled ... persecuted:** This would be the true test of those who would be evangelists for God. In order to take the gospel to the world, they must be willing to endure what Paul here describes (See Mt 5:44; Lk 6:28; 23:34; At 7:60; Rm 12:14). Those who seek to be servants of God, as Jesus and the apostles, must be willing to accept the persecution and poverty that comes with the work (Mk 10:17-22; Lk 9:23,57-62). If their witness as a Christian calls for persecution and poverty, then they must be willing to suffer the cost of the cross.

FOLLOW ME

4:14 Beloved children: The church in Achaia had been infiltrated with the Greek intellectualism that was prevalent in their culture. The intellectual, and supposedly "spiritual" arrogance of some, had caused contentions among them. Paul thus admonishes them as a father would his children (2 Co 6:13; 12:14; 1 Th 2:11; 1 Jn 2:1; 3 Jn 4). However, his admonition could go beyond the words of this letter. **I warn you:** As a Christ-sent apostle, Paul was going to Achaia. He was going to correct matters that only a Christ-sent apostle could correct and in a manner by which only a Christ-sent apostle could.

He was going to exercise the rod of discipline (See comments 2 Co 12:19 – 13:4).

4:15 I have brought you forth: The Greek word here (*paidagogous*) refers to one who is a tutor of a child. Paul uses an exaggeration in order to emphasize his point. They had countless tutors pulling them to and fro with every wind of teaching. However, they had only one father concerning their birth into Christ. Paul was the one who first preached the gospel to them. They were born again by their obedience to the gospel which he preached (2 Th 2:14; see At 18:11; Gl 4:19; Js 1:18; 1 Pt 1:22,23).

4:16,17 Be imitators of me: “Imitate” comes from the Greek word (*mimaitais*) which is the word from which the English word “mimic” is derived. Paul wanted them to mimic his life-style (vs 6; 11:1; Ph 3:17; 4:9; 1 Th 1:6; 2 Th 3:9). **Faithful:** Timothy was converted by Paul (See intro. to 1 Tm). **Who will remind you:** Paul was sending Timothy to Corinth in order to remind them of both his behavior and teaching (11:2; At 19:22; Ph 2:19). **In every assembly:** The Holy Spirit had revealed a consistent teaching of the apostles (Compare Jn 14:26; 16:13). All apostles taught the same fundamental teachings throughout the 1st century world. The harmony of their message was evidence of their inspiration. No group of men could independently teach a harmonious teaching as the apostles did if they were not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Any man who claims to speak for God, but contradicts the teachings of the Bible, is not speaking from God. One would be presumptuous to speak contrary to the word of God while at the same time claiming to be inspired by God.

4:18 Some are arrogant: Though arrogance was manifested among the disciples, we must not assume that all of them had followed after the arrogance of the few. Paul here states that those who are arrogant are saying that he will not personally come to them in order to defend himself. They had accused that he was “weak” (vs 10). They thus assumed that he would not come. Paul assumes that they might deduct from his sending of Timothy that he was afraid to personally come himself. But they are wrong.

4:19 If the Lord wills: Though it was his decision to

go to Corinth, Paul realized that his life was still subject to the circumstances that might befall him. Therefore, it was the Lord's will in the sense that the Lord made it possible for him to go (See At 18:21; Hb 6:3; Js 4:15). Therefore, Paul believed that the Lord worked in some ways that were not perceived through sight. This is commonly referred to as the providential work of the Lord to carry out His work in the lives of His servants. **But the power:** When Paul came, there would be a confrontation between Paul and the arrogant false teachers. Paul would be coming with the miraculous power of a Christ-sent apostle. The sermon of words was conveyed through this epistle. Therefore, when he went to Achaia it would not be a time for talk, but for miraculous judgment action unleashed through a Christ-sent apostle (See At 5:1-11; 18:8-11; 1 Tm 1:20).

4:20 The kingdom of God: The reign of God, as it is manifested from heaven, is not manifested in word alone. The word of truth came by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. However, the words of truth were simply words without the miraculous power of God that was poured forth from heaven to confirm the preached word (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Therefore, the church exists because the word of God was confirmed by the power that was manifested from the kingdom reign of God in heaven (2:4).

4:21 The Achaians had the choice concerning the nature of the coming visit of Paul. If they repented, then Paul could come without having to exercise his responsibility of administering physical discipline (See comments 1 Tm 1:20). **Rod:** The "rod" was not a hard sermon that would be delivered to rebuke them for their arrogance. It would be the unleashing of God's discipline such as was witnessed by the Jerusalem disciples at the very beginning (See comments At 5:1-11). The warning concerning the coming with the rod, therefore, was a stern warning to those arrogant teachers among them (See comments 2 Co 12:9 - 13:4).

Chapter 5

PURIFYING THE CHURCH

In this chapter Paul discusses an immoral situation

that was tolerated among the disciples. It was a situation wherein the members manifested their inability, or unwillingness, to deal with immorality within their fellowship. The immorality involved a family matter, and thus, the entire body for some reason failed to respond by disfellowshipping the one involved in the immorality. In this case, a brother was living with his father's wife. The woman involved in the sinful relationship was apparently not a Christian, for there is no rebuke concerning her disfellowshipping. Because Paul does not identify her as the man's mother, it is possible that the woman in this case was the immoral brother's stepmother.

5:1 Reported: The household of Chloe had reported to Paul the matter of immorality (1:11). At least those of Chloe's household realized that the situation was sinful and that something had to be done. The household of Chloe was evidently overruled by the arrogant false teachers of other house groups who would not deal with this immoral problem. **Fornication:** This is from the Greek word *porneia*. It is not the specific word for adultery, but the generic word that refers to any illicit sexual activity. The two people were living together in an immoral relationship. The immoral relationship of living together was not practiced among the Gentiles in the community, and thus, this situation was giving the disciples throughout the region a bad reputation (Compare Lv 18:8; 20:11; Dt 22:30; 27:20).

5:2 You are arrogant: The arrogant attitudes of some among the disciples led them to condone the sin (See 4:6,18; 5:2). This defines Paul's reference to arrogance. In this case, their arrogance was in their supposed forbearance of sinful behavior. **Mourned:** Instead of being emotionally sorrowful for the immorality in which the brother was involved, they were haughty about the matter (2 Co 7:7-10). They should have been outraged with such immoral behavior. Unfortunately, they became indifferent to the matter, and thus, they were in the process of allowing the disciples, as a group, to accept such behavior. They were falling into sin as a group because of their insensitivity to the sin (See comments Mt 5:4; Jc 5:1).

5:3 I ... have judged already: Paul was coming to Corinth, and thus, he could have personally dealt with this matter. However, since immoral behavior is a deadly virus to the body, this matter had to be dealt with immediately. Therefore, Paul here exercised his Christ-sent apostolic responsibility to withdraw the disciples' fellowship from this immoral brother through the proxy of all the disciples. He personally did not have to investigate the facts in the matter, for the testimony of the household of Chloe was sufficient to warrant his judgment. The immoral man had violated a fundamental teaching in reference to morality. Therefore, the decision was not in reference to whether the man was living in immorality. He was. Since the decision to withdraw fellowship was not being made by the Achaian disciples, Paul made the decision and asked the disciples to carry through with his decision. He called on the Achaian church to carry out his decision to deliver the immoral brother unto Satan (See comments 1 Tm 1:20).

5:4 In the name: Herein is revealed the authority of the word of God. Paul did not have to be personally present in order for this mandate to be carried out according to God's will. This epistle he wrote carried with it the authority by which the faithful in Corinth could act. We still have the same inspired letter today, and thus, the authority for Christians to act in response to God is still in the inspired letters of the New Testament. **You are assembled:** Since this was a public matter, it had to be carried out in a manner where everyone could be informed. This was not a matter that was to be settled behind closed doors. One of the purposes for the action was to strike fear in the hearts of every member. Therefore, everyone was to be informed, since the immoral brother remained in fellowship among the disciples. At a time when the disciples assembled, the notice of disfellowship was to be made in order to deliver the immoral brother unto Satan. **With the power:** The Christ-sent apostles had the authority to inflict physical punishment (See comments 4:19-20; At 5:1-11; 13:11,12; 1 Tm 1:20). The power of Paul's apostleship was not limited to his presence. Therefore, we assume that when this brother was disfellowshipped,

he was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh without the presence of Paul.

5:5 Deliver ... to Satan: The result of this inspired pronouncement would happen without the personal presence of the apostle. Only the Christ-sent apostles had the responsibility to unleash the power of God to inflict physical punishment (2 Co 10:8; 13:10). Since there are no Christ-sent apostles alive today, this punishment cannot be pronounced upon sinning disciples. God will simply wait until the final judgment in order to carry out the punishment. Paul here says that Satan is responsible for the infliction. Our deduction would be that the apostles released the individual into the control of Satan who would go to the limit that he went with Ananias and Sapphira, that is, death (At 5:1-11). In this case, the punishment was limited to physical infliction, which infliction is not here revealed. The purpose for the action was that the individual who was involved in the immorality might be taught. He needed to be taught that he could not associate with the family of God, and still live an immoral life. **May be saved:** The purpose for the disfellowship and physical infliction is here revealed. It was for the purpose of shocking the sinning brother into mourning over his sin (Compare Ps 109:6; Pv 23:14; Lk 22:31). Therefore, if disciples do not practice the law of exclusion (disfellowship), they become complacent and indifferent to sin. Those disciples who do not obey God in casting out the immoral, do not take their obedience to God seriously (See 2 Th 3:6-12). Too many are disobedient by not being obedient to God's law of exclusion.

5:6 Your boasting: It is evident that the disciples were taking some pride in their forbearance of the sinful brother. But the forbearance of sin will eventually destroy the greater community of disciples. **Leavens the whole:** See Hs 7:4; Mt 16:6; 12; Gl 5:9; 2 Tm 2:17. Indifference toward the sin of those who habitually practice that which is contrary to the word of God will cause the entire group to become complacent toward the hideousness of sin. Therefore, those who do not practice the law of exclusion will slowly digress into social groups that lose their moral and doctrinal identity with Christ.

5:7 Purge out the old leaven: The fact that they were to “purge out” the immoral man emphasizes the fact that he was continuing in fellowship with the disciples. He was thus influencing others in reference to his immoral behavior. The purging was more than exclusion from their house assemblies. They were not to associate with the brother in any way, other than for the purpose of exhorting the individual to repent. Upon the command of Paul, the disciples did purge out the immoral man. He subsequently repented (2 Co 7:6,7,12). The primary purpose for which the disfellowship was to take place was to stimulate repentance on the part of the sinner. If they had not carried out this action, they would have continued to be the “old lump.” Therefore, those fellowships of disciples that condone the practice of immorality among themselves have digressed to being an “old lump.” **Christ our Passover:** During the Jewish Passover feast, all leaven was to be cast out of the house (Ex 12:15; Lv 23:6). Since Jesus is our continual Passover (Is 53:7; Jn 19:14), Paul’s illustration from the Jewish Passover is that all leaven of sin be cast out of the fellowship of the disciples. The reason for this is illustrated by the nature of leaven. If left in the “lump,” it will affect everyone.

5:8 In this context it seems that this must be a continual practice, that is, whenever immorality crops up among disciples, those involved must be excluded from the fellowship of the disciples. Because the church is in continual fellowship with Christ, then she must continually purge herself of old leaven. **Nor with ... malice and wickedness:** The Achaian disciples were assembling and eating the love feast and the Lord’s Supper with malice in their hearts, and in the company of the immoral man described in this context. They must correct the problem of sin among themselves in order to partake of the Supper with sincerity and truth.

5:9 I wrote: Paul had earlier written concerning the matter of immorality. It is difficult to determine if this letter was lost or was grafted into the epistles of 1 & 2 Corinthians. Some Bible students believe that the earlier letter, about which he speaks here, was incorporated into the contents of 1 & 2 Corinthians. The sections of 1

Corinthians 6:12-20 and 2 Co 6:14 – 7:1 could have been the first letter that was grafted into these two epistles we now have in the New Testament canon. However, the earliest manuscripts give the present order and content of the letters of 1 & 2 Corinthians. It is probable, therefore, that the letter to which Paul here makes reference was either lost by careless hands or was destroyed as a result of maliciousness on the part of the arrogant false teachers in Corinth (See comments 3 Jn 9). **Not to associate:** The immoral brother in this case was maintaining his association with the other disciples. But Paul says that this must come to an end. Christians are not to associate with those disciples who are living in immoral situations (2 Co 6:14; Ep 5:11; 2 Th 3:6,14). If they do, then the behavior of the entire body will be affected by the influence of immorality by becoming indifferent to sin.

5:10 Of this world: Paul wants to make it clear that he is not talking about the immoral people of the world. One must do his work in the secular world in order to support himself. The world is defined by the nature of its behavior. Those of the world are materialistic (covetous). They often cheat people of their money by means of fraud (extortion). They reverence both the material things of the world, as well as create religions after their own desires (idolaters). If the Christian would disassociate from those of the world, he would have to separate himself from the world and live in isolation. While living in the world, Christians must be cautious about their associations with those of the world. Their close friendships must be with Christians and not with those who are driven by the preceding behavioral attitudes toward the world.

5:11 The faithful Christian is not to condone, fellowship, eat with, or associate with any disciple who practices the sins that Paul lists in this verse. We would judge, therefore, that these sins violate fundamental behavioral laws by which the Christian must direct his life (See comments Gl 5:19-21). Each sin that Paul mentions is a behavioral action that destroys the relationship disciples are to have with one another. If such sins were practiced among the disciples, the church could not exist. Since

it is the purpose of church to develop relationships that will continue into eternity, then the nature of the disciples' relationship with one another must be based on moral integrity.

5:12 Judge those who are within: God will hand down judgment to those who are not in Christ. However, for those who are in Christ, and thus in the body of Christ, it is the responsibility of the members to make judgments concerning whether one has violated the law of God in reference to what Paul has mentioned in verse 11 (6:2). It is the responsibility of the church to cast out of their fellowship any member who violates the principles of verse 11. They are to do so in order to guard the behavioral and moral integrity of the body. God has entrusted the disciples as a group with the responsibility to judge concerning these matters in order to keep the church pure. The church does not have the right to establish laws. The laws of verse 11 have already been established by God. The church has only the responsibility to carry out what God has already bound. When the disciples obey these instructions, they act on the authority of the word of God.

5:13 Put away: Since God has already established the law upon which Christians must act, the members must assemble together (vss 3,4) in order to cast out the immoral brother (See Dt 1:5; 17:7,12; 19:19; 21:21; 24:7). The immoral brother was to be put away from an association with the disciples. Their gathering together to carry out the command was for the purpose of making the matter known to all the disciples.

Chapter 6

LAWSUITS & BRETHREN

6:1 The Achaian disciples were going outside their fellowship in order to settle matters of dispute within their fellowship. They were taking matters of the church before the courts of unbelievers. The language of this text indicates that Paul was greatly disturbed by this practice. He was not discussing cases where those of the world might bring charges against the church or individual members of the church. Neither was he dis-

cussing charges that apostate Christians might bring against the church. He was discussing the squabbling of disciples against one another in the civil courts of law in Corinth. Paul's point of this section of scripture was that Christians should not settle matters of dispute within the church by resorting to the civil courts of unbelievers. However, this does not mean that Christians cannot use civil courts to defend themselves against the charges of unbelievers. If a brother breaks the laws of the land in reference to his brother, then such a case is for the civil courts to settle. What Paul is discussing in this context does not refer to those brethren who break civil law, regardless of whether their breaking of the law affects an unbeliever or a believer. If one violates civil law, he is accountable to the civil courts of the land.

6:2,3 Paul here rebukes the disciples by referring to what they should already know. If they possessed the intellectual superiority that they claimed, then certainly they could judge in these matters that pertain to the affairs of the members. What he says in the following statements, therefore, should be viewed as sarcasm against those who claimed to have great intellect and wisdom in spiritual matters. If they thought that they would judge the world and angels, Paul sarcastically rebukes them by asking why they could not judge matters among themselves. **Saints will judge the world ... angels:** Some Bible students have affirmed that Christians declare the world to be wicked by their living after the will of God. This is true. However, there is no scripture in the Bible that states that Christians will actually judge the world through verbal pronouncements of judgment upon the wicked. No disciple should ever desire to be put in such a position. All judging rests on the shoulders of God. In view of the fact that Jesus has been assigned the final judge of all things, it would be questionable to assume that Christians would function as judges of the wicked (See comments At 17:30,31). Only the apostles were promised the right to be judges of the world (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:28-30). And this they were by revealing the inspired standard by which the world would be judged, the word of God (See comments Jn 12:48). Their judg-

ment would be by the inspired word of the Holy Spirit that they would deliver unto the world (See Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). When one rejected their word, he judged himself. Therefore, in this context it seems apparent that Paul is using sarcasm to embarrass those in Corinth who claimed that they were spiritually and intellectually superior to the inspired apostles.

6:4 *Least regarded in the church:* Paul continues his sarcasm. He sarcastically reproves the arrogant false teachers for taking their disputes before unbelieving courts and judges who are not guided by Christian principles. The statement here concerning the “least esteemed” (better, “those of no account”), is sarcastic. These members were considered least esteemed only by those among them who were arrogant. Therefore, Paul says it would be better to let those they considered inexperienced or less mature among the disciples to act as the judges, than to take matters before unbelieving courts.

6:5,6 *To your shame:* Paul here identified that he was speaking in a manner that should shame them because of their practices. He turns from sarcasm and asks for them to turn to the wiser and more spiritually mature members among them in order to judge in these matters. In the question that he asks in this verse, he assumes that they will be embarrassed by asking if there is not one wise person among them who can make correct judgments. The fact that they went before courts of unbelievers indicates that they were not wise in these matters. It manifested that they were carnal in their thinking. Now he encourages them to correct these matters, and thus, look to themselves in order to judge concerning matters of dispute.

6:7 *Failure among you:* When it came to the test of spirituality and wisdom, they failed. Now it was time for them to behave according to godly principles in their relationships with one another. ***Suffer wrong:*** It would be better to suffer wrong than to take cases of dispute among the disciples before the courts of unbelievers. God will deal with those who commit wrong against the innocent (See Pv 17:13; 20:22; 24:29; Mt 5:38-42; Lk 6:29;

Rm 12:17-19; 1 Th 5:15; 1 Pt 3:9). If the Christian suffers at the hand of those who are unbelievers, then he should remember that Jesus suffered, though He was innocent. If a brother is wronged by another brother, then he should take steps to correct the matter (Mt 18:15-18). However, the offended party should not seek to settle the matter out of a spirit of retaliation or vengeance. God is the one who will eventually deal with the unrepentant and offending brother.

6:8-10 There were some sinful disciples among them who made it a practice to use the civil courts and lawsuits in order to take advantage of fellow Christians. We must keep in mind that what Paul lists here is in reference to those who will not be saved. If Christians behave after the manner of what he describes, they cannot be saved. They are not candidates for heaven because of their practice of those things that destroy the community of Christ. **Be not deceived:** If a brother has convinced himself that he can behave after the manner of what is here described, then he has deceived himself. Those who live a life-style that is after the manner of what he describes will not enter into the heavenly kingdom of God that is yet to come. They cannot simply because their behavior is not conducive to correct relationships among people. **Fornicators:** This is from the word *porneia* that refers to all sexual sin (See comments Gl 5:19-21; Ep 5:4,5; Rv 21:8). Those who participate in illicit sexual activity are not considerate of one another. Their sexual activity outside the bond of marriage is evidence that they are selfish, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh for their own pleasure. **Idolaters:** These are those who create religions and deities after their own desires. In the Corinthian context, they had created a religion that had justified sexual immorality in their worship of the god of fertility, Aphrodite, whom they had created after their own sexual desires. **Adulterers:** These are those who would violate the marriage contract by having sexual intercourse with someone other than their mate. **Homosexuals:** This is from the Greek word *malakoi*. The word here refers to those who are involved in sexual activity between men and men and women and women that is not natural according to

God's plan of procreation. **Sodomites:** Reference here would be to unnatural sexual activity between people, and even unnatural sexual activity of a human with an animal (See comments Rm 1:24-27). **Thieves:** These are those who have developed the life-style of selfishly taking the possessions of others. One is a thief whether he steals from an individual or from a government. When one takes that which he did not earn by honest labor, or which was not given to him as a gift, he is a thief. **Covetous:** This would be possessing the material things at the expense of or ignoring others. **Drunkards:** Those who drink alcohol in order to lose their senses in drunkenness have given themselves over to being the slaves of alcohol. **Revilers:** These are those who resort to abusive speech against others. They manifest their inability to relate with others because of the use of their mouths to promote their own agenda or opinions. **Extortioners:** These are those who use intimidation in order to extract either money or possessions from others. They see others as an opportunity to enrich themselves.

6:11 You were washed: Before they were immersed into Christ for the remission of their sins (At 22:16; Ep 5:26; Hb 10:22), the Achaians had practiced the preceding sins. However, when they were baptized into a covenant relationship with Christ, they stopped such practices. They stopped because they were set apart (sanctified) for service to God, and thus, they stood justified before God by His grace (Rm 5:1,2). Since they were washed, sanctified and justified, they should not behave after the manner of their former life (See comments Ep 2:1-10). They should be moved to respond with thanksgiving for what God had done for them through the cross (See comments 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). Becoming a disciple, therefore, involves a change in life. If one is not willing to make the change, then he cannot be a disciple (See comments Lk 14:25-35).

BELONGING TO GOD

6:12 All things are lawful: This may have been a statement that was made and believed by some Christians in reference to moral and civil law. In their arrogance,

they justified their sinful behavior. However, all things are lawful if they are used for their proper use and in accordance with God's ordained purpose and laws (10:23). It is not that Christians may work outside either civil law or God's law. Christians are to live in subjection to both civil law and God's law (See Rm 13:1-7). **Profitable:** Something may be lawful, but not expedient or profitable in reference to Christian behavior. Though it may be morally right to do some things, the doing of such may not be beneficial to oneself or to his relationship with others. The Christian must exercise discipline and self-control in his life in order to work that which is good toward others (Gl 6:10). **The power of anything:** Paul could be speaking in reference to himself. In other words, the false teachers in among the Achaians had no authority over him as a Christ-sent apostle. However, in his personal life he disciplined himself to bring his desires under control (9:27).

6:13 God created all foods for the benefit of preserving the body (1 Tm 4:4,5). However, at the end of time, both the foods and the physical body will give way to a body that will dwell in a new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3:13). Food that is now necessary to preserve life will not be necessary for the preservation of the spiritual body that is yet to come. **Body ... for the Lord:** Since the body is the gift of God for our dwelling on this physical earth, then we should lawfully use it to His glory, not for our own self-gratification. The body should not, therefore, be used to satisfy the lusts of the flesh through gluttony or fornication (See 5:1; Gl 5:19; Ep 5:3; Cl 3:5; 1 Th 4:3).

6:14 In the last day God will raise up our body (Jn 5:28,29; Rm 6:5,8; 2 Co 4:14). However, it will be raised a changed body (See comments 15:35-54). Our present body is confined to the limitations of this world. It must subsist on the food of this world. However, it will be changed to a spiritual body that is after the nature of Jesus' body (Ph 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2). The foods and appetites of the body of this present world will not be restored for the heavenly body (Rm 8:10,11).

6:15,16 Members of Christ: As Christians, our bodies are the extension of Christ in this world. Our bodies thus

belong to God as a part of the spiritual body of Christ (6:13; 12:27; Rm 12:5; Ep 5:30; Cl 1:18). In committing the act of fornication, one takes the body of Christ and lays it with a harlot. Paul's quotation here is from Genesis 2:24 where Moses spoke of the relationship in lawful marriages. In this context he is talking about unlawful sexual activity outside the bond of marriage. In the unlawful sexual intercourse of fornication outside the bond of marriage, one is bringing together into one the male and female as they are sexually brought together in marriage. Through the act of fornication, therefore, one desecrates the law of God in reference to marriage and sexual intercourse within the bounds of marriage.

6:17 One spirit: Since the Christian's body is one with the Lord, then to unite with a harlot in fornication is to take a part of the body of Christ into the bed of fornication. The oneness that one establishes with the Lord is greater than any sexual relationship with another person. Therefore, the Christian should guard his membership with Christ by keeping himself away from fornication (See 6:15; Jn 17:21-23; Rm 8:9-11; Ep 4:4).

6:18 Flee fornication: The Greek word here is *porneia* (fornication, or sexual immorality). Since the Christian is united in body and mind with the Lord, he should flee from the temptation of sexual immorality (6:9; Rm 6:12; 2 Co 12:21; Ep 5:3; Cl 3:5; Hb 13:4). **Against his own body:** Except for the sin of fornication, all sin affects someone who is the victim of the evil motives of the individual (Rm 1:24; 1 Th 4:4). Sin is first a violation of God's laws, but God's laws were given to humanity in order that people have healthy relationships with one another. Therefore, in the act of fornication the individual's body becomes the instrument by which sin is committed against another person. In the act of committing fornication, the Christian cuts himself off from the body of Christ by using his own body as an instrument for sin.

6:19 Temple of the Holy Spirit: In 3:16 Paul discussed the indwelling of the Spirit in each disciple. The Spirit indwells the Christian as he or she behaves after the manner of the body of Christ. In this context, he is emphasizing the importance of the physical body of every

member by reminding them that the Spirit indwells each member (See Jn 2:21). Therefore, those who commit fornication rob God of one's own body by defiling the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. **Not your own:** When one becomes a Christian, he gives the totality of his life to the Lord (Rm 12:1,2; 14:7). Therefore, he should not behave in a manner that portrays selfish living after the lusts of the flesh (See comments Gl 2:20).

6:20 Bought with a price: The price was the sacrificial offering of the incarnate Son of God (At 20:28; Gl 3:13; Hb 9:12; 1 Pt 1:18; 2 Pt 2:1). Since the price was high, then Christians should behave after a manner that is worthy of the price that was paid (Rm 12:5; Ep 4:1; Ph 1:27). Paul's point is that since we have been bought with such a great price, our lives should be lived in thanksgiving to God for giving His Son for our redemption (See comments 2 Co 4:15). Redeemed people, therefore, do not belong to themselves. They belong to the One who redeemed them from a life-style of sinful behavior (See comments Gl 2:20).

Reply To Questions From Corinth

(7:1 - 16:24)

Outline: (1) Questions on marriage (7:1-7), (2) Unmarried Christians and widows (7:8,9), (3) Christians in marriage (7:10,11), (4) Marriage of believers to unbelievers (7:12-16), (5) Remaining as one is called (7:17-24), (6) The unmarried (7:25-40), (7) Unity in areas of opinion (8:1-13), (8) Rights of support (9:1-27), (9) Temptation to apostasy (10:1-13), (10) Temptation of idol feasts (10:14-24), (11) Wise use of Christian liberty (10:25 - 11:1), (12) Maintain God-ordained roles (11:2-16), (13) Fellowship during the Lord's meal (11:17-34), (14) Miraculous gifts (12:1-11), (15) Unity of the global body (12:12-31), (16) The more excellent way (13:1-7), (17) Passing of the miraculous gifts (13:8-13), (18) Prophecy and languages (14:1-25), (19) Instructions for the assembly (14:26-40), (20) Definition of the gospel (15:1-4), (21) The appearances of Jesus (15:5-11), (22) The bodily resurrection (15:12-49), (23) The resurrection event (15:50-58), (24) Special contributions (16:1-4), (25) Future plans (16:5-12), (26) Final exhortations (16:13-24)

Chapter 7

QUESTIONS ON MARRIAGE

The material that Paul gives in this chapter is challenging to understand if we read into the context our

preconceived ideas. Bible students have disagreed over portions of this chapter for many years because they have come to the context with ideas that would have not been known by the Achaian who were the first recipients of this letter. This is especially true in reference to the material that Paul covers in the area of separation and divorce. However, we must first commit ourselves to interpret the chapter according to what it actually says. We must not come to this material with preconceived ideas of our own background. We must remember that the Achaian disciples had only this letter to make a decision concerning what Paul meant. We must remember that it was written specifically to them in their cultural and social background. When they received the letter, they could not make comparative studies with other New Testament letters. They could not because this letter, and the previous letter that Paul wrote to them, were the only inspired letters they possessed (See 5:9). It is also helpful to understand this material if we can place ourselves in the historical situation in which the Achaian disciples were living at the time the letter was written and received. They had been converted from a manner of life that was based on idolatrous beliefs that were contrary to the word of God (6:11). Since they were only a few years in the faith, we would assume that they were still struggling with some of the beliefs and behavior of their past life. In conjunction with this point, we must keep in mind that they were still living in Corinth, in a culture that was very immoral and idolatrous. They were also suffering persecution in an idolatrous environment. They were in times of distress, though Paul does not go into detail concerning the exact nature of the distress (vs 26). With these thoughts in mind, we must allow the context to state what it means from our objective reading of the material almost two thousand years removed from the events that were taking place.

7:1 Not to touch a woman: What Paul means is that it is best not to become married in view of the present distress. This advice to remain celibate must be understood in the context of the persecution the Christians were enduring at this time and would endure during

the tyrannical rule of Nero who eventually died in A.D. 68 (vss 8,26). Therefore, Paul is not establishing celibacy as a commandment of God. He is giving his own advice. The recipients had the freedom to accept or reject his advice. Simply because he gave this advice did not mean that a law was established. It was possible for any inspired writer to give advice in writing Scripture that was not meant to be considered law. In this context, this advice is an example. Paul is simply affirming that celibacy is expedient in the times in which these early disciples lived because a marriage relationship with children would be very difficult to maintain when enduring persecution. We must also keep in mind that marriage is an expedient, not a commandment. There are some who choose to remain unmarried. They choose to do so for the purpose of giving their entire lives to kingdom business (See comments Mt 19:10-12). This is an honorable purpose for which one would give his or her life.

7:2 Sexual immorality: Because of the strong sexual drive that is within the individual, men and women should marry if they cannot control their sexual desires. They should marry lest they are tempted to commit fornication, and subsequently, lose their souls (Rv 21:8). **His own wife ... husband:** In the beginning, God intended for people to marry and populate the world (Gn 2:18). Paul restates God's instructions here for the type of relationship that should be characteristic of the Christian home (See comments Ep 5:22 – 6:4). In this statement that each wife and husband have their own mates, Paul indicates God's plan for marriage. One should have only one mate for all his life (See comments Mt 19:3-9). Polygamy is not God's plan for the marriage relationship. The polygamist cannot carry out the God-ordained responsibilities that are intended to create the home atmosphere in which children are to be nurtured (See Ep 5:29,30).

7:3 Deserving affection: In the marriage relationship, it is right that each mate give their bodies to one another for the purpose of sexual satisfaction (See Ex 21:10; 1 Pt 3:7). This is natural in marriage and should be carried out in order that each partner in marriage find sexual satisfaction within the bond of marriage and not with

someone other than the marriage partner.

7:4 Normal sexual intercourse in the marriage relationship is an obligation that each partner has toward the other. Sexual intercourse in marriage is a God-ordained blessing of marriage. All sexual relationships should be conducted within the bond of marriage (Hb 13:4). If sexual relationships are not confined to the bond of marriage, then society digresses in its social environment (See Hb 13:4; Rv 21:8).

7:5 Do not deprive one another: Paul here states that the sexual relationship of a man and woman in a marriage relationship is not solely for the purpose of procreation. It is an emotional and physical time of enjoyment for the man and woman, and thus, should be cherished in the marriage as the gift of God. Married partners may abstain from sexual intercourse for an agreed period of time. They can do so for the purpose of focusing on prayer and fasting. However, they must come together again lest one partner be tempted to go outside the marriage relationship in order to satisfy sexual drives. Paul indicates that it should be a part of the Christian marriage relationship that both the husband and wife agree to have times for prayer and fasting (Compare J1 2:16). In order to enhance the marriage relationship, it would be advisable that Christian partners spend time in prayer and fasting. The relationship between a husband and wife grows in times when they pray and fast together.

7:6,7 By way of allowance: Paul is here giving his advice. This advice, however, is not to be accepted as a commandment. The abstinence from sexual activity in the marriage for the purpose of fasting and prayer was advised, not commanded. **As I myself:** At the time Paul wrote this letter, he was not married. There is no direct New Testament statement that affirms he was ever married. Because of the times of persecution (vs 26), he believed that men and women should live in celibacy with enough self-control to abstain from sexual intercourse. However, because some could not control their sexual drives, they should marry in order that they not commit fornication (vss 1,2).

It is at this point in his instructions that Paul begins

to give advice to three groups of people who are all in a covenant relationship with God. (1) He gives instructions to Christians who have not yet married and those who have lost their mates (vss 8,9). (2) He gives instructions to Christian mates who are both Christians and in a marital covenant with one another (vss 10,11). (3) He gives instructions to those Christians who are married to one who is not a Christian (vss 12-16).

UNMARRIED CHRISTIANS & WIDOWS

7:8,9 Unmarried ... widows: To the unmarried Paul gives his personal advice. Because of the times in which they lived, it was better to remain unmarried (vss 1,26). However, if they could not exercise sexual self-control, then they should marry. It was best to marry in order to prevent sexual immorality. Though marriage is not specifically for the purpose of satisfying sexual drives, sexual drives are to be satisfied only in marriage. Marriage is based on greater things than the satisfaction of sexual appetites. It is more than the physical attraction of a man and woman. Paul covers the marital relationship in other contexts (See comments Ep 5:22-33; Cl 3:18-21). Therefore, in this context we must not misunderstand what he is saying. Since the Corinthians lived in a highly immoral society, Paul is here emphasizing marriage for sexual reasons in order to prevent sexual immorality.

CHRISTIANS IN MARRIAGE

7:10,11 Not I but the Lord: While He was on earth, Jesus gave revelation concerning what Paul only reviews here for instructions directed to those in a covenant relationship with God (See comments Mt 5:32; 19:3-9; Mk 10:9; Lk 16:18). Therefore, it was not necessary for Paul to give further revelation on these matters or to go into detail concerning what Jesus had already revealed. **Not leave:** A marriage partner should not separate from his or her mate (See Ml 2:14-16). In this context, Paul is not teaching that one should divorce his or her partner. Neither is he discussing the departure of the innocent party because the guilty party has committed adultery (Mt 19:9). He is discussing the incompatibility of two people

that made it impossible for them to live together. If living together in harmony was impossible, separation was allowable. However, the condition is that neither partner may marry. The two partners must remain unmarried or else be joined together in the marriage relationship.

MARRIAGE OF BELIEVERS TO UNBELIEVERS

7:12,13 To the rest: When Jesus was personally on earth, His ministry was to the Jews who were in a covenant relationship with God. He gave the commandments concerning marriage relationships that were directed to the Jews as a people in a covenant relationship with God (See Mt 5:32; 19:2-10; Mk 10:9; Lk 16:18). However, in this context Paul is dealing with mixed marriages. These were Christians who were in a covenant relationship with God who were married to those who were unbelievers. This situation developed as one of the partners in a marriage was converted and the other was not. The problem was not that a Christian married one who was not a Christian. Achaia was a province wherein many were being converted out of idolatry. Therefore, the problem was growing where there were many members who were married to partners who were not converted. Paul thus gives new revelation from God concerning this situation. **I say, not the Lord:** Paul gives inspired instructions concerning the marriage relationship about which Jesus did not personally speak when He was on earth, since His earthly ministry was to those who were all in a covenant relationship with God. We must remember, however, that this revelation comes from the Lord through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These commands are not the opinion of Paul. They are from the Lord, through Paul, to those Christians who were living in a marriage contract with one who did not become a Christian. **Pleased to dwell with him:** If a husband or wife is converted, he or she should not take the initiative to leave the unconverted marriage partner. In other words, the believer should not divorce the unbeliever. The believer should take the initiative to preserve the marriage, and thus, give the children and unbelieving mate the opportunity to stay in close contact with one who has given

himself or herself to the Lord (See comments 1 Pt 3:1,2).

7:14 Sanctified: If the unbeliever in the marriage agrees to stay with the believer, then the marriage is considered sacred by God. Separation of the two is avoided, and thus, if children are involved, the marriage continues for their benefit. If one would separate from the unbeliever, the unbeliever may take the children, and thus, the children would be raised outside the Christian influence of the believer. Therefore, the believer should not seek to leave the unbeliever for the sake of bringing up the children in the presence of the believer's Christian influence.

7:15 If the unbeliever leaves: If the unbeliever takes the initiative to divorce the believer, then the responsibility for the dissolving of the marriage contract is not on the shoulders of the believer. **Is not bound:** Though this is often a controversial statement, the immediate understanding of the statement in the context of this letter, which was the only letter of inspiration the Achaian disciples possessed, was that the believer was no longer under the bondage of the marriage contract if the unbeliever took the initiative to divorce himself or herself from the believer. There are two primary positions that Bible students take concerning what Paul here teaches. (1) It is assumed in this case that the unbeliever departs in order to live in an adulterous relationship with another person. The believer, therefore, is under no obligation to maintain a marital relationship with the unbelieving partner. He or she could divorce the unbeliever on the grounds of adultery (Mt 19:9). (2) Paul is not giving another exception for divorce between two who are in a covenant relationship with God. He is discussing a different situation than what Jesus discussed in Matthew 19, that is, the marriage of one who has become a Christian to one who has rejected the gospel. This is a different situation than the one wherein Jesus gave directions to the Jewish couples in Matthew 19 who were both in a covenant relationship with God. In the context of the Corinthians, the situation was that a converted person came into a covenant relationship with God, while the other did not. The Achaian disciples, therefore, were

asking Paul what to do in such situations if the unbeliever decided to desert the believer for any reason. Paul instructed them that if the unbeliever should depart, the believer is no longer obligated to be a marriage partner to the departed unbeliever. The deserted believer is not under the bondage of a marriage contract concerning the marriage relationship. The believer is thus free to remarry and should not suffer the suppression of sexual drives, loneliness, economic poverty, and the possible depravation of a home situation wherein children would be without a mother or father. The deserted Christian partner should not be confined to the burden of a single parent household because of the unfaithfulness of an unbeliever who refused to obey the gospel. **Called us to peace:** The believer has the responsibility of maintaining a peaceful environment within the home if the unbeliever decides to depart. Rage and reviling would accomplish nothing except drive the unbeliever further away (See comments 1 Pt 3:1-6).

7:16 Paul concludes his instructions concerning mixed marriages by exhorting the believer to remain with the unbeliever. If the believer maintains a Christian attitude in the marriage, there is the possibility that the unbeliever will be converted. Therefore, the believer should take no initiative to depart from the unbeliever. All initiative to depart must be with the unbeliever. It is the responsibility of the believer to conduct himself or herself in a manner that would possibly lead to the conversion of the unbeliever. Therefore, the believer must conduct himself or herself in a manner that will encourage the unbeliever to preserve the marriage.

REMAINING AS ONE IS CALLED

7:17 Paul is still discussing the marriage relationship in this context. He here discusses that one must preserve the marital relationship that he or she has at the time either became a Christian. Throughout the New Testament there is neither commandment nor advice given that a Christian should take the initiative to break up a marriage relationship. In the preceding context of verses 12-16, the believer was exhorted to maintain his or her marital relationship with the unbeliever. If the

unbeliever agrees to remain with the believer, then the believer must remain in the marital relationship. Therefore, one must remain in the marital relationship he or she has at the time of conversion. However, this would not apply to a polygamist relationship since such a relationship is not a God ordained relationship of one man for one wife for life (See comments Ep 5:22-33).

7:18,19 Those Jews who were converted must not seek to change the fact that they were Jews. Neither must the Gentiles become as Jews. “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love*” (Gl 5:6; see Rm 2:27,29; Gl 3:28; 6:15; Cl 3:11). **Keeping of the commandments:** What is important as a Christian is not changing one's marital situation, but obeying the will of God (Jn 14:15; 15:14; 1 Jn 2:3; 3:24; 5:2).

7:20 The statement of this verse is directed to those who have obeyed the gospel. In the preceding context, Paul spoke of the unbeliever who might choose to change the marital situation by deserting the believer. However, Paul here states that those who obey the gospel should not seek to change their marital status at the time they obey the gospel. We assume, therefore, that regardless of one's marital status, he or she must remain in the marital relationship he or she is in at the time of conversion. The Holy Spirit gave no instructions to any New Testament writer concerning the breaking up of marriages when people became Christians. In fact, the precise message of the instructions the Holy Spirit gives in this context is that such should not be done. Those who obey the gospel are commanded to make every effort to preserve their marriage relationship when they become Christians, not to dissolve such. Therefore, it would be presumptuous of any man to teach something that is contrary to what the Holy Spirit has here specifically commanded concerning the preservation of marriages.

7:21,22 If a slave had the opportunity to gain his freedom after he became a Christian, then he should take the opportunity to be free. **The Lord's freeman:** Whether the slave who became a Christian gained his freedom or

remained a slave, his relationship with Christ continued the same. He was set free from sin through his obedience to the gospel in order to become the slave of righteousness (Compare Jn 8:36; Rm 6:16-18; Cl 3:24; Pl 16; see Js 1:9,10). **Christ's bondservant:** When any person obeys the gospel, he or she becomes the slave of Jesus (See 6:20; 9:21; Gl 5:13 Ep 6:6; 1 Pt 2:16). As a Christian he is not his own, but one in whom God dwells to accomplish the work of God on earth (Gl 2:20).

7:23 Bought with a price: The price that was paid was the incarnate blood of the Son of God (6:20; At 20:28; 1 Pt 1:18,19; Rv 5:9; see Lv 25:42). Since they were freed in Christ, then they would not become the bondservants of those false teachers throughout Achaian who were seeking to bind on them that which God had not bound (See comments At 15:10; Gl 5:1,2).

7:24 The application of the principle that is stated here applies to both the marital status and the slavery status of those who became Christians in Corinth. Paul was not breaking up marriages, neither was he on a campaign to set the slaves free (See Ep 6:5-8; Cl 3:22-24). This statement of Paul simply means what it says. One must remain in the civil or marital state he or she is in at the time of conversion. In this context, reference was specifically to those who were married.

THE UNMARRIED

7:25 Concerning virgins: Paul now turns to answer the Achaians' questions concerning those young people of both sexes who were unmarried. **I give my opinion:** What advice he gives here is not by commandment of the Lord (See 2 Co 8:8). It is simply his judgment in view of the circumstances that are explained in the following verse.

7:26,27 The present distress: Paul does not explain any particular distress. Sometime before the writing of this letter, Caesar Claudius ran the Jews out of Rome (At 18:2). The persecution that Nero would launch against Christians could have already begun, and thus, the time had come when Christians were headed into great persecution that would come through the personal vendetta of

Nero against Christians. The greater persecution would later come from the Roman government (See comments in intro. to Rv). Add to this the fact that this letter was probably written about fifteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. Jewish persecution of the church was still prevalent. Also, antagonism between Rome and nationalistic Jews was building. In A.D. 70, Rome would eventually crush Jewish nationalism with the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24). Therefore, these were not peaceful times. Though we do not know all the social and political troubles that prevailed in the environment, we do know that they were of such nature that Paul would give the advice of these verses. We must also understand that the distress about which Paul speaks was not temporary. It was a distress (persecution) that would continue for years. It would be a time when it would be difficult to marry and bring children into a world of hardship and persecution. **Remain as he is:** The advice is that one remain either single or married. If married, then one should not seek to be loosed from his or her partner. If single, then one should not seek to be married.

7:28 If you marry you have not sinned: If one did marry against Paul's advice in this context, he or she did not sin because Paul was giving only his advice, not a commandment from God. Therefore, Paul can give advice by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the writing of this inspired epistle without that advice being bound as law. **To spare you:** Paul's advice to remain in the situation in which he or she was at the time of conversion was based on his concern for the husbands and wives. These were not the best of times for a Christian family, and thus, one should not change his marital situation.

7:29,30 The time is shortened: In comparison to eternity, the Christian's life on earth is short. It is too short to be concerned about those things that will not continue into eternity (Compare Rm 13:11; 1 Pt 4:7; 2 Pt 3:8,9). Since marriage will not be a part of our heavenly dwelling (Mt 22:30), then it is not something that should be focused on in times of distress about which he refers in verse 26. Our focus should be on those values and prin-

principles that will endure past the end of all things of this world (See comments Mk 10:28-30; Lk 14:25-33).

7:31 As not misusing: For the Christian, the world is not the end. It is only the means to the end. The end is the new heavens and earth that is yet to come (2 Pt 3:13). Christians, therefore, should have their minds focused on those things that are above and beyond this present world (Cl 3:1-3). In this way they will properly use the things of this world. The Christian's goal is not to remain attached to this world. It is not his goal to rule over this world. It is his desire to see the passing of this world in order that the heavenly realm of existence be established. See comments 2 Pt 3:11-13; see Ps 39:6; Js 1:10; 4:14; 1 Pt 1:24; 4:7; 1 Jn 2:17.

7:32 Free from concern: In the times of persecution, Paul wanted them to be free from the worries of providing material necessities to maintain a family with small children (Compare 1 Tm 5:5). **Things of the Lord:** In times of persecution, those who are single would have to think about their service to the Lord instead of worrying about partners and children in a marriage relationship.

7:33,34 In normal times of peace, it is the responsibility of the husband to care for the things of the world in order to provide for his family. Paul thus uses the general responsibilities of the husband in times of peace to remind them of the difficulty of fulfilling this responsibility in times of persecution. In the times of distress in which they were in, he thus discouraged marriage in order to spare them from the added burden of family responsibilities. It is not that Paul is teaching celibacy as a manner of life (See 1 Tm 5:14,15). The times of physical distress in which they lived called for the advice that they remain single in order that they focus on the Lord throughout those times (See Lk 10:40). A woman who is married must care about providing for a husband and children (Ti 2:4). In times of distress this would be difficult.

7:35 For those who could control their sexual drives (vss 1,2), Paul advised that they remain unmarried in order that they focus on serving the Lord without the distraction and worry about providing for a marriage

partner or children. **Restraint:** This could be translated "snare." In other words, Paul did not want his advice to bind them to celibacy. There were some among them with strong sexual desires, and thus, it would be best for them to marry, even in times of distress (vss 1,2,8,9). It would be better to marry in times of distress than to be tempted to commit fornication. **Without distraction:** In times of distress, those who remained single would better commit themselves to the service of the Lord without the burden of providing for marriage partners and children.

7:36 If anyone: The custom of the culture of Corinth was that the parents, specifically the father, or guardian in the absence of a parent, had the authority to give the daughters for marriage. In this case, if the daughter was passing the usual age for marriage, Paul encouraged the father or guardian to let her marry. If they felt that they were unfair to her in not allowing her to marry, then they should allow her to marry even though they were in times of distress. **He does not sin:** Paul again reminds them that he is talking concerning his own advice and not the commandment of the Lord (vs 25). This is inspired advice. But it is not an inspired commandment. If they did not follow his advice, they would not be sinning against God.

7:37,38 The parent or guardian who determined that it would be unwise to allow the daughter to be married was not obligated to give her in marriage. He should not feel guilty about not giving the daughter in marriage because of the times of distress. If she remained unmarried she would be spared the burden of caring for the things of the world in order to provide for a husband and children (vs 34). Therefore, the father could forbid her to marry without sinning against God. We must keep in mind while reading throughout this advice of Paul, that the environment for Christians was hostile to their faith (vs 26). In the context of persecution, therefore, Paul's advice against marriage must be understood.

7:39 Bound by law: God's principle for marriage is that one person marry another person, and that marriage exist until one mate dies (See comments Mt 19:1-

9). If one mate dies, then the living mate may marry another (Rm 7:1-3). **Only in the Lord:** If a Christian woman's husband dies, she is at liberty to marry again. However, Paul states here that she must marry one who belongs to the Lord. Since the religiously split marriage produced problems when only one mate was converted (vss 12-16), then Paul's stipulation here would only be reasonable for wise women who had either experienced marriage to unbelievers or who had worked with women who were married to unbelievers. It would certainly be unwise on the part of a Christian to bring himself or herself into the bondage of an unbeliever in a marriage contract. Since it would be unwise on the part of older women who had lost their husbands to death to marry unbelievers, then certainly it would be unwise for a young virgin to marry an unbeliever.

7:40 My opinion: Again, Paul does not bind celibacy. He knows that he writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But what he writes in this context concerning celibacy is only his inspired advice, not the commandment of God (vss 25,35). **Happier:** Again, this advice is in reference to the circumstances of distress in which they lived (vs 26). Caring for a family in times of persecution would be a great burden on fathers and mothers. It is for this reason that Paul suggests that the unmarried remain as they are.

Chapter 8

UNITY IN AREAS OF OPINION

Corinth was an environment of idol worship and religious immorality. Fornication was a part of the idolatry that prevailed throughout Achaia. In religions that were created after the imaginations of immoral men, who sought to gratify their own lusts of the flesh, animals were sacrificed to false gods. The meat of these sacrifices were partially consumed in the temple at the time of the sacrifice and by the one who offered the sacrifice. The remainder of the meat was sold in the public market place (See 8:4,7,10; 10:19; At 15:20,29). In this chapter, Paul is expressing his concern for the new converts. In expressing his concern, he establishes principles for

maintaining unity in the midst of different opinions (See comments Rm 14).

8:1 Knowledge puffs up: In the eyes of God, there is no religious significance to meat. God created all meats to be eaten according to the will and taste of the individual. Mature Christians have this knowledge of what is true. However, some of the new converts of Achaia were still struggling with a conscience that was trained by their past idolatrous life. At the same time, there were some among the disciples who knew that there was no religious significance to meat. Those mature disciples were intimidating some of the new converts to eat meat against their conscience (See Rm 14:14). Those who had knowledge that there was nothing in meats, were eating with a puffed up attitude toward those who were still struggling with their past in reference to sacrificed meats (Rm 14:3). Therefore, Paul proceeds in this chapter to give advice concerning the relationship between stronger and weaker disciples in relation to those things that are matters of opinion. He teaches that at times, stronger Christians must forego their rights of exercising their liberty. They must do so in order to protect the conscience of the new converts. Patience and love must be exercised toward the new converts until they grow in the faith to understand that God placed no religious significance on any food.

8:2 Those who knew that there was nothing in an idol were doing wrong by intimidating the weaker new convert to eat the meat that was sacrificed to idols. Knowledge that determines one's behavior with little or no consideration for the weaker brother, is knowledge that is used arrogantly and in an unloving manner. One's knowledge, as he grows as a Christian, must be used to edify new converts in their growth. In this case, the new converts could be taught that there was nothing in meats, but their feelings (conscience) were still guided by their former idolatrous life. It would take time for them to overcome their past in order to be able to walk in the freedom of Christ (See comments Gl 5:1).

8:3 One's love of God is manifested in his love and consideration for his brother. See comments 1 Jn 3:10,11;

see 1 Jn 3:13-17. **Known by Him:** God knows the heart of the person who considers both the will of God and the conscience of the new convert (See Mt 7:23; Gl 4:9; 2 Tm 2:9). He knows our actions, though our brethren know our hearts only by our actions. Therefore, in order to manifest that one loves God, he must behave in a loving manner in his relationship with his brother.

8:4 An idol is nothing: An idol is only a reminder of a god the worshiper has created after his own image. Therefore, the idol actually represents the emotional intellect of the one who conceives a god in his mind to whom he gives reverence (See Lv 26:1; Is 2:8; 10:10; 41:24; Ez 30:13). There is thus nothing in an idol beyond the ability of man to conceive. Idol gods are only in the mind of the one who has created the image of such gods. **No other God:** There is only one God (8:6; Dt 4:35,39; 6:4; Mk 12:29; 1 Tm 2:5). He is the God who is beyond the comprehension of the minds of men (See comments At 17:22-29). And since His being and existence cannot be fully comprehended by men, then men seek to create a god in their minds that they can understand. In this way the idolater creates a concept of god in his mind that is mere human, and thus understandable.

8:5,6 For even if: If there were other gods, there would be only one God for the Christian, for it was to this God that the Christian has given his submission. Paul here applies the reasoning of the pagan religious mind. The Achaians understood that different men gave their submission to different gods, and thus, submitted to what they conceived to be the demands of that god. Paul asked from the viewpoint of pagan reasoning that at least the Achaians should submit to the demands of the God to whom they gave their allegiance through Jesus. **There is one God:** Though the Greeks submitted themselves to gods they conceived of being in heaven or on earth, the Christian has submitted himself to the one true and living God of heaven (Ml 2:10; Ep 4:6). **Through whom are all things:** See comments At 17:22-29; Cl 1:16 (Rm 11:36). **One Lord:** There is only one Lord to whom we have given our allegiance and submission (Jn 13:13; At 2:36; Ph 2:11; see comments Ep 4:4-6). Jesus was the creator of

all things (Jn 1:1-3; Cl 1:16; Hb 1:2). Since all things are upheld by the power of Jesus' word (Hb 1:3), we continue to live because of Him. Our existence on earth, therefore, depends on the grace of God to continue all things as they are.

8:7 We must keep in mind that this context is discussing something that had religious connotations from past religious practices by those who gave reverence to idol gods. It is not discussing opinions that we would make religious, and thus, bind on the church. The context of what is stated is based on the culture of idol worship and pagan religions that were prevalent in Corinth. **Not everyone has this knowledge:** There were among the Achaian disciples new converts who had not yet changed their thinking concerning the foods that were sacrificed to idols (10:28). In their conscience, they were still living in the past. **Their conscience being weak is defiled:** These new converts continued to believe that sacrificial meat had spiritual connotations connected with it when eaten. There were also those who had been Christians for a longer period of time who had grown out of the reverential consideration of any meat that was offered to an idol god. The case was that these stronger Christians were intimidating the younger Christians to eat the meat, and thus, the younger Christians ate against their conscience. In eating, their consciences were defiled. When they ate, they were renewing in their minds their past reverence they had toward sacrificial meat.

8:8 Does not commend us: There is no religious significance in meat or any other food. We cannot make food a part of our worship to God (Rm 14:17). The eating of food does not have any bearing on our salvation. *"For every creature of God is good. And nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer"* (1 Tm 4:4; see Mk 7:19). All foods, therefore, can be eaten by the Christian. However, if one grew up in a religion that placed religious significance on certain foods, then this person must grow to realize that there is no religious significance to any food. However, he may associate idol worship with certain foods until he realizes that God created all foods without any religious

significance. This is a process of growth with which the stronger disciples must be patient.

8:9,10 God has placed no religious significance on foods. This does not mean that our liberty of eating certain foods should be used to cause someone to stumble by intimidating them to eat against their conscience. Because of one's knowledge that meats have nothing to do with salvation, he could eat without offending his own conscience. However, if the new converts were intimidated to eat the meat that they had formerly eaten in reverence to idols, then the freedom to eat on the part of the knowledgeable brother would be a stumbling block to the new convert. The weak brother would thus sin in eating against his conscience (Rm 14:23). What Paul is stating is that the conscience of the weak brother (the new convert) must be considered by the strong brother (the knowledgeable brother). The conscience of the weak brother must be considered until he grows out of the past religious connotations that he put on the eating of certain foods (Compare Gl 5:13). **Idol's temple:** Some of the stronger brethren were eating the temple meat that had been sacrificed to idols. The new converts witnessed this, and thus, were confused concerning the practice because they still thought of idol gods when thinking of the meat that was sold and eaten in the temple. Paul is saying that the knowledgeable disciples should not go to the temple to eat the meat if such causes the new converts to be encouraged to eat against their conscience. One must stay away from the temple foods for the sake of the new converts (10:27-33; Rm 12:13,21).

8:11 If the new convert is encouraged to eat, then he sins because he has not eaten out of faith (See comments Rm 14:23). Therefore, the strong brother has encouraged the weak brother to offend his own conscience by eating what he believes has religious connotations in reference to idols. The strong brother would cause the new convert to sin against his conscience if he encourages the weak brother to eat against his conscience.

8:12 **You sin against Christ:** One has the liberty to eat what foods he so chooses, for all foods are clean (Mk 7:19; 1 Tm 4:4). However, if one uses this freedom

to encourage a new convert to eat against his own conscience, then he has sinned against Christ (See Mt 25:40; Rm 14:15). Paul's point is that the older Christians in the faith have a responsibility toward the new converts. The knowledgeable brethren must walk in love until the new converts grow out of any religious significance of meats that they were taught while living in idol religions.

8:13 I will never eat meat again: This shows how committed Paul is to the principle he has taught in this context. He would willingly forego any liberty he had until the weak disciples grow to understand that there is no religious significance to the eating of meats (See Rm 14:21; 2 Co 11:29). Therefore, our conduct is often governed by the consciences of the new converts (Rm 15:1). Stronger Christians must be willing to sacrifice their liberties in Christ in order to nurture the new converts. However, this teaching also assumes that the new converts must grow to the point of being where the stronger brothers were in their thinking concerning foods. If one does not grow out of a conscience that was trained by idol worship and pagan gods, then he has a problem of refusing to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18). If a brother remains in the faith for many years without changing his novice thinking concerning sacrificed meats, then this brother must be approached for his refusal to understand the liberty that one has in Christ to eat all meats. Brothers who are older in the faith must lovingly teach new converts the freedom that one has in Christ. It is a freedom from the bondage of pagan religious beliefs that held one in captivity before conversion (See comments Gl 5:1,2; Cl 2:11-19). Freedom in Christ is a fundamental teaching that must not be endangered lest we take ourselves back into religions of bondage from which we escaped in our obedience to the gospel. It is in Christ that we are truly free, and thus, disciples must maintain their freedom.

Chapter 9

RIGHTS OF SUPPORT

When considering the context of this chapter, we must keep in mind that it was Paul's general practice to

support himself through tent-making when he stayed at any location for a period of time. He did such while in Corinth (At 18:3), Ephesus (At 20:33-35) and Thessalonica (1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:6-13). When he was in transit and speaking to unbelievers in evangelistic work, he received support from the churches. However, when he was located with brethren for extended periods of time, he worked to support himself.

9:1 In this discussion, Paul applies the principles of chapter 8 to his own life. To begin this discussion, he reaffirms his apostleship. His apostleship was based on Jesus' personal appearance to him and calling him into apostleship (15:8; At 9:3,17; 18:9; 22:14,18; 23:11). **Seen Jesus:** At least one qualification for being a Christ-sent apostle was seeing Jesus and being personally called into apostleship by Him (See comments At 1:21,22). **My work:** The Corinthians were in Christ because of the sacrificial labors of Paul. Paul had given up his previous life. He had refused the financial support of the Achaian disciples (See comments 3:6; 4:15; At 18:1-3,11). Their existence as a part of the redeemed, therefore, was based on his being called by Jesus and his sacrifices to work in Corinth. However, there were some in Corinth who questioned his apostleship. They questioned his motives for preaching to them. Such only indicates the limits to which arrogant attitudes will take those who have set themselves against God's workers. Paul had manifested the spirit of servanthood in his life. The false teachers in Corinth manifested the spirit of pride and selfish ambition (See comments 3 Jn 9,10).

9:2 Apostle ... to you: The generic meaning of the word *apostolos* (apostle) is "one sent." Since Paul was sent to Achaia by Jesus, then he was the only apostle who first preached the gospel to them (15:1,2). **Seal of my apostleship:** Since Paul was the first to preach the gospel in Achaia, then the existence of the Achaian disciples was the evidence of his apostleship of preaching the gospel. Their very existence as part of the universal church of Christ, therefore, proved his apostleship. Add to this the fact that he worked the signs of a Christ-sent apostle among them (2 Co 12:12). He had also imparted the

miraculous gifts of the Spirit to them (See comments At 8:18; Rm 1:11). Therefore, the existence of the Achaian disciples was the certification (seal) of his apostleship.

9:3 My defense: The word “defense” is from the Greek word *apologia*. The word is also used throughout the New Testament in reference to making a verbal defense of one's beliefs (See At 22:1; 25:16; Ph 1:7,17; 1 Pt 3:15). It seems inconceivable that a Christ-sent apostle would have to defend himself as such to a group of disciples who actually experienced firsthand the “*signs of an apostle*” (2 Co 12:12; compare Gl 2:8,9). We would assume, therefore, that those who were questioning his apostleship had not personally met Paul while he was in Achaia. They had not personally experienced the miraculous power of the apostle, and thus, they were challenging those among the disciples concerning Paul's authority as an apostle. The report from the house of Chloe (1:11) was a plea from the Achaian brethren who personally knew Paul. It was a plea that he write this defense, or else come and personally correct the problem.

9:4 In this context Paul begins with his right as an apostle to be supported by the church. By asking the question of this verse, his implied answer is that he, as one who was sent forth to preach the gospel, had the right to be supported by the church (1 Th 2:6,9; 2 Th 3:6). The responsibility of his apostleship demanded the necessity of the church to support him (Compare 3 Jn 7,8).

9:5 A believing wife: The other apostles, including Peter, were married (See Mt 8:14; Mk 1:30; Lk 4:38). Since they were married, and went forth with their wives to preach the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15), then it was the responsibility of the church to support them (See comments Rm 10:15). The apostles went forth with Christian wives. Therefore, their wives willingly went forth with them in order that they fulfill their Christ-commissioned responsibility to preach the gospel to the world.

Brothers of the Lord: The physical brothers of Jesus, who were born to Mary and Joseph, also became evangelists to preach that their half-brother, Jesus, was the virgin-born Messiah and Son of God (See Mt 13:55).

9:6 It seems that Barnabas also supported himself as

an evangelist throughout his journeys. A very important point concerning the support of an evangelist is given in the example of Paul and Barnabas. In reference specifically to Paul, a close examination of his journeys in his writings reveals that he supported himself most of the time throughout his journeys (See comments At 20:34,35; 2 Th 3:7,8). He had certainly received support from the Antioch disciples on his initial few months after leaving Antioch (See At 13:1-4). However, when the money ran out that they sent with him, he and Barnabas made tents in order to support themselves (See comments At 18:1-3). The Philippian church partially supported him, with Silas and Timothy, when they left Philippi for Thessalonica (Ph 4:15,16). However, this contribution only subsidized what he and those with him made through making tents. The example here is obvious. Evangelists would do well to go forth with the initial support of the church, but with the goal of supporting themselves in order to carry on with their journey (See comments 3 Jn 1-8). This would not be a binding example of Paul, but at least it manifested his dedication to preach the gospel to the world regardless of the support of the church.

9:7 Though Paul supported himself much of the time throughout his journeys, he still had the right to receive support from the church. This is the point of his argument to those in Corinth who were challenging his apostleship. As an apostle, he had a right to financial support. He asks three questions here that have obvious answers. Those who go to war, are paid. Those who plant a vineyard have a right to eat the fruit of the vineyard. Those who milk the goats and cows, drink the milk. Therefore, those who preach the gospel financially have a right to live from the gospel by the support of those who are converted by their preaching of the gospel (vs 14; see comments Gl 6:6).

9:8,9 *The law:* Paul here resorts to principles of the Sinai law concerning the support of those who minister the requirements of the law to the people. **You will not muzzle the ox:** The ox is allowed to eat the grain as it treads the grain from the husks (Dt 25:4; 1 Tm 5:18). This Sinai law is used in order to teach that God is concerned

more for his evangelists than an ox. If God cared for the ox in its labors to tread out grain, then Paul's conclusion is that He would certainly be more concerned for the evangelists. Those churches, therefore, who do not support evangelists, but allow the ox to eat of the grain, are more concerned over an ox than they are over the financial well-being of an evangelist.

9:10 *Plow in hope ... partaker of his hope:* Those who plow in evangelism of the lost and edification of the church, have the right to receive support. It is right for an evangelist to hope for support as a result of his labors. This would especially be true of elders who work in edification of the church (See 2 Tm 2:6). The laborer who expects to be supported has a right to be supported for his labors in spiritual matters (Compare 2 Co 11:8).

9:11,12 *Reap your material things:* The evangelist who teaches the word of God has a right to receive financial support from those to whom he ministers the word of God (See comments Gl 6:6; see Rm 15:27). ***If others:*** Others had come to Corinth after Paul left. It seems that the Achaians had supported them. This verse would also indicate that the Achaians were supporting those who were opponents of Paul. In other words, the opponents of Paul were being inconsistent. They were saying that Paul had no right to financial support while at the same time they were extracting support from the church. ***We have not used this right:*** While he was in Achaia, Paul did not receive support from the disciples. He did not take their support because he did not want to be accused of preaching for money, the very thing they are accusing him of doing at the time he wrote this letter (See comments 3 Jn 5-8). They needed to be reminded that while he was in Achaia, he supported himself by making tents (At 18:1-3; 20:33-35; 2 Co 11:7-9; 12:14; 1 Th 2:6). The Achaians society was accustomed to supporting philosophers or teachers of some strange doctrine. In order that they not associate him with this group of self-proclaimed false teachers, Paul chose not to exercise his right to be supported by the newly converted disciples (See 2 Co 11:12). The actions of the Achaians in this verse to support false teachers justified Paul's reasons for not

being supported by them. His argument against the false and accusing teachers was that he preached without receiving contributions. This was in contrast to his accusers. They were accusing him, who was their father in the faith, while they were receiving pay. **Not hinder the gospel:** There are often cultural situations wherein an evangelist should support himself when preaching the gospel. He should not receive support from an unbelieving audience to whom he preaches in order that he not be accused of preaching for money. We must keep in mind that this situation is in reference to the initial preaching of the gospel to unbelievers. After people are converted, and thus taught their responsibility to support evangelists, the converted manifest their lack of spiritual growth when they do not support evangelists who go forth to preach the gospel in other areas. Disciples are spiritually immature if they do not carry out their responsibility of supporting evangelists. These disciples have not learned the spirit of God's grace and the commission of Jesus to take the gospel to all the world (See comments Ph 4:10-18; 3 Jn 5-8).

9:13 Paul again refers to the Sinai law. The Levitical priests who administered those things that were required of the Jews in fulfillment of requirements of the law, were justified in receiving payment from the worshipers (Lv 6:16,26; 7:6,31; Nm 18:8-31; Dt 18:1; see Mt 10:10; Lk 10:7,8).

9:14 *The Lord has commanded:* No stronger language could have been given to the disciples concerning their responsibility to financially support evangelists in their work of world evangelism. Every disciple, therefore, that does not financially support the work of evangelists is contravening this commandment of the Lord. Even the Achaian disciples in their carnal thinking were at least carrying out this commandment in reference to the false teachers in their midst (vs 12). It seems inconceivable that a disciple would claim to be a member of the body of Christ, and yet, not obey this commandment that has been God's plan throughout His work with mankind to get the gospel to all the world. Every disciple should answer the question that Paul asked the brethren in Rome.

“And how will they preach unless they are sent?” (Rm 10:15). Christians who are not supporting the work of evangelists to preach the gospel to the lost, have not been converted to the work of God to save the lost (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). They are negligent in their responsibility as Christians.

9:15 Used none of these things: Paul had not used his right to be financially supported by the Achaian disciples, for he supported himself while in their presence (At 18:3). Neither was he writing this letter in order to move them by guilt to support him. He wanted to remove all accusations that he was preaching for money (vs 12; 2 Co 11:10). **Make my boasting void:** Any preacher who supports himself in preaching the gospel should be proud that he does such. If the Achaians had supported Paul, then he would not have the argument of this context against the false teachers who were living off the Achaians. The sincerity of self-supporting evangelists is magnified in the fact that they support themselves while preaching the gospel. Paul says here that he would not condescend to full-time support in Achaia in order that his boasting concerning self-support not be questioned by his accusers. We must keep in mind, however, that he was writing these things to Christians who were only a few years in the faith. Disciples who are well established in the faith, and have been Christians for several years, have no excuse for not supporting evangelists as they go forth to preach the gospel. Older disciples who do not support the preaching of the gospel to the lost have either not been taught to do such, or they are neglecting their responsibility. The problem with some of the Christians in Achaia was their innocence in supporting any self-proclaimed teacher.

9:16 Necessity is laid upon me: Sincere evangelists will preach the gospel regardless of whether they receive any support from the church. The message of the gospel is as fire in their bones and they cannot help but preach the gospel (See Jr 20:9). Any other motive for preaching moves one to be a hireling (Jd 11). The motivation of the dedicated preacher is that he must speak because of the gratitude in his heart for his own salvation (15:10; 2 Co

4:15; see comments Rm 1:14,15). He is driven to speak forth the gospel in the face of danger and poverty (See At 9:15:16; 15:25,26). Of his own peril that he had experienced and would experience in his ministry, Paul said to the Ephesian elders that he would not stop preaching, even if it meant the loss of his life (At 20:24,25). Such is the determination of the evangelist who is driven to fulfill his destiny.

9:17 In verse 16 Paul said that he could not boast if he preached the gospel in order to receive a salary. If an evangelist considers preaching the gospel as a secular job, then he is a hireling. He is preaching for money. Paul affirms here that he was preaching willingly without receiving support. Because he was preaching out of a sincere heart that was driven by his appreciation for God's grace, then he had a reward (15:10; 2 Co 4:15; see 1 Co 3:8,14; 2 Tm 4:7,8; Rv 14:13). **Entrusted with a stewardship:** Paul had been given the responsibility of taking the gospel to the Gentiles (At 9:15; Rm 1:1; Gl 2:7; Cl 1:27). It was therefore his destiny to accomplish this task (See comments At 20:24,25). Because he knew his Christ-appointed work, he would not allow anyone or anything to detour him from his course. And so should evangelists consider their work as preachers of the gospel. One must feel that God has called him to the work of preaching the gospel. Once one determines that it is God's will that he preach the gospel, then persecution and hardship will not deter him from his calling.

9:18 My reward: Paul was proud that he could preach the gospel without being a financial burden to the church (10:33). He knew that his preaching of the gospel did not depend on the support of other disciples. He knew that he could finish his course of evangelism that was assigned him by Christ (At 9:15) without being hindered by support because he could support himself through the making of tents. This does not mean, however, that he did not receive support from the disciples at times during his journeys (See Ph 4:15-17). It means that he had confidence that his preaching would not be determined by whether he received support from other Christians. His self-support gave him confidence to fulfill his mis-

sion of preaching the gospel.

9:19 *I am free:* When a church supports an evangelist, the disciples often seek to govern the work of the evangelist. Paul here says that he is free from such control. He was not obligated to serve the unnecessary local demands of brethren who might impose on him those things that would conflict with his ministry as a Christ-sent apostle to the Gentiles (See comments Lk 4:42-44; At 6:1-7). He knew that unlearned brethren did not fully understand the nature of the work of an evangelist. He was thus free from their manipulation that would come with their support. Since he was free from their demands, he could speak those things that needed to be said without the intimidation of brethren who might threaten to drop his support. His statement concerning financial freedom is not a statement of arrogance. He simply knew that some brethren do not understand the work of an evangelist, and in this case, the work of a Christ-sent apostle. In their lack of understanding, they would seek to control or manipulate those they financially support. Such practices often lead to the evangelist being stolen from the lost to whom the Lord has sent him to preach the gospel. It also often leads to the evangelist not preaching those things the members need to hear in order to grow spiritually (2 Pt 3:18). ***Bondservant to all ... gain the more:*** Members often covet their preachers, and thus, steal them away from the lost (Lk 4:42-44). They use their financial support of the evangelist in order to intimidate him away from the lost to whom God has commissioned him to go. Paul here states that he was free from the confinement of such self-oriented disciples in order that he might be an evangelist to the world (See 2 Co 4:5; Gl 5:13).

9:20-23 *To the Jews ... a Jew:* In order to communicate the gospel to the people of the many cultures to which he went, Paul culturally identified with both Jews and Gentiles (Compare At 16:3; 18:18; 21:20-26; Rm 11:14). He was willing to give up his own customs in order to relate to others. He did this in order to have an opportunity to preach the gospel in a manner that would be understood by all men. ***As without law:*** These were Gentiles who were not under the Sinai law. However, they were

under the law of God (Rm 2:12-14). **As weak:** Reference here is probably to those who were new in the faith. He sacrificed his rights in order not to encourage new converts to act against their consciences (8:9,11-13; Rm 14:1; 15:1; 2 Co 11:29). **I have become all things to all men:** Paul was willing to sacrifice his rights (10:33). He was willing to sacrifice his right to the material things of life. He was willing to sacrifice his right to maintain his own culture. He was willing to sacrifice all that was necessary in order to get the job done of evangelizing the world. God calls on all evangelists to do no less in obedience to the great commission (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15, compare Rm 1:14,15; 11:14). **The sake of the gospel:** Paul was willing to make any sacrifice that was necessary in order to share with the Achaians the reward that comes from the result of obedience to the gospel. That reward is eternal life in heaven. The sacrifices of his personal life, therefore, were small in comparison to that which we will receive as a result of God's grace.

9:24,25 One receives the prize: The Isthmian games were a part of the Corinthian culture. The competition of these games illustrates what Paul seeks to portray concerning the struggles one has in the Christian work. Before one could receive the prize in the games, he had to commit himself to the task of the race, and thus, exercise great self-discipline in order to prepare for the race. In order to finish the Christian race, one must exercise no less commitment and discipline. See comments Hb 12:1,2. **Imperishable:** The trophy one may receive by winning a race in the Isthmian games would soon perish. However, if Christians exercise great discipline in the Christian race, they will receive an eternal reward. If they will faithfully run the race, they will receive the prize of eternal glory in heaven (2 Tm 4:7,8; Js 1:12; 1 Pt 5:4; Rv 2:10; see comments 1 Pt 1:4,5).

9:26 Not with uncertainty: Paul was confident that God would give the reward. He did not trust in his performance of law or good deeds. He trusted in the grace of God (2 Tm 2:5; see comments Ep 2:8-10). He was not as one boxing the air. There was substance to his hope, and thus, he endured the Christian race with confidence in

God's promises (See Hb 6:18,19).

9:27 I discipline my body: The Christian must not allow the lusts of the flesh to detour him from the race (See Rm 6:18; 8:7,13; Gl 5:17; Cl 3:5). He must exercise self-discipline in order to train his character to be fit for eternal dwelling. The disciple who preaches to others without bringing his own lusts under control, will lose his reward. Therefore, one's good works in preaching are not enough to save one from an unholy life (See comments Hb 12:14).

Chapter 10

TEMPTATION TO APOSTASY

In this context Paul pronounces a warning. He uses the apostasy of Israel to show that "most of them" of national Israel (vs 5) were lost because they did not take heed to remain faithful. Therefore, God is not interested in numbers, but in the faithfulness of the few who commit themselves to serve Him.

10:1,2 The fathers, the nation of Israel, had a covenant relationship with God (Dt 5:1-5). They were God's people of the Old Testament era. However, the covenant relationship that Israel had with God did not prevent the apostasy of the majority of the people. Paul here lists the great things that God did with Israel, which things did not prevent their apostasy. **The cloud:** This was the Shekinah that led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness (Ex 13:21,22; 14:20; Nm 10:34; 14:14; Ps 105:39). It was a visible evidence that God was with His people. **The sea:** God miraculously divided the Red Sea in order that Israel escape from Egypt (Ex 14:21,22,29; Ps 78:13). **Baptized into Moses:** They went under the cloud and through the sea in order to be committed to the leadership of Moses. Israel was delivered from the destruction of the Egyptian armies because they followed the cloud of God and passed through the divided waters of the Red Sea. The waters closed on the Egyptians and they all drowned. In the Achaian context, the Achaians were delivered from the destruction of spiritual death through the waters of baptism into Christ for the remission of their sins (See comments Mk 16:16; At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6; 1 Pt 3:21).

They were baptized unto (*eis*) a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See comments Mt 28:19,20).

10:3,4 Same spiritual food: God miraculously provided manna in the Sinai wilderness in order to preserve the nation for entrance into the land of promise (Ex 16:4,15,35; Dt 8:3; Ne 9:15,20; Ps 78:24; Jn 6:31). **Spiritual drink:** God provided water for Israel from a rock (Ex 17:5-7; Nm 20:11; Ps 78:15). The food and drink were spiritual in the sense that they were miraculously provided by God. They were provided in order to preserve the heritage of Abraham through whom God planned to bring the Redeemer into the world (Gn 12:1-3; Gl 3:16). **Spiritual Rock:** Israel also had the blessing of the spiritual leadership of the Christ who was with the nation through the wilderness wanderings (Compare Dt 32:4,14,18; Is 17:10; 26:4). They were given the law by which they would be directed (See Rm 3:2).

10:5 Many of them: This is the same warning that Jesus gave in Matthew 7:13,14 that the gate is wide and broad for destruction. God is not interested in numbers, but in faithfulness. For this reason, most of Israel fell from God's grace because of their unfaithfulness in following after gods they had created after their own desires (See Nm 14:29-32; 26:65; Ps 106:26; Hb 3:17; Jd 5; see comments 1 Pt 3:20,21). Though God delivered them from Egyptian captivity, they were destroyed because of their unfaithfulness.

10:6 Paul now makes an application of the Israelite illustration. It is an application of warning to which every Christian should give heed. Christians would be allowed by God to follow after their own lusts (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12; see Hb 6:4-6; 2 Pt 2:20-22). However, God will eventually destroy them if they persist in unfaithfulness (Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). Because Christians were saved through the cleansing blood of Jesus, does not guarantee that they will continue in the grace of God. **Lust after evil things:** The fall of most in Israel was the result of their following after their lusts (Nm 11:4,34; Ps 106:14). Those Christians who lust in order to fulfill the desires of the flesh will eventually fall victim to their own lusts. The

fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh will result in one's sin and subsequent destruction from the presence of God (See comments Js 1:13,14).

10:7 Idolaters: Idolatry was the result of Israel's desire to create a religion and life-style after her own lusts (See Ex 32:6). The Israelites thus pacified their own consciences by deceiving themselves into believing that it was religiously right to follow after the lusts of the flesh. The rich of Israel idolized wealth, and thus oppressed the poor. The rich justified their oppression of the poor by creating religious behavior that soothed their consciences. The Achaian disciples were born out of a religion that promoted the fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh through fornication and gluttony (vs 14; 2 Co 6:17). In the context of chapter 11, there was also in the Achaian culture the same economic divisions into which Israel digressed in her final years.

10:8 Fornication: The Baal-Peor idolatrous religion that the Israelites had created after their own desires led them into believing that sexual gratification was a part of religious behavior. As a result, God rained down judgment on them where in one day 23,000 died (Nm 25:9; Ps 106:29). This was in conjunction with the one thousand that were executed by the judges of Israel (Nm 25:5). Once Israel fell into the apostasy of greed and sexual gratification, she gave up her right to exist as God's people.

10:9 Try the Lord: They tempted the preexistent Son of God by turning against the commandments of God (See Ex 17:2,7). In the Achaian context, God's people were again tempting the Son of God by participating in the temple feasts and the immorality associated with the feasts (6:12-20). **Serpents:** As a result of their sin, Israel was punished with a plague of poisonous snakes that were sent from God (Nm 21:6-9).

10:10 Nor ... complain: Moses was the representative of God's authority among the Israelites when they came out of Egyptian captivity, and during the forty years of wilderness wanderings before they entered the promised land of Canaan. Therefore, when they complained against Moses, they were complaining against God (Ex

16:2; Nm 14:2). **Destroyed:** As a result of their complaining, God destroyed them (Nm 14:37). **The destroyer:** This was the angel through whom God worked to bring death to those who rebelled against His authority (Ex 12:23; 2 Sm 24:16; 1 Ch 21:15; Hb 11:28).

10:11 As an example: The events wherein God punished disobedient and rebellious Israelites reminded the disciples that God is storing up wrath for the last day. He will destroy those who disobey Him (Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). Paul's point is that since God brought punishment upon those He had brought out of Egyptian captivity, He will also punish the unfaithful Christians who have been brought out of the captivity of sin through their obedience to the gospel. Simply because one has been immersed for remission of sins does not mean that he will be saved. The condition for salvation is his continued faithfulness. One should also keep in mind that because God is delaying His judgment, one should not become indifferent to the fact that He will judge. We should not be deceived into thinking that because God delays punishment that He will not punish (See comments 2 Pt 3:3-7). **Written for our admonition:** Christians should study the Old Testament in order to learn from the examples of obedience and disobedience that are therein recorded. Old Testament examples were written for our learning (Rm 15:4). We must learn from how God worked among His people in the Old Testament in order to understand how He works today among His people. Because God is storing up punishment for the disobedient must not be misunderstood. God is not ignoring sin. God delivered immediate judgment on the Israelites in the initial establishment of the nation after her deliverance from Egyptian captivity. He dealt the same to the disobedient in the early establishment of the church (At 5:1-11). Today, He stores up all punishment for the last day when the disobedient will suffer the destruction of hell (Mt 10:28). **Ends of the ages:** In Acts 2:16,17 Peter affirmed that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had come in the last days of national Israel. Paul's emphasis here is the same. From Pentecost in A.D. 30 to A.D. 70, the date when national Israel was destroyed by the destruction of

Jerusalem, God was patient with Israel for forty years as evangelists went forth preaching the sonship and messiahship of Jesus. This end of the ages came upon national Israel in the lifetime of the first readers of this epistle. Therefore, the destruction of national Israel loomed in the near future (See comments Mt 24; Hb 9:26; 1 Pt 4:7; 1 Jn 2:18). Around A.D. 65,66 James wrote, "Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near" (See comments Js 5:8). Therefore, at the time James wrote, the coming of the Lord in judgment on national Israel was only a few years away.

10:12 Lest he fall: When one becomes arrogant in his faith, he has laid himself open for a fall from the grace of God. The very confidence by which he thinks he stands, is that which causes him to fall. His arrogance moves him to trust in himself, and thus, he leads himself astray after his own righteousness (Rm 11:20). We must not assume that one's fall here refers to one becoming irreligious or pagan in behavior. In the Achaian context, the false teachers were falling after their own arrogant religiosity (See comments Rv 2:2-6).

10:13 God is faithful: In contrast to the one who trusts in himself, God stands by those who trust in Him (1:9; Ps 125:3). One stands, therefore, not because of his ability to guarantee his salvation, but by the grace of God (See comments Ep 2:1-10). **Temptation:** All men are tempted. But the temptation to sin originates from within the individual (See comments Js 1:12-15). Sin occurs, therefore, when the lusts and pride of the individual are carried into action that is contrary to the will of God (1 Jn 2:15). **A way of escape:** Since temptation originates from within the individual to carry out lusts and pride, the way of escape originates from within one's heart. In order to escape temptation, therefore, one must first look within himself. It is within one's heart that he must seek the way of escape from the lure of the environment in which he lives. It is because the source of temptation lies within our hearts, that we cannot blame anyone or anything that lies outside our hearts for the sin we may commit by carrying out the lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes and pride of life. **Able to endure:** One is able to en-

sure only when he trusts in the will of God in his heart. If God's word is not securely stored up within one's heart, then he will give his heart over to the evil influences of the environment in which he lives (Compare Hb 4:12; Jc 1:21; compare comments At 20:32).

TEMPTATION OF IDOL FEASTS

In the discussion that follows, Paul brings to a conclusion the argument he began against idol worship in 8:1. In his conclusions, he seeks to separate completely the Achaians' life-style from the idolatrous culture in which they once behaved and in which some of them were tempted to involve themselves again. The lesson he clearly states is that Christians should not allow ungodly cultural influences to become a part of their Christianity. Regardless of the acceptance of cultural practices that are contrary to the will of God, the Christian should not allow such practices to become a part of his life as a disciple.

10:14 *Flee:* Since temptation originates from within the heart of man, the Christian must separate himself from that which stimulates emotions, feelings, and subsequent actions that are contrary to the will of God. In this case, the Achaians must flee from the idolatrous worship that was associated with temple idolatry (vs 7: 2; Co 6:17). The principle here is that Christians should flee from anything that would lead them to compromise their allegiance to God (See Mt 6:34; 22:37; Mk 12:30).

10:15 *Wise men:* Paul seems to resort to sarcasm here in reference to those who claimed to be wise. They were puffed up because of their knowledge that there was nothing in the eating of meats that had been sacrificed to idols (8:1). However, their overconfidence in their knowledge would lead them away from the will of God. It would at least discourage the new converts who were still struggling in their separation from the idol worship in which they once participated.

10:16 *The cup ... the bread:* In this reference to the Lord's Supper, Paul affirms that when we eat the Supper, we are communing, or fellowshiping (*koinonia*), with the blood sacrifice and universal body of Jesus (See 11:23-32;

Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:20; At 2:42). In this context, Paul is referring to the universal body of believers that communes together when partaking of the cup and bread. In partaking of the cup and bread, Christians are reminded of their union with the universal body of Christ because of the members' common obedience to the gospel of Christ.

10:17 *One bread and one body:* By eating the Supper, Christians manifest their unity of faith. The bread is symbolic of the unity of the body. Therefore, every time Christians meet together to eat the Supper of the Lord, they proclaim the unity of the global body of Christ (12:12,27; Rm 12:5; Ep 4:4,16; Cl 3:15). Paul teaches that in eating the Supper we remember the oneness of the body. Each individual member is a part of the body regardless of where he assembles. When we eat of the Supper, therefore, every disciple throughout the world must remember that he is a part of the universal body of Christ. Though the disciples do not eat in the same place, or at the same time, they eat the bread of the Supper of the Lord in remembrance that they are part of the body.

10:18 *Partakers of the altar:* Israelites partook of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. They ate of the sacrifice that was made (Lv 3:3; 7:6-19; 8:31; Dt 12:17,18). In the same way, those who partook of the pagan feasts of Corinth, and ate of the meat sacrificed to idols, were partaking of the idolatrous worship. Therefore, though we understand that there is nothing in the meat, Paul urges Christians to stay away from the pagan ceremonies of idolatrous worshippers.

10:19 There was nothing in an idol, nor the sacrifices to an idol (8:4). The only significance to either was in the imaginations of the worshippers. Therefore, Paul is not discussing the supposed religious significance of either idols or foods taken in reference to idols. He is discussing the religious connotations that misguided religionists place on such things. The Christians who knew that there was no religious significance to either idols or foods must set an example for the community that God does not consider the religious inventions of men to

have any significance in reference to salvation.

10:20 *Sacrifice to demons:* Any religion that is created after the misguided religious desires and imaginations of men, therefore, is a tribute to demons (Compare Lv 17:7; Dt 32:17; Ps 106:37; Gl 4:8; Rv 9:20). Such was the idolatrous worship throughout Achaia. Therefore, Paul did not want the Corinthian brethren participating in idol feasts. Their participation would give the impression that they condoned the false religions of Corinth. Therefore, Christians should stay away from idolatrous religions. When one becomes a Christian, he should separate himself from man-made religions in order to be joined to the body of Christ (See comments Mk 7:1-9; 2 Jn 9-11).

10:21 The Achaians had to make a choice. If they were going to fellowship with the body of Christ, then they could not partake of the false religions of man (See 2 Co 6:15,16). They could not be members of the body while at the same time associate with idolatrous religions. If they did they would give the impression that they condoned the religious inventions of those who have been deceived by Satan. Paul worked among the religious groups of his day in order to evangelize those who were caught up in their own idolatrous religions. He did not associate with them in order to partake of their religious error.

10:22 *Stronger than He:* If one would attempt to provoke the Lord to jealousy, then he will certainly reap the wrath of the Lord (Dt 32:21; Ez 22:14). A Christian would not seek to provoke the Lord to jealousy by his participation in idolatrous religions. Though there is nothing in an idol or foods offered in respect to an idol, one should not use his liberty to eat meat or associate with idolatrous temples in any way that might give the impression that he condones idols or foods sacrificed to idols. It is important, therefore, that one be cautious about his participation with idolatrous religions that may give the impression that he condones religious error. This does not say, however, that what other religions do should govern what the church does in matters of opinion. In the context of the idol worship that Paul is discussing, the discussion is not in reference to matters of opinion. These

were matters of fundamental teaching in reference to the one true and living God as opposed to false gods. Christians enjoy freedom among themselves in matters of opinion. However, when God speaks, they give their obedience to His law. It is for this reason that the Christian's relationship with those who have not obeyed the gospel is evangelistic. The disciples of Jesus must never refuse an opportunity to teach others the truth of God's word as Paul never refused to go into any religious center. Whenever there is an opportunity to teach, one must take the opportunity (See At 19:29-31).

10:23 All things are lawful: As an individual, Paul understood the freedom that we have in Christ (6:12). We must understand this statement in the context of this discussion. The idols were nothing, and neither were the foods that were eaten in respect to the idols. However, it was not wise to partake of such in a context wherein the new convert might conclude that one was paying homage to an idol. Our knowledge that there is nothing in an idol, nor the foods offered to idols, should never be used as an occasion to encourage another to eat the foods offered to the idols (8:12). **All things do not edify:** Something could be lawful, but not necessarily beneficial for edification. Eating of meats sacrificed to idols by the knowledgeable Christian was lawful, but it was not expedient for the sake of the new convert (8:12). Something may be lawful, therefore, but considered not expedient because it causes the new convert to act against his own conscience (See comments Rm 14).

10:24 Because individuals come into a brotherhood of believers through immersion into Christ, they come into a fellowship wherein they have responsibilities toward one another. They come into a fellowship of slaves who seek the best for others (See comments Mk 10:43-45). They thus seek to edify one another in an environment of mutual love (See 13: 5; Rm 15:1,2; Ph 2:4).

WISE USE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

10:25 Paul now turns to giving instructions concerning how one should wisely use his freedom in Christ in reference to the idol worship of the Achaian culture. **Eat**

whatever: If the meat was bought in the market, then it was possibly meat that had been sacrificed to idols. However, Paul instructs the Christians to simply buy and eat the meat without asking if it was meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

10:26,27 One must remember that all foods were created by God in order to sustain the physical part of man (Ex 19:5; Ps 24:1; 50:12; see comments 1 Tm 4:4). There is no religious significance to any food. If a Christian were invited by an unbeliever to a house and served meat, he was to ask no questions concerning any religious significance of the meat. **For conscience' sake:** They were not to ask in order that they might eat the meat in ignorance concerning its origin in reference to idol worship (Lk 10:7,8; see comments Rm 14:23).

10:28 Do not eat: If the Christian were informed that the meat that was set before him was sacrificed to idols, then he should not eat. He should not eat in order to inform the host that he will not do that which would condone the teaching that there were gods other than the one true God (Dt 10:14; Ps 24:1). The strong Christian who has liberty to eat any meat, should not allow the unbeliever or the new convert the opportunity to believe that he has any respect for the idols of false gods (8:7,10,12).

10:29,30 Conscience ... of the other: Paul now explains that in the context of eating meat sacrificed to idols, the leadership of the strong brother must lead in protecting the conscience of the new convert. Therefore, the point of his instructions is for the sake of the new convert, not the conscience of the strong brother or even the unbeliever. Paul's instructions, therefore, must be understood in the context of the one body relationship that the members have with one another. In this relationship of unity, it is the responsibility of the strong brethren to maintain their relationship with the new converts. The strong must maintain the fellowship for the sake of the new convert. Though one might have liberty in Christ to do something, that liberty must first be considered in reference to new converts who might be encouraged to act against their consciences (9:19; Rm 14:6). Keep

in mind that the one who might be encouraged to eat against his conscience is the new convert, not the older brother who should have grown out of giving any religious significance to meats offered to idols. The fact that there existed in the Corinthian church those who were converted out of idol worship, and yet had spiritually grown past showing any religious significance to idols, is evidence that God expects Christians to grow in reference to these matters. Consider also the fact that the Corinthian disciples, even those who had been Christians for the longest time, were only Christians for five to six years. Therefore, by this time these strong Christians with knowledge concerning idols, had grown in five to six years to understand that there was nothing in an idol or the meats offered to idols. We would assume, therefore, that the new converts among them would eventually grow out of their thinking that neither idols nor foods had any religious significance. If they did not, then they would be guilty of not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:18). If they did not grow, their spiritual immaturity in these matters would be manifested in a few years if they maintained their same attitude toward meat as they had at the time Paul wrote. We would correctly assume, therefore, that Paul's instructions concerning this matter do not apply to matters of different opinions between strong disciples. Strong disciples are those who realize that in matters of opinion, there is unity in the diversity of opinions (Compare comments Ti 3:9-11).

10:31-33 To the glory of God: The Christian's life is given in its entirety to God (Rm 12:1,2; Gl 2:20). Therefore, the motivation behind the Christian's behavior is in thanksgiving for all that God has done through His grace (15:10). When one is motivated by grace, he is motivated to glorify with his life that there is only one Lord to whom he has given his life (2 Co 4:15; Cl 3:17; 1 Pt 4:11). **Give no offense:** The Christian should not conduct himself in a manner that would dishonor God through his offense of the new convert (Rm 14:13). His conduct must portray obedience to the one true God, and thus, become the opportunity for the unbelievers to ask concerning

his hope (1 Pt 3:15). **Not seeking my own:** The Christian is to behave in a manner that puts others first in his mind. In his personal conduct, Paul lived that which he preached. He became an example to those he sought to save through the preaching of the gospel (9:22; Rm 15:2; Gl 1:10).

Chapter 11

11:1 This verse should actually be the concluding statement of chapter 10 and the discussion concerning idols. **Imitate:** This is from the Greek word *mimaitais*. It is the word from which the English word “mimic” is derived. For the Achaian disciples, Paul here establishes his behavior as an example to be followed. However, the condition for following his example is as he followed Christ (See 4:16; Ep 5:1; Ph 3:17; 1 Th 1:6). The Holy Spirit allowed him to write this unique statement because of the nature of his life as a dedicated individual who had given himself to Christ (See comments Gl 2:20). They were thus to follow the example of his life as his life was patterned after Christ.

MAINTAIN GOD-ORDAINED ROLES

Since the letters of both 1 and 2 Corinthians were directed to all the Christians in the province of Achaia, we would assume that Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 - 14 were in reference to the provincial meetings that took place occasionally in the city of Corinth (See 1 Co 16:15; 2 Co 1:1; 9:1,2; 11:10; compare 1 Th 1:7,8). It was during this unique and occasional assembly that some were reflecting their unloving sectarianism and behaving competitively in the use of their gifts (See 1 Co 1:12,13).

In 11:2-16 Paul writes concerning the influence of the culture on the behavior of Christian women. He wrote to correct the behavior of some of the sisters who seem to have been influenced by either temple prostitutes or the unruly behavior of some dominant women of the culture.

11:2 Keep the traditions: One should certainly not confuse Paul's use of the word “traditions” here with

the man-made religious traditions upon which false religions are based (See comments Mk 7:1-9). He speaks of inspired teachings by which they must conduct their thinking and lives (7:17; 15:3; 2 Th 2:15; 3:6; see Gl 1:11,12).

11:3 *The head:* This metaphor is used to signify that which is the center of reference and in control. Christ is the center of reference to every man who has submitted to His will. Therefore, Christ is in control of the submitted through the authority of His word (Jn 12:48). The husband is the spiritual center of reference in the home, and thus, the one who has the final responsibility of leadership in the family (See comments Ep 5:22-33). In her relationship with her husband, therefore, the wife should manifest an attitude of subjection to the husband in order to preserve the order of the home. An insubordinate wife presents an environment in the home wherein there is no final authority, and thus, children grow up without learning how to respect authority. Matriarchal societies produce insecure men. ***Head of Christ:*** No one manifestation of the Godhead (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) works independently of the Godhead. Therefore, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the head of Christ (Jn 14:28).

11:4 Paul addresses here the conduct of the men in the assembly who publicly prayed and preached by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He uses the Greek word *anair* which refers specifically to the male members. ***Head covered:*** The literal translation of this phrase is "to have something down over his or her head." That which one is "to have down over his head" is not mentioned in the Greek word. We would assume that such things as hats, caps or napkins are not in the definition of the word. Verse 14 indicates that what is under discussion is the hair. However, it was a custom of the times that women wear veils that covered their faces. The veil symbolized the woman's subjection to her husband and the fact that she sexually gave herself only to her husband. If she did not wear the veil, then she was manifesting a spirit of rebellion. There are some Bible students who believe that reference here is to the hair of the man and woman. In

other words, the man should not pray or prophecy while manifesting an effeminate appearance as a woman. **Dishonors his head:** If a man prays or prophesies in public with the appearance of a woman, he dishonors his headship.

11:5 Every woman: There were women in the early church who were inspired in their prayers and teaching (At 21:9). However, there is no indication where any sister taught or prayed in a manner wherein she usurped authority over a man (14:34). Their work of praying and teaching was always in an environment wherein they maintained their submission to the brothers. Though the environment wherein they maintained their submission may be determined by the culture, Paul instructs that they should not conduct themselves in a manner where they lose the glory and honor of their position. Since the covering of the women manifested their position in public life, Paul is talking about more than the assembly of the body (See comments 1 Tm 2:8-15). **Uncovered:** The Greek word here is *akatakalyptos*. This word does not define that which is the covering. Since it is a generic term, then the context must determine what the covering is. Verse 4, in conjunction with verse 14, would identify the covering here as hair. There were possibly some Corinthian sisters who were cutting their hair in a way to be identified with the temple prostitutes of Aphrodite. Their wrong behavior was not in cutting their hair or in having short hair. Many women throughout the world naturally have short hair. The problem here was the shaving of their hair in order to be identified with the temple prostitutes. Such behavior brought shame upon the church. It manifested an attitude of insubordination to those outside the church. **Dishonors her head:** By cutting their hair, these sisters were behaving in a way to be identified with the idolatrous temple worship, and thus, were bringing shame upon their husbands. It brought shame upon the body of Christ because such an act manifested to the society that these women were behaving in an insubordinate manner in reference to their husbands. When Christians behave in a manner to identify with cultural practices of the world that manifest principles

contrary to the will of God, then they bring shame upon other disciples. It is not the place of Christians to involve themselves with those things in a society that are considered either rebellious or immoral (Compare comments 1 Pt 3:1-6).

11:6 It was not becoming, as a lady in the culture of Corinth, for a woman to cut her hair in order to look like a man. In the Old Testament, the head was shaved in times of mourning (Lv 10; Jb 1:20). In this context Paul affirms that if the sisters want to shave their heads, then they must accept the shame that goes with doing such (See Nm 5:18). If they shave their heads in order to identify with the temple prostitutes, then in the eyes of the Christian community they have shamed themselves before the church. Therefore, Christians must be careful not to present themselves in a manner that identifies them with an immoral and disobedient world.

11:7 The man should not reject his God-ordained position in life by covering his head. The woman should not reject her honored position by shaving her head. We must keep in mind that the principle of the headship of man and submission of the wives was determined by God. However, how such is manifested within a culture is determined by the culture. Paul does not explain in what manner a woman is to remain in a submissive role. The fact is that she is, and thus, she should exercise caution in her life in order to manifest a position of submission in relation to her husband. In the Achaian culture, the covering had great significance in reference to the position of the wife in reference to her husband and other men. This cultural significance, therefore, determined the use of the veil that covered the woman's face. However, in most societies throughout the world today, the covering means nothing in reference to the woman's submission to the man.

11:8,9 *Woman for the man:* The woman was created from man (Gn 2:21) and given to the man (Gn 2:18). She was created for man (Gn 2:18) and was given to be the glory of man (See comments 1 Tm 2:13,14). The relationship of the woman to the man, therefore, is a place of glory. When women walk outside their place of glory,

they do not exalt themselves in the eyes of God. What Paul instructs in this context is for the purpose of guarding the position of the woman, both before society, and before the church.

11:10 Authority on her head: Though Paul does not define how long the covering of hair should be, he assumes that the Corinthians can culturally determine the length that would indicate her submission to the headship of her husband. Whatever the length may be, it must indicate that she is guarding her husband's authority and headship in the family. **Because of the angels:** Angels function submissively before the presence of God. Some Bible students have affirmed that Paul means here that there were angels in their presence. The woman's sign of submission, therefore, must be maintained in order to manifest her demeanor of submission for the sake of angels. However, the Greek word *angelos* that is used here can be translated "messengers" (See Gr. in Mt 11:10; Lk 7:24; 9:52; Jn 2:25). Reference could possibly be to the evangelists who came their way.

11:11,12 The man and woman are mutually dependent on one another. It is God's plan that the woman function in a submissive manner in order that the man guard her position of honor through love. The wife who does not allow her husband to function as the head of the family has moved herself out of a position wherein her honor is protected. The man is dependent on the woman who adds wholeness to his life. His very existence depends upon the power of the woman to continue the human race through procreation. Together, both man and woman are dependent on God, for both are created and sustained by the power of God (See Gl 3:28).

11:13 Paul asks the question of this verse while knowing that the Corinthians would answer in the negative. **Head uncovered:** The same Greek word is used here as in verse 5. That which is the covering is not identified by the word. Therefore, we can identify the covering only by the context in which this word is used. Verse 14 identifies the covering as the hair. The Achaians knew what the covering was about which Paul spoke. They would therefore judge that it was not proper for the woman to

pray with her head shaven.

11:14 It is in this passage that Paul identifies the covering about which he is talking. It is the hair. The problem was the cutting of the hair in order to manifest an non-submissive attitude. In the cultural context of the Achaians, the cutting of the woman's hair identified the women of the church with the rebellious cultural practices of women manifesting a spirit of insubordination. The problem is not the covering. It was the attitude by which the covering was dismissed. We must not lose focus of the issue in the context. Paul is not condemning the short hair. He is dealing with the attitude of those women who were rebelling against their God-ordained position. The cutting of the hair was only the indication of the problem.

11:15 *Given to her for a covering:* It is here that Paul explains that the hair manifested the glory of the woman. If a woman would present herself in a manner to be identified as a man, then she has forsaken her glory. In the culture of Corinth, emphasis on the long hair indicated the woman's willingness to maintain her position in society. The long hair is given to her for a covering instead of a veil. Therefore, she could signal her willingness to maintain her position in society by the wearing of long hair instead of the physical covering or wrap that was used to cover the face. Paul used the Greek word *koma* for the first time here in this chapter. It refers to the physical veil that was used to cover the face in order to show submission. However, in this passage Paul is saying that the long hair of the woman would take the place of the *koma* in that long hair would also manifest the position of the woman.

11:16 *Seems to be contentious:* The non-submissive attitudes of some of the sisters was contrary to the teaching of submission that had been taught to all the disciples. It is thus not a point of dispute, but one to which the sisters in Achaia must submit in order to maintain the God-appointed role of the woman (vss 2,3; see 1 Pt 3:1-6). ***No such custom:*** It was not Paul's custom to be argumentative about matters of opinion (2 Tm 2:24; Ti 3:9). In cultures where the woman's covering in-

dicates the position of the woman, there may be points of discussion on this matter. However, in those cultures where the covering signifies nothing in reference to the woman's position, then the matter is not an issue for discussion. Women were free to do with their covering as they chose. Therefore, Paul's discussion of this context developed only because of some sisters who were not maintaining their positions in reference to male leadership. The problem was not the covering, but the attitude of some dominant sisters. Though the covering had to be discussed because it was the cultural symbol of submission, contentions over the covering must not divert our attention away from the real problem.

FELLOWSHIP DURING THE LORD'S MEAL

This section of teaching must be understood in the historical context that the Achaian disciples gathered together in the homes of the members throughout Achaia, as other disciples did in other cities of the 1st century. Since assembly in purpose-built church buildings would not exist in the history of the church until the first part of the 4th century, the logistics of the assembly of the disciples of the early church must always be understood to be in a house setting. And since nowhere in the New Testament is the church determined to exist or be identified by the ability of all the members to meet together at the same place, then the disciples in any city met in many homes throughout the city. The urban disciples met in multiple assemblies in every city where the church existed. The context of verses 17-34, therefore, must be understood in reference to meeting in either the homes of the members, or a possible occasional area-wide meeting of all the disciples for a special fellowship love feast/Supper. There is nothing in this context that informs us as to when this particular meeting took place. The disciples came together on the first day of the week on a regular basis (16:1,2). But their regular coming together in small house assemblies does not present the historical setting for what Paul instructs in this context. The context supports the conclusion that what is under discussion is an occasional assembly of all the disciples

of Achaia, though the early disciples met every week in their homes in order to celebrate the Supper (At 20:7).

11:17 *Come together ... for the worse:* The reason for their coming together in an area-wide assembly was to celebrate their oneness as the whole body through the sacrifice of Jesus and to encourage one another to love and do good works (See comments Hb 10:24,25). They came together to remember their common covenant relationship with God that was based on the cross. They came together for a love feast in order to celebrate their unity because of the oneness of the universal body of Christ (10:14-17). However, because of the puffed up attitudes of some, their coming together into one area-wide assembly was an occasion to manifest their dysfunctional unity (vs 33). Instead of coming together to celebrate their unity, their assembly became an opportunity to manifest pride and sectarianism on the part of some. For this reason, their coming together promoted division instead of unity. Their assembly for the love feast/Supper became an opportunity for discord because of the inconsiderate attitudes of some.

11:18 *In assembly:* The Greek text literally reads, "in assembly." Paul is discussing a public assembly. It is unlikely that this is the assembly in someone's house. The context of this assembly would be when all members in all Achaia came together to celebrate their oneness around the love feast/Supper (See 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12). It was an occasion where every member had to consider one another. Rural and urban, rich or poor, would have to consider one another's culture, customs and ministries of the miraculous gifts. Individuals would have to consider their mutual responsibility to encourage one another. Unfortunately, this provincial assembly of several house groups from all Achaia became the occasion to manifest their dysfunctional unity that existed among the Achaian disciples. ***Divisions:*** They had divided among themselves because of their sectarian attitudes (See comments 1:12,13; 3:3). They had divided among themselves because of their prideful use of the miraculous gifts. In the context of the love feast, they had socially divided themselves by manifesting their

selfishness and lack of consideration for one another as the Achaian body.

11:19 *Factions:* This word is from the Greek word *haireseis*. Reference is to sects among the disciples of Achaia that were caused by allegiance to different individuals (1:12,13), and prideful attitudes in reference to the use of miraculous gifts (chs 12 - 14). There were even questions over teaching concerning the resurrection (ch 15). ***May be made known:*** Times of dysfunctional unity among disciples provides an opportunity to manifest those disciples who truly have a heart of love, mercy and forbearance. It also provides the occasion for the proud to manifest their true character before all. God will allow the opportunity for division to occur in order to test the sincerity of those who claim to be Christian (Compare Dt 13:3; see Lk 2:35; 1 Jn 2:19). It is during times of social chaos among the disciples that the spirit of love, mercy and forbearance is manifested within the hearts of those who truly love God and seek to behave after His will (See comments Ph 4:5). On the occasion of what is mentioned in this context, the area-wide love feast/Supper became the opportunity for those with sectarian hearts to be manifested before the whole church.

11:20 *It is not to eat:* The Achaians, as well as many 1st century disciples, regularly gathered to ate the love feast/Lord's Supper (vs 21; 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12; see comments At 20:7). As the Passover meal, at which time Jesus instituted His Supper, it was a time of celebration. For this reason, the love feast of the early church was a celebration meal. In the case of the Achaian church, however, this feast turned into an opportunity for division, selfishness and disorder. The unholy attitudes that were generated during their love feasts made it impossible for them to have a mind of celebration in order to eat the Lord's memorial that was eaten during or after the love feasts. ***Lord's Supper:*** "Supper" is from the Greek word *deipnon*, meaning a full meal, or feast, as it is used in other contexts of the New Testament (See Mk 6:21; Lk 14:12-14; Jn 12:1,2; 13:1-14; Rv 19:9,17). This is the only time the phrase "Lord's Supper" is used in the New Testament in reference to the disciples eating a meal in re-

membrance of the sacrifice of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead (See comments Mt 26:26-29). The assembly of Christians on the first day of the week provided an opportunity for them to come together in their different homes in order to remember the One who was the atoning sacrifice for their sins (See At 20:7). It was a time to celebrate their covenant with God. It was also an opportunity to remember the one universal body that was purchased with the sacrificial blood of Jesus (10:15-17).

11:21 The Achaian love feast had digressed into an occasion that manifested pride, selfishness and sectarianism. The rich brethren were not being considerate of the poor. Some were eating the food of the love feast before others had a chance to come and share in the food (vs 33). The love feast that should manifest Christian brotherhood had digressed into a feast of gluttony and drunkenness. As a result, they were in no spiritual state of mind to eat the Lord's Supper. Their unholy attitudes made it impossible for them to partake of the Lord's Supper with a correct mental attitude.

11:22 *Houses in which to eat and to drink:* Paul gives instructions here that it would be better for them to eat something first at their own home before they came to the general assembly to partake of the love feast/Supper. If they could not wait to eat before everyone arrived at the love feast, then they should eat something before they came. It would be better to do this than to come together and manifest an inconsiderate behavior toward others. In the statements of this verse, Paul shamed them for harboring unholy attitudes that led them to carry out unholy practices when they partook of the love feast with one another. He does not condemn them for gathering together to have the love feast, for in verses 33 & 34 he gives them instructions on how to have an orderly love feast with the Lord's Supper when they come together. Neither does he condemn the eating of a meal at the location of the meeting. If he did this, then he would be condemning the eating of a meal in the Christians' homes because the Christians in the 1st century met on Sundays in their homes. What Paul is condemning are some disciples who were turning something that

was good and right into an occasion for division (See 16:19; Rm 16:5). Christians must remember that the love feast, in the context of the Lord's Supper, is not a common meal. It is a covenant meal. It is a time for considering one another in our covenant relationship with God. The love feast, therefore, was not eaten to satisfy hunger. It was an opportunity to come together to examine ourselves and prepare our minds for eating the Lord's memorial meal. **The assembly of God:** When Christians behave among themselves in a manner that is portrayed here in reference to the digression of the love feast, then the community in which the disciples live is revealed to be an assembly of people with ungodly attitudes. Those Christians, therefore, who would seek their own interests at the expense of their relationship with other disciples, have brought upon themselves the judgment of God. If the Achaians could not cease from their gluttonous and drunken meal, then they should stop the love feast, for it brought themselves as the body of Christ into disrepute. Paul calls on them to respect the poor. He calls on them to consider the reputation of one another. He calls on them to restore an assembly for the love feast and Lord's Supper that would be characteristic of people of God who have love among themselves. He instructed them not to have an assembly that was characteristic of the drunken assemblies of the pagan temples.

11:23,24 I have received: What Paul now explains came to him by revelation of the Lord (15:3; Gl 1:11,12; Cl 3:24). The Lord directly explained to him the significance of the Lord's Supper (See comments Mt 26:26-29). **Took bread:** It was during the Passover meal that the Lord changed the meaning of the Passover into a memorial of His body and blood. The bread represented the incarnate body of Jesus that was sacrificially nailed to the cross, as well as the universal body of members who are connected to Him in a covenant relationship (10:16). But the symbolism goes beyond the literal body of Jesus. For the Jews, bread referred to sustenance from God. Throughout their wilderness wanderings, God sustained the nation of Israel by giving manna from heaven. During the Passover feast, the bread symbolized God's suste-

nance of their lives throughout the wilderness wandering. While in the land of promise, the nation was blessed with rain from God. Bread came from grain. Grain came from plants. Plants grew because of the rain. And rain came from God. Bread was thus symbolic of God's sustenance of His people. Those who are members of the body of Christ receive the continued sustenance of eternal life that comes from God. When Jesus took the bread, therefore, the Jewish disciples knew what the bread of the Passover meant. It meant life. Being a member of His body means life, which life was made possible by the atoning sacrifice of the literal body of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is the Bread of Life who has come down out of heaven for the life of all those who obey Him (Jn 6:35) **Is for you:** The word "broken" that is used in some translations is not in many Greek texts, and thus, this word could be dropped from the text as many translations do. The text would read, "*This is My body which is for you.*" There were no bones broken in the crucified body of Jesus. **Remembrance:** The Greek word here is *anamnesis*, which is generally translated "remembrance." The word can equally be translated "reminder." The Lord's Supper can be the token, sign or memorial event that Jesus instituted in order that His body of people remember His covenant with them. Or, reference could be that the Lord's Supper was instituted in order that the disciples also partake of it in order to remind Jesus to fulfill the promises of His covenant with them (See Gn 9:12-16; Ex 2:23-25; Ez 16:59,60). The Supper was instituted in order to regularly remind Christians of who they were and why they were the sons of God. It is imperative, therefore, that Christians regularly partake of the Supper in order to remember the sacrificial offering of Jesus. However, in partaking of the Supper, we, as the sons of God, are reminding Jesus to remember the promises of His covenant. It is not that He forgets. It is that we need a continual reminder of the promises of the covenant by reminding Him.

11:25 The cup: Paul was not placing emphasis here on the physical cup that was used only as a container in which the fruit of the vine was distributed among the disciples. The bread of the previous verse did not need a

container as the liquid of the fruit of the vine. Therefore, he simply referred to the cup to stand for the fruit of the vine that was within the cup. There is no spiritual significance of the container. **The new covenant:** Jesus gave His blood in order to ratify a new covenant between God and man (See comments Jr 31:31-34). Therefore, when one is immersed into Christ, he comes into this new covenant relationship with God. It is new because the Sinai covenant between God and Israel was taken away (See comments Hb 10:5-10).

11:26 As often as: In this context, Paul did not command a specific time for the eating of the Lord's Supper. However, we would assume from the context here that the Achaians were eating it on the first day of the week (Sunday) when they came together in their homes. This was the day when they came together in assembly (vs 18; 16:1,2; see At 20:7). Since they were coming together for the occasional regional love feast, they were corrupting the Supper by their gluttony and drunken inconsideration of one another. Therefore, because of their sinful attitudes, they were not able to partake of the Supper with their minds focused on their oneness in Christ. Their attitudes were clouded with drunkenness and their spirit of division was manifested through their lack of consideration. At the time they were to eat of the Supper, therefore, they were not worthy in their thinking. **Proclaim the Lord's death:** When Christians come together to eat the Lord's Supper, they make a proclamation that Jesus died for their sins. Paul affirms that Christians should make this proclamation of the Lord's death until He comes again. Christians make the proclamation that they are blood-bought sons of God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As often as the disciples have the opportunity to eat the Supper, they proclaim who they are and what they believe. It is for this reason that disciples should eat the Supper as often as they can.

11:27 An unworthy manner: Paul does not mean here that we must be spiritually worthy in order to eat the Supper. If this were true, then no one could eat the Supper because all have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23). There is no

man or woman who can meritoriously qualify to eat the Supper if reference is to spiritual worthiness. If Paul were discussing the worthiness of the individual, then if one did eat, he would be arrogantly trusting in his own performance of law and good works. He would be arrogantly comparing himself with his brother who felt that he could not eat because he felt unworthy. Therefore, Paul cannot be teaching here that one's general worthiness in reference to God is a qualification for eating the Supper. If such were true, he would be teaching something that is contrary to the context in which he makes this statement. What he does refer to is the unworthy attitudes and behavior of those inconsiderate disciples who became gluttonous and drunken when they ate the love feast (vss 20-22). Because of the unholy and arrogant attitudes of those who did not wait for everyone to gather for the feast, they could not eat the Supper that followed the love feast. The unholy attitudes that came out of the love feasts before the Supper made it impossible for them to eat the Supper of the Lord in the right state of mind.

11:28 *Examine himself:* One must first examine himself, and then eat the Lord's Supper. During the love feast, there is the opportunity for each disciple to examine his relationship with his fellow brother. If one can eat the love feast in fellowship with a brother, then he can eat the Supper of the Lord. Therefore, as one eats the Supper of the Lord, he should be manifesting his attitude of fellowship and unity toward his brothers. If he is not in unity with his brothers while eating the love feast, then he judges himself to have an unworthy attitude at the time he eats of the Lord's Supper (10:15-17; see Mt 26:22; 2 Co 13:5; Gl 6:4). Therefore, one should be in a worthy state of mind at the time he partakes of the Supper in order to proclaim the Lord's death, as well as to remember the oneness of the body of Christ. It is for this reason that during any assembly of the saints wherein the Supper is eaten, there must be no hysterical outbursts or uncontrollable situations. There must be no gluttony or drunkenness. It must be a time of fellowship and self-examination during which the disciples celebrate their

unity in Christ. The love feast, therefore, was an occasion to prepare the disciples' minds for eating the Supper.

11:29 For one to eat of the Supper in a casual or irreverent manner is to despise the sacrificial body of Christ and His body, the church (vs 22). Eating the Supper with such an attitude is to bring condemnation upon oneself because he is not considering the seriousness of his relationship with either his brother or the Lord. If a person is not considering the Lord's body and his brother at the time he eats and drinks, then he is judging himself unworthy because he has an unworthy attitude at the time of eating.

11:30 *Many are weak ... sleep:* Some Bible students have affirmed that Paul's reference here is to the Achaians' spiritual sickness. Because of their unworthy attitudes, and the atmosphere surrounding the Supper, such was a manifestation of their spiritual sickness. Some were "asleep" because they had already spiritually fallen away (Compare 2 Pt 2:20-22). However, some Bible students affirm that reference here is to physical affliction that was brought upon them directly by God as a result of their corruption of the body of Christ. If this were not the case in the absence of Paul, then it was possibly going to take place when Paul came, for he was coming with the rod of discipline (Compare comments At 5:1-11; 1 Tm 1:20). He was coming with the rod of discipline in order to correct these matters among them (4:20). As a Christ-sent apostle, he had the responsibility to deliver sinners to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. It is best to understand this passage metaphorically in the sense that many among them were spiritually sick and some were simply spiritually dead. However, as a Christ-sent apostle, we can also assume that Paul was coming to carry out his God-ordained responsibility to continue what was already happening to them directly from God as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (See comments At 5:1-11). There would be the destruction of the flesh of some in order that they might be taught.

11:31 *If we judged ourselves:* If they were judging themselves to be unholy, and thus, correcting their sinful

practices and attitudes in reference to the Supper, then there would be no need for someone else to judge them. Paul is urging them to take the initiative to judge their own relationship with God (vss 28,29; 2 Co 13:5; compare Ps 32:5; 1 Jn 1:9). He said this in order that his coming to them not be an occasion for judgment, but for joy.

11:32 *Disciplined by the Lord:* Because they did not judge themselves in order to correct the problems surrounding the Supper, and other sinful attitudes and practices, the Lord was directly chastising them (2 Sm 7:14; Ps 94:12; Hb 12:5-8,11; Rv 3:19). Only through the revelation that Paul herein writes, they could understand that they were being chastised by the Lord. Since their self-judgment was not sufficient to correct their ungodly atmosphere that surrounded the Lord's Supper, they could not connect their discipline from the Lord with their violation of the sanctity of the Supper. Therefore, if they did not repent, Paul was coming to finalize their chastisement from the Lord (4:20; see comments 2 Co 10 - 13).

11:33 In the last two verses of the chapter, Paul gave them basic instructions on how to correct, not discontinue, their love feast occasions. When they came together for their love feasts, they must wait for one another. This would manifest consideration for one another. It would allow the poor an opportunity to have a portion of the food. It would allow those who came from great distances throughout Achaia to be present for the feast and Supper. It would also prevent some from eating, and then going home after eating the Lord's Supper.

11:34 If there are those who are too hungry to wait, then they should eat something at home before they come to this special area-wide feast (vs 22). In this way, they would not be coming together for the purpose of simply eating the love feast, for the love feast was not a common meal, but a covenant meal. They would be coming together for the proper reason of being with their brethren, as well as coming together for the Lord's Supper. If they came together and carried on in a gluttonous manner, then they would have judged themselves unworthy. ***When I come:*** There were evidently other things

that needed to be corrected than what was discussed in this context. Therefore, Paul was going to personally set these things in order when he came (See 4:20). He was coming with the responsibility of a Christ-sent apostle, and with such responsibility, he had no choice but to exercise the power of a Christ-sent apostle. God gave the apostles disciplinary power in order to grow the early church into maturity during its early years of existence. Once the church was firmly established, this disciplinary power passed away with the death of the Christ-sent apostles.

COVENANT FEASTS

Jesus instituted His Supper in the context of a covenant meal, the Passover feast. The Lord's Supper is a covenant feast of Christians who are in a common covenant relationship with God. And thus, the love feast/Supper is an opportunity to celebrate our covenant with God. Covenants in the Old Testament were established on the foundation of a sacrifice. A covenant was first made between two parties, which covenant was confirmed and instituted by animal sacrifices (Ps 50:5). The covenant represented an agreement between two parties, and thus fellowship that was based on the agreement. At an altar of an animal sacrifice, therefore, a covenant was established. After the sacrifice, however, celebration took place as the covenanted parties came together in a fellowship meal. The making of the covenant at the altar of sacrifice was a time of commitment and solemnity, but when it came to the meal at the table to eat the sacrificed animal, it was a time for joy and celebration in the presence of God. There was a difference, therefore, between the altar of sacrifice and the table of fellowship. Each had its own significance in the institution and continuance of the covenant. Here are some examples:

1. In Genesis 26:26-31, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, came to Isaac in order to establish a covenant of peace with him. *"Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us. And let us make a covenant with you"* (Gn 26:28). Abimelech wanted to make the covenant in order *"that you [Isaac] will do us no harm"* (Gn 26:29). A covenant

was subsequently made between Isaac and Abimelech in order that something good come from the covenant. Once the covenant was established, a covenant meal celebrated the event. In Genesis 26:30 it is stated, *“So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.”*

2. When Jacob secretly left the presence of Laban in order to return to his homeland, Laban pursued after him with the intent of doing Jacob harm (Gn 31:22,23). However, God came to Laban in a dream and warned him concerning his evil intentions against Jacob (Gn 31:24). When Laban finally overtook Jacob, he offered to make a covenant with Jacob in order to establish a peaceful relationship between the two families (Gn 31:44). Again, the purpose of the covenant was looking forward to something good, that there be peace between Jacob and Laban.

The covenant between Jacob and Laban was sworn in the presence of God who was the judge of the covenant (Gn 31:49,50,53). Both parties of the covenant would be blessed if they honored the conditions of the covenant. A peaceful relationship would continue between the two families from the time of the covenant forward. In order to enact the covenant, a sacrifice was made. Following the sacrifice, and as part of the covenant ceremony, a joyous meal of celebration was conducted (Gn 31:54). The meal for the sacrifice was not a time for solemnity, sadness and guilt. It was a time of celebration over the fact that a covenant of peace had been made between two parties. The sacrifice established the covenant. The fellowship feast celebrated the sacrifice and the covenant.

3. When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, God established a covenant relationship with the nation (Ex 19 - 24). After the conditions and responsibilities of the covenant were stated, Exodus 24:1-11 explains the ratification of the covenant. Israel *“offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord”* (Ex 24:5). *“Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read in the audience of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do. And we will be obedient’”* (Ex 24:7). Following the ratification of the covenant through sacrifices to God, and oaths to keep the covenant, the nation ate

and drank (Ex 24:11). The eating and drinking after the establishment of the covenant was a time of celebration and joy. A covenant of peace had been established with God. At the altar, sacrifices were offered for the sins of the people. After the sacrifice, a meal was eaten to celebrate the covenant that had been established with God. Both events were in the presence and fellowship of God. When we eat, therefore, we eat in the presence of the Lord.

Throughout the history of Israel, there were times for remembrance and renewal of the covenant that God made with Israel. When the temple was built, it was a time of remembrance, revival and recommitment to the will of God (2 Ch 5 - 7). When the temple was completed, *"the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord"* (2 Ch 7:4). After the sacrifices, Solomon *"sent the people away to their tents, rejoicing and happy in heart for the goodness that the Lord had shown to David and to Solomon, and to Israel His people"* (2 Ch 7:10).

After the Babylonian captivity, Israel returned and rebuilt the temple that had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (Ez 6:13-22). In the remembrance and renewal of their covenant with the Lord, they offered sacrifices for all Israel (Ez 6:17). Ezra 6:22 states, *"And they kept with joy the feast of unleavened bread seven days, for the Lord made them joyful."*

The returnees from Babylon also rebuilt the walls of the city of Jerusalem (Ne 7,8). Once the walls were rebuilt, it was a time for remembrance, revival and celebration by keeping the feast of Trumpets (See Nm 29:1-6). On the day this feast of renewal was kept, Nehemiah exhorted the people not to mourn or weep, for it was a day of joy and celebration (Ne 8:9). He exhorted them that *"this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Ne 8:10).

No better words than the preceding words of Nehemiah could be spoken to describe the atmosphere that should surround the love feast/Supper that we eat today. This is not an occasion for sadness. The sacrifice has already been offered at the altar of the cross in order that we come into a covenant relationship with God.

Therefore, it is a time for great joy and rejoicing as in the time when Israel was delivered from her enemies (See Et 9:19,22). It is a time to share with one another (See Ps 112). It is a time of eating and drinking together with celebration to the Lord.

What is significant in reference to the meal that followed the altar of sacrifice that ratified a covenant, was that the meal was eaten in the presence of the Lord (Ex 18:12; see Dt 12:7,18; 14:23,26; 15:20). When Israelites communed with one another in the celebration of the covenant meal, they did so with the knowledge that the Lord was in their presence. God's presence was His stamp of approval of the covenant itself, as well as the joy and celebration that took place after the sacrifices for the covenant. When the covenant was established and maintained, God was present. In the celebration meal, therefore, those who communed with one another knew that they were in the presence of the Lord. Either the Achaians did not comprehend the significance of the love feast/Supper, or there were some among them who were still carnal. If they did not repent in this matter, however, Paul was coming with the rod to sort them out.

Chapter 12

MIRACULOUS GIFTS

Chapters 12-14 have been some of the most controversial and studied chapters in the Bible. They have also been some of the most twisted contexts of Scripture among those who have sought to create a religion after their own emotional hysteria. In these chapters Paul deals with the misuse of miraculous gifts. The gifts were misused because of the puffed up attitudes of some of the disciples in Achaia. In fact, we have these portions of Scripture to study because of the puffed up attitudes of these disciples. The miraculous gifts permeated the body of disciples of the 1st century to which the Christ-sent apostles had traveled. In many cases, the gifts were received by those who traveled to the early Passover/Pentecost feasts when the apostles were still in Jerusalem (See comments Mk 16:17-20; At 2:38,39; 8:18; Rm 1:11).

In the absence of an inspired written New Testament, God administered teaching through the apostles' hands by which the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given. The gifts firmly established the first Christians in their conversion out of Judaism and idolatrous religions. However, in the case of the Corinthian church, we have Paul's instructions concerning the use of the gifts because of the Corinthians' misuse of the gifts. Ephesus, Philippi, Derbe and a host of other cities did not have the arrogant and puffed up attitudes as was typical of many in Corinth. Therefore, there was no need to write exhortations as 1 Corinthians 12-14 to other regions. Because the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write to the Corinthians who misused the gifts, and not to Christians in other areas, leads us to conclude that the gifts were only temporary in the establishment of the early church. Once their purpose was fulfilled, there would be no further use of the gifts, and thus, they would pass away. If it were not for the misuse of the gifts in Corinth, therefore, we would have no information concerning their use among the early 1st century disciples. It is on this basis that we must conclude that the gifts were meant to be only temporary. They would pass away when the fullness of the inspired New Testament was written and distributed among the disciples. It is on this basis that we must conclude that the miraculous gifts were never meant to be the foundation upon which the Christian's faith was to be based. Believers were to focus on Jesus, not the work of the Holy Spirit through the miraculous gifts.

The individual ministry of the gifts for edification was to be inclusive of all who were gifted to exhort the body. And because the assemblies were to be inclusive, the assemblies were to be based on the members' consideration for one another (See Hb 10:24,25). This teaching is emphasized in 14:26: *"When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a language, has a revelation, has an interpretation."* The meaning of this statement is that every gifted person who came together in the assembly was to be given the opportunity to exhort the assembled body with their gifts. However, if one gifted with speaking in languages was present without one gifted

with interpretation, then the one speaking in languages was to remain silent. He could not exhort the assembly if they assembly could not understand what he was saying. Therefore, no individual who spoke in a language that only he could understand was allowed to speak in the assembly. In any individual assembly, "everyone" who was present did not have the gift of languages or the gift of interpretation, or some other gift. Paul emphasized this point with questions in chapter 12: "Are all prophets?" (1 Co 12:29). The answer is, NO. "Are all teachers?" (1 Co 12:29). NO. "Do all speak with languages?" (1 Co 12:30). NO. It was not that there were those in every assembly who had something to say, or must use their endowed gift for the benefit of the whole in order that the gifts be used to the "profit of all" (1 Co 12:7). If there were those in every assembly who had something to say, then they were to be given the opportunity to exercise their gift for the edification of the whole body. Assemblies that did not give an opportunity for any prophet, teacher, or speaker in languages, to speak, became exclusive. In the Corinthian context, the prophets (teachers) were being marginalized by those who prided themselves with their gift of languages. Some assemblies, therefore, become exclusive and competitive, if not rude and offensive. From what we understand from the Holy Spirit in the context of 1 Corinthians 11 - 14, one very important principle is taught: No one gifted individual in the assembly had a right to dominate the assembly to the exclusion of others who were likewise gifted.

12:1 Concerning spiritual gifts: The word "gifts" is not in the Greek text. However, it is clearly understood that the subject of this context is about the manifestation and function of the miraculous gifts that were given by the Holy Spirit (vss 5-11). The purpose for which the gifts were given was to edify and build up the new Christians until they were firmly established upon the word of God. Once the gifts had accomplished their purpose, then they passed away (See comments 2 Tm 4:20).

12:2 Led astray: It is good for us to remember our state of being lost when we were outside Christ (Ep 2:1,2). In this case, Paul reminds his readers that they were once

in the bondage of their self-deception of belief in idols (6:11; Ep 2:11; 1 Th 1:9; 1 Pt 4:3). They had created gods after their own imaginations, and subsequently, they made idols to represent their beliefs (Ps 115:5; Is 46:7; Jr 10:5; Hk 2:18,19). **You were led:** Regardless of their being led astray after their own religious inventions, they were led back to God through the preaching of the gospel (2 Th 2:13,14).

12:3 No one who was truly speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit would either speak or live in a way to curse the name of Jesus. The truly inspired man who spoke would also live the life about which he spoke. The identity of any person to be from God would be the word that he speaks. One could not work the miraculous work of God, and at the same time teach those things that were contrary to the word of God. **Accursed:** This is from the Greek word *anathema*. The emphasis of the meaning of the word is on being destroyed from the presence of God (See Gl 1:6-9). The emphasis of Paul's statement here could be that anyone who spoke by the direction of the Spirit would obviously not proclaim Jesus accursed (See 1 Jn 4:2). **Jesus is Lord:** Except through the revelation of God, Jesus would have been just another Jew and an innocent person crucified on a cross. However, the messiahship and sonship of Jesus were made known to man through the revelation of God (Ep 3:3-5). His reign and lordship over all things were made known by inspiration of the Spirit (See At 2:36,37).

12:4 Many kinds of gifts: Though there are different functions of the miraculous gifts, all of them originated from the same Spirit (vs 11; Rm 12:3-8; Hb 2:4; 1 Pt 4:10). Since there is only one Spirit (Ep 4:4), then the one Spirit works in unison through the gifts.

12:5 Many kinds of ministries: This is the administration of the gifts to carry out the work of only one Lord Jesus (Rm 12:6; Ep 4:4-6). Since the one Godhead works in unison, the division that existed among the Achaian Christians did not originate from God, but from man. Since God works as one, so should those who claim to work on behalf of His cause. Disciples that claim to have the Spirit working through them, but do not work with

other Spirit-filled disciples, do not have the one Spirit working through them. The fact that there was division among the Corinthians was evidence that their own thinking was involved in the division, and not the direction of the Spirit.

12:6 Many kinds of activities: The miraculous gifts manifested themselves in different ways. Nevertheless, one must not understand the diversity of the function of the gifts in a way that would attack the oneness of God. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all work as one, though God has manifested Himself in the three works of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through the miraculous gifts, God manifested His work through men in several ways.

12:7 The miraculous gifts were not given for the purpose of self-exaltation among the disciples of Christ. They were given for the edification of all the disciples (See Rm 12:6-8). The very purpose for which the gifts were given was based on serving the needs of others. What God had given for the purpose of administering service to others, the Corinthians were using as an occasion for self-exaltation. Miraculous gifts were never given for the purpose of one to serve himself. They were given in order for one to serve the whole body.

12:8-10 Word of wisdom: From this we would assume that through the Spirit a special gift of wisdom was given to members to be able to make decisions concerning matters wherein judgments were to be made for the whole body (See Js 1:5,6). If the discussion of 2:6,7 is a commentary of what is discussed here, then Paul's meaning here could be on the word that comes as a result of the inspiration of the Spirit. **Word of knowledge:** Knowledge was revealed to the New Testament prophets in order that they understand and teach the truth of God to the disciples (See 2:11,16; Rm 15:14; 2 Co 8:7). **Faith:** Reference here was possibly to an exceptional faith that was granted to specific members in order to carry others through times of hardship and persecution (See 13:2; Mt 17:20; 2 Co 4:13). **Healing:** In every region where there were disciples, and where a Christ-sent apostle went, there were evangelists who were given the miraculous

gift to heal diseases among unbelievers in order to confirm the message and messengers of God (See comments Mk 16:17-20; At 5:12-16; 19:12; 28:8,9; Hb 2:3,4; Js 5:14). **Powers:** Paul does not give us a distinction between miracles and healings, though here he uses the word *dunamai*. This would possibly refer to all miraculous powers that would be exercised for purposes other than healing diseases. Through miracles, God's power was instantly manifested. Through the prayers of righteous men, God's power continued to be manifested in the lives of the disciples (See comments Js 5:13-16). **Prophecy:** This would include inspired preaching, teaching, singing and prayer (15:14; see comments Rm 8:26,27; Jd 20). **Discerning of spirits:** Through this gift the Holy Spirit enabled the early Christians to determine the inner character of those who professed to be inspired preachers or teachers (See 1 Jn 4:1; 2 Jn 7: Rv 2:2). **Kinds of languages:** This was the inspired ability to speak in different foreign languages that one had not previously studied. The purpose of this gift was to make it possible for the gospel to go quickly into all the world, as well as to edify multilingual assemblies (See At 2:4,6-8; 10:44-46; 19:1-6). Therefore, the gift to speak in the languages of men was specifically a sign to and benefit for the unbeliever (14:22). The disciples' speaking in languages was the fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11,12, where God, through Isaiah, prophesied that He would identify His people through their speaking in languages. **Interpretation of languages:** If a foreigner came into the assembly that did not speak the language of the local culture, there were those local brethren who could miraculously translate the message of the gospel for the benefit of the foreigner. In some cases the traveling evangelist who did not speak the local language could speak before the local disciples through an interpreter in order to report to the church the work of God in other areas (See comments At 14:26,27).

12:11 As He wills: The oneness of the work of the preceding gifts was accomplished in the fact that they all originated from the work of the one Holy Spirit. The administration of the gifts was not the work of the particular individuals who possessed the gifts. It was the will of

the Spirit to work through the manifestation of the gifts. Therefore, the Spirit did not contradict Himself. For this reason, the prophets all spoke the same thing and prayed the same thing. Any man who claimed to have the Spirit, and yet, spoke in contradiction to the revelation of the Spirit through the word of God, did not have the Holy Spirit of God. Any man who claimed that the word of God was not the final authority in religious matters, was speaking against what the Spirit had said concerning the finality of the word of God (2 Tm 3:16,17). He thus did not have the Spirit of God. Therefore, no man could speak in a manner to make the Spirit of God contradict Himself or deny what He had already revealed through the inspired Scriptures.

UNITY OF THE GLOBAL BODY

12:12 *The body is one:* This is a fundamental truth (See comments Jn 17:20,21; Rm 12:4,5; Ep 4:4-6; Cl 1:18). There is only one universal body of Christ. Though the body is made up of many individuals, it must function as a unit. Every member of the body, therefore, must strive to maintain the unity of the body throughout the world (1:10; Ph 1:27; see comments Jn 15:1-8). The body is not determined by its assemblies, but by individuals who are in a covenant relationship with God. Regardless of where one might assemble with disciples, he is a member of the universal body of Christ.

12:13 *Baptized into one body:* It was the Holy Spirit who explained through Peter the purpose of immersion in water in relation to one's salvation. It was the Holy Spirit who explained that one must be buried with Jesus in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of his resurrection in order to come into the one body (See comments At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6; Gl 3:27,28). Therefore, all those who have believed in Jesus as the Christ, and have submitted to obedience of the gospel, have been added to the one universal body of Christ by God (At 2:47). Baptized believers are not added to a diversity of bodies. They are added to the one body of Christ that exists throughout the world. ***One body:*** Paul begins here by teaching a fundamental truth concerning the unity

of the body. He wanted to encourage those who felt that their gifts were inferior. He instructed that the body must function as a unit (vss 14,20). He emphasized the fact that all gifts or abilities of each member of the universal body are necessary for the function of the organic body (vss 15,16). Since all parts of the body throughout the world are necessary, then there should be a mutual dependence of one member on another (vss 15,16). Those gifts that may seem less honorable, should be exalted because they are necessary for the edification of the body (vss 22,23). He points out that the parts that are not presentable are to be honored because they have overcome their handicap (vss 23,24). He concludes this discussion on unity by emphasizing the fact that the universal body must function without division in order to survive as the church of Christ (vss 25,26). Therefore, each member must manifest a concern for every other member of the body in order that unity prevail among the disciples (vs 27). Though he was writing this letter from a different location, he, the Achaian disciples, and all members of the body of Christ throughout the world must function as a united force against the forces of Satan. We cannot conclude that the gifts he mentions in this context existed in every house assembly of disciples. However, they did exist throughout the universal body, though not everyone with the gifts was able to assemble together at the same place. Paul speaks from the view of the universal body of disciples, not from the view of a specific house assembly. Since he was writing this letter from Ephesus, through the use of the pronouns "us" and "we," he would be including himself in the one universal church about which he wrote. **Drink:** All the Corinthians quenched their spiritual thirst with the spiritual life-giving water that flows from God (Jn 7:37; see Jn 6:63; 1 Pt 2:2; 2 Pt 3:18).

12:14 The church is not defined by a set of traditions that have been inscribed on a piece of paper by men in order to produce meritorious salvation. The church is people. It is a body of many individuals who have submitted to the lordship of Jesus, and thus, are motivated in their lives to follow the instructions of their Lord. The

membership of the submitted is the one universal body of Christ because all the members have submitted to the one gospel of Christ. The members are one, therefore, because they obediently follow the directions of Christ through the Spirit-inspired word of God (See comments Jn 12:48).

12:15-17 Paul metaphorically uses different organs of the body in order to illustrate the organic function of the body wherever it exists throughout the world. Each body part has a special feature and use. The entire body needs every member in order to function as a whole body. Not every member of the body must be cloned into being eyes, feet or hands. Every member must be encouraged to use his abilities in order to make the body function harmoniously. The disciples of Achaia were manifesting a divisive spirit by excluding the importance and function of every ministry. However, the body must work together. The members must not manifest a spirit of pride or competition in reference to the miraculous gifts. Paul corrects their dysfunctional behavior by saying that each gift is necessary for the organic function of the whole body.

12:18,19 *Just as He has desired:* The Achaians must remember that the miraculous works of the Spirit were given according to the will of the Spirit, not the will of the individuals who possessed the gifts (vs 11; see Rm 12:3). If each member tried to work independently of the other members, then the body would be dysfunctional. The body thrives on the basis that each member provides a vital link in the organic function that exists between all members (See comments Ep 4:11-16).

12:20,21 Though the body is composed of many members throughout the world, no one member can say to another that he can stand alone as a member of the body. Members of the body of Christ must recognize their mutual interdependence on one another. Members are not autonomous from one another. No group of members in one area has a right to meet together in order to declare their autonomy from any other group of disciples. The universal nature of the organism of body life demands that functioning members accept one another in order

that the body live.

12:22-24 *Feeble*: Though one member may seem to be weaker in his function of the body, his abilities are necessary for the function of the global body of Christ. ***Less honorable*:** Those members of the body who are judged to be less presentable must also be considered necessary for the function of the body. Because they are necessary, they are to be honored. ***More abundant presentation*:** Since God is the one who made the body, then we must consider that He made each member of the body to be important. Therefore, since the Spirit is the author of the gifts that function among the members of the body, there is no gift that is less important, for all have originated from God. Every member is necessary for the organic function of the body.

12:25 *Should be no division*: The members of the body must work in mutual appreciation and gratefulness for one another in order that there be no divisions. If members recognize the necessity of one another's contributions to the body, then they will care for one another. Working in a unified manner does not mean that every member functions with the same gift. The unity is maintained by recognizing the diversity of the gifts, while not judging one another concerning the necessity of one another's gift (1:10). Unity in the body, therefore, is not dependent on every member working in the same way. It depends on accepting one another in our diversity of function.

12:26 When disciples care for one another throughout the world, then no member of the body suffers without other members suffering also. Therefore, the fellowship of the church should be close in order that no one member be allowed to suffer alone in times of hardship. The Achaians' contribution to the famine victims of Judea illustrated the care the body must manifest toward its members, regardless of where the members live (See comments 16:1-7).

12:27 Individual members make up the church of Christ (Rm 12:5; Ep 1:23; 4:12; 5:23,30; Cl 1:18,24). Though individual members make up the body of Christ, they should not function in a manner by which they ignore

one another. Individuality in the body is retained when each individual supplies his or her abilities to the function of the whole body.

12:28 Paul indicates that there was an order by which the gifts were given in the beginning of the church (See comments Ep 4:11,12). **Apostles:** The first ones to announce the gospel to the world were the Christ-sent apostles (See Jn 14:26; 16:13; At 2:37,38; Ep 2:20; 3:5; see Lk 24:48; Jn 15:26,27; At 26:16). But there were no Christ-sent apostles in every assembly of the church. There were Christ-sent apostles in the universal church. **Prophets:** The New Testament prophets went forth as evangelists in order to speak the truth that was already revealed through the apostles (At 13:1; Rm 12:6). There were prophets throughout the universal church, though they did not exist in every assembly of the church. **Teachers:** These were those with the gift of teaching who labored in local assemblies in order to build up the disciples in the knowledge of the word. **Then:** Paul here lists those gifts or works that were carried out by the apostles, prophets and teachers. These were miracles (vs 10), healings (vs 9; Mk 16:17-20), helps (Rm 16:3,9), administrations (Rm 12:8) and languages (vs 10). Every ministry was for the benefit of someone other than the one who possessed the gift. Different individuals had different gifts, and thus all those who had the gifts were needed by the universal body. The fact that no one individual possessed all the gifts necessitated that all members accept one another in order to benefit from all the gifts.

12:29,30 The Corinthians misunderstood the necessity for the harmonious function of the different gifts in a local situation. The fact that each member had a different function meant that they did not all function in the same manner. The point of Paul's questions is to emphasize the fact that all members of the body function in different ministries. Because they function in different ministries must not be an occasion for one member to marginalize the importance of another member and the ministry of his gift.

12:31 **The greater gifts:** The best gifts are not here identified by Paul. The word gifts is plural, and thus,

more is in his mind than the gift of prophecy that he considered one of the most essential gifts in 14:1,39. We would assume that a loving attitude that would produce unity among the believers would be greater than any of the miraculous gifts. At least this is what Paul affirms as he leads his readers into the more excellent way of love in the following contexts. **A more excellent way:** The way of love is more excellent than the function of miraculous gifts. Love is more excellent than prophecy, languages or healings. The Corinthians, therefore, should be striving after love instead of competing over the use of their gifts. Their goal for a better body function should be to grow beyond the ministry of the miraculous gifts. Their goal should be to grow to where all the members function as servants to the needs of others. Paul thus defines love as the central fiber that generates the function of the body (See Cl 3:14,15; see comments Jn 13:34,35). Without love, the church is simply a social club of religious people who gather together in order to maintain their traditions by their assemblies.

Chapter 13

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

In the first three verses of this chapter Paul emphasized that love is greater than miraculous gifts. Unity in good works is based on love (Jn 13:34,35).

13:1 If one used his gift of speaking in languages without a heart of love, then he would be as the obnoxious clanging musical instruments that were used in the pagan worship of temples to idol gods. **Languages ... of angels:** Angels would not have a language that is as the language of man which is produced with words through the physical mouth. However, Paul may have conversed in some way with angels on his visionary experience of being caught up to the third heaven (2 Co 12:4). If one could speak with angels, such would be of no spiritual benefit without a spirit of love. **Love:** In this chapter Paul uses the Greek word *agape* for love. This is the primary Greek word that was used for expressing unconditional love. This is the word that is used in the New Testament to refer to man's active response to God, as well as his

godly relationship with his brother (See Jn 14:15; 15:14; Rm 13:10; 1 Jn 2:3-5; 3:17,18; 5:3).

13:2 Without love, the ability to miraculously teach the word of God is empty (12:8-10,28; 14:1; see comments Mt 7:22). Without love, the privilege of understanding all things in reference to God's work among men is useless. Without love that moves us to respond to our brother's needs, the ability of one to remain personally faithful to God is useless (See Mt 17:20; 21:21; Mk 11:23; Lk 17:6).

13:3 One could legally perform the duties of his beliefs after a meritorious manner. However, the doing of such is worthless without being moved by a heart of love (See Mt 6:1,2). One could meritoriously give himself into the hands of those who would persecute him unto death for his faith. However, if the giving is not a love response to the grace of God, then it is useless. **Profits me nothing:** The actions of life that Paul mentions in these first three verses are good works. However, meritorious performances do not prepare one's character for eternal dwelling in heaven. One can meritoriously do the works without a heart of love, but he cannot love without doing the works (See comments Js 2:14-26). It is a heart of love that is essential for one to be able to dwell in heaven.

13:4 There are fifteen qualities explained here concerning the nature of love (See comments Gl 5:22,23). These are qualities that are manifested in one's relationship with his fellow man. In this case, this should be the nature of the Christians' relationship with one another in their behavior as disciples of Jesus (Cl 3:12-15). Disciples who do not behave in this manner, have fallen into carnal behavior as the Corinthians (3:1-3). Paul personifies love as one who manifests specific characteristics. **Suffers long:** Love patiently endures the weaknesses of others. Love is not quick to discard a relationship simply because of a disagreement (Pv 10:12; 17:9; 1 Th 5:14). **Kind:** Love does not portray a harsh attitude with one's brother or spouse (Ep 4:32). Through kindness, love actively works toward the benefit of all those with whom it comes into contact. **Not envy:** Love is not jealous over the accomplishments of others, nor does it seek for the possessions of others (Gl 5:26). It will thus build up and

not tear down. **Not exalt itself:** Love does not push itself forward in order to be recognized, but is willing to humbly work in the background of the crowd in order to exalt others. Love does not work in order to draw attention to itself. **Not puffed up:** Love is not prideful or arrogant, and thus, does not insist on having its own way or consider itself better than others. It does not exalt itself above others. It does not lift itself up by knocking others down.

13:5 Not behave unbecomingly: Love does not behave in a manner that manifests little consideration for others. Love does not ignore the person of others for the sake of exalting itself. **Not seek its own:** Love does not love to be first. It does not seek to have its own way by ignoring the thoughts and dreams of others (See 10:24; Ph 2:4; 3 Jn 3:9,10). **Not easily provoked:** Love does not easily lose its temper when something either goes wrong or is said that would generate anger. Love does not react to disagreeable situations with rage and anger, but responds with calmness and gentleness. **Thinks no evil:** Love does not search for evil in the lives of others. Love does not search for evil in order to destroy its enemies by slanderous character assassination. Love realizes that one's perceptions of others is usually based on wrong information. Love thus assumes the sincerity of others without questioning the motives of others.

13:6 Not rejoice in iniquity: Love does not take pleasure in finding sin or failures in the lives of others. It does not rejoice when another sins or makes a mistake. It does not exalt itself above others by pointing out the mistakes of others (Ps 10:3; Rm 1:32). **Rejoices in the truth:** Love seeks truth and not evil. Love is identified in the one who searches for truth and not evil in the lives of others.

13:7 Bears all things: When things become difficult, love does not cease to work. Without retaliation, love endures malicious slander that is spoken against it. When one is sinned against, love forbears without retaliation. **Believes all things:** Love believes and seeks the good in all situations and people, and thus hopes for the best. Love is positive about life, and not negative. **Hopes all things:**

Love believes that all things are working together for the good of the Christian (Rm 8:28). Love believes that the best is yet to be. **Endures all things:** Because love believes that all things are working together for good, it looks on the positive side of things when things seem to go wrong. Love is always confident about the future. True love never quits though things may go wrong. Love never quits in the face of trials, discouragements, persecutions and temptations.

PASSING OF THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS

Since love exceeds the value of the miraculous gifts, it is Paul's argument in the following verses to exemplify love by stating that the miraculous gifts will pass away. In verses 1-3 he argued that love must be at the center of our behavior. In verses 4-7 he argued from the standpoint of showing the behavior of love. In the final verses of this chapter, he exemplifies the importance of love by the passing away of that which the Achaians exalted, that is, the miraculous gifts. Since the miraculous gifts will pass away, then the Achaians' emphasis must be on love, for it will be love that will guarantee their unity after the passing of the miraculous gifts (See comments Cl 3:12-15). The gifts brought unity because they were the work of the one Spirit. However, love would bring unity because of the loving unity of the people.

13:8 Love never fails: Love never fails in comparison to the miraculous gifts that would eventually pass away. Though the ministries that came from the gifts would pass away, the ministries that would spring forth from a heart of love would never pass away. **Prophecies ... languages ... will vanish away:** Paul was saying that the time would come when the gifts of prophecy, languages and knowledge would no longer be available. They would pass away because they were no longer needed. He used these three miraculous gifts to represent all miraculous gifts, and thus, he taught that the time was coming in the Achaians' lives when the gifts would vanish away. They would vanish away because the means by which they were imparted would vanish away. The gifts were imparted by the laying on of the apostles' hands

(See comments At 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11). Paul and all the apostles would eventually die. The means by which God had commissioned that the miraculous gifts be administered, therefore, would pass with them. However, by the time of the passing of the Christ-sent apostles, the purpose for which the gifts were given would also have vanished. Their purpose was to strengthen new Christians in the absence of the inspired written spiritual guide of His word. However, when the apostles had accomplished their work of revealing all truth, then the need for the gifts to strengthen the early disciples no longer existed. The miraculous gifts were to exist only until the time when a loving response to the word of God maintained the existence and function of the body (See comments Jn 13:34,35).

13:9 Know in part: They knew only a portion of the whole. At the time Paul wrote this letter to the Achaians, he had verbally revealed to them, with their prophets, portions of the word of God. The rest of God's revelation would later come to them through the entire written record of the New Testament. Therefore, the inspired Scriptures would eventually supersede inspired prophecy (See comments 2 Tm 3:16,17). Their prophets spoke only a portion of what would later come as a whole (8:2). Therefore, they should not emphasize the miraculous gifts (the part), but focus on what would result from the miraculous gifts (the whole). With the passing of the ministry of the gifts, the early disciples would maintain their unity by focusing on the word of God (Rm 10:17). Their foundation for unity would be on the revealed word of God.

13:10 That which is complete: The Greek word for "perfect" (*teleion*) refers to that which is complete or whole. In this context Paul is contrasting the partial with that which would be complete. That which was only "in part" referred to what they knew, not what they did through the miraculous gifts (vs 9). What they knew was revealed to them through the inspired prophets. Therefore, Paul contrasted the partial revelation of God's word by means of the miraculous gift of prophecy with the complete writing of the word of God that would guide the disciples

for centuries to come. The early Christians knew only the partial revelation of the word of God. However, they would know all things that God intended that His people know (2 Pt 1:3). Paul wrote these things in view of the fact that God would preserve His people throughout the centuries through the members' loving response to the revelation of His directions for them (Jn 14:15). **Be done away:** The Achaians must understand that the gifts about which they were competing with one another were only "in part." Since the gifts were only "in part," then it is assumed that the whole would come. It was not that the gifts functioned insufficiently. They were only a part of God's plan to establish the disciples who would later base their faith on the fully revealed word of God. Therefore, when the whole came, the part was done away because it had fulfilled its purpose. The Achaians must not emphasize the part when the whole was coming. They were focusing their validation as saints, and individual prominence among the disciples, on the basis of their performance of the gifts. Paul here speaks of the foundation of our faith that is based on the whole. The foundation of our faith is the word of God (Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17). In the future, their validation would not be based on their performance of the gifts, but on their knowledge of and continued obedience to the word of God. Through a loving response to the word of God, one maintains his validation as a disciple of Jesus, and thus, his unity with his brothers in Christ (1 Jn 1:3). Therefore, the church continues to exist because men lovingly respond to the word of God. In the Achaians' situation, the exercising of the gifts brought disunity. However, in the future, love would bring unity in absence of the gifts. For this reason, love was the more excellent way that they must learn.

13:11 Spoke ... understood as a child: Some men never put away childish speaking and understanding. They still excite one another as children over stories of fantasies and competitive attitudes. However, the mature man puts these things away. When one becomes a man, he is not driven by childish competition through the invention of spiritual games. Paul calls on the disciples to grow up. They were behaving as children by their

competitive spirits that were controlled by jealousy and envy. In their puffed up attitudes, they used the blessing of God as a means of belittling one another's ministry.

13:12 When the church was in its infancy, she could only see dimly in the mirror what would eventually reflect the full revelation of God. The church could see dimly because all revelation that God intended the church to have had not yet been revealed to any one group of disciples in a particular area. **But then:** There are two possible interpretations to what Paul is saying here. He could be referring to the time when the church received the full revelation of God that He intended for the church to have. He could also be referring to his transition into heavenly dwelling. Since in the context he is contrasting the partiality of the miraculous gifts upon which the members were seemingly focusing their attention, with the "whole" that was to come, he could possibly be referring to the time when the disciples must focus on a loving response to the word of God in order to maintain unity. It would be in this state of existence that the church must depend on the word of God in order to maintain unity based on love instead of their childish competitions in their overemphasis of the miraculous gifts. In studying this context, we must not forget the great emphasis God places on the revealed written word of God. Since the conclusion of the miraculous gifts that were given to establish the early church, God has communicated through the written word. In studying contexts as this in the New Testament, we must not forget that the miraculous gifts were only a brief work of the Holy Spirit in reference to the centuries that followed wherein the church has depended on the word of God. **I will know:** Paul refers to knowledge. When the entirety of the revelation of God had been revealed, then the members would know all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pt 1:3; see comments 2 Tm 3:16,17).

13:13 Faith, hope and love must prevail in order that Christianity continue. Faith and hope refer to the individual's personal relationship with God. However, love refers to the individual's relationship with his fellow brother on earth (Jn 13:34,35). Since the church is the

fellowship of God's people on earth, love must prevail in order to offer members an atmosphere of preparation for eternal dwelling. Faith and hope will have no reward of eternal dwelling if there is no personal relationship with one's brother in Christ (See Mk 12:28-31; Jn 2:16; 14:15; Rm 13:10; 1 Jn 4:7-21). It is for this reason that love is the primary objective of the faithful, since it is the loving faithful who will be rewarded with eternal life in a heavenly environment. Faith and hope keep one pointed in the right direction, the direction of heaven. But it is love that will transition our lives into eternal glory.

Chapter 14

PROPHECY AND LANGUAGES

Since it seems unlikely that the following instructions would have been given to a small assembly of members in a house group, we find it more consistent to understand the context in view of a large area-wide assembly of all the disciples in Achaia, who met periodically in the city of Corinth. It was in this assembly context that their sectarianism was manifested. It was also in this context that the prophets, and those speaking in languages, somewhat competed with one another for attention.

14:1 Pursue love: After focusing the attention of his readers on the answer to the problems that prevailed in Achaia, Paul now turns to the correct use of the miraculous gifts of prophecy and languages. **Especially ... prophecy:** The gift that was most beneficial to the work of the disciples and world evangelism was the gift of inspired preaching, teaching, singing and prayer (vs 39; 12:31). Through this gift the word of God could go forth with great rapidity in correcting the twisted concepts of idolatry. Through this gift the Spirit revealed inspired instructions by which the disciples would be directed in education and edification. It was through this gift, therefore, that the disciples were instructed to behave after a Christ-like manner in order that the gospel go to all the world.

14:2 An unlearned language: Some translations added the word "unknown" to the text here, but the word is not in the Greek text. The addition of the word caused

some confusion. Some interpreters thought that Paul was talking about some unknown language to mankind. But such was not the case, for he speaks in this context of the same miraculous ability that was imparted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost (See comments At 2:1-7; 10:46). He speaks of the miraculous endowment of being able to speak in a foreign language without having studied that language. **Speaks ... to God:** When he speaks in a language that cannot be understood by those to whom he speaks, then he can only be understood by God. He would be speaking the mysteries of God, but what he said would only be a mystery to those who could not understand what he was saying. What Paul is introducing is the argument that the gift of languages was useless for edification if the gift was used when no interpreter was present. Therefore, the speaking in a language when no one could understand what was being said was a manifestation of pride on the part of the one speaking in the language. **In spirit:** This could be a reference to the Holy Spirit, though the article is not in the Greek text. "In the Spirit" is a phrase that is commonly used in the New Testament to refer to the direct work of the Holy Spirit (Rv 1:10), which translation is here used by many versions. However, the Greek phrase is simply "in spirit."

14:3 In contrast to the one who speaks in languages that cannot be understood by the audience, the one who prophesies through the direction of the Holy Spirit speaks in a manner to be understood, and thus, edifies the assembly. Since he can be understood, then his gift is more beneficial to the disciples.

14:4 Edifies himself: In contrast to the one who speaks by inspiration, wherein the entire assembly can understand (prophecy), the one who speaks in a language the assembly cannot understand only edifies himself. If the one who possessed the gift of languages had also the gift of interpretation, then he could edify himself and others by interpreting what he spoke in a foreign language. However, if he did not have the gift of interpretation, then he edified only himself in the sense that he had evidence of his possession of the gift of languages. By way of comparison, the gift of prophecy was given for

the purpose of edifying the assembly. However, the gift of languages was not the inspired teaching or preaching of truth, but simply the communication of truth through another language. The one who had the gift of languages was only communicating that which had already been revealed through the prophets. No new truth was communicated through the gift of languages.

14:5 It would have been great if every member spoke with languages in order that the gospel be propagated to all language groups. However, for the benefit of the local Corinthian assembly, it would be better if they had the gift of prophecy whereby the assembly could be edified through inspired preaching, teaching, praying and singing (vs 15). If the one who spoke in a language was also able to interpret what he said to those who did not understand the language, then his speaking would benefit everyone.

14:6 *What will I profit:* Paul begins here with discussions concerning the misuse of the gift of languages. His first point is obvious. If one stands up and speaks in a language that is foreign to the audience, he argues that the speaker does not benefit those to whom he speaks. The teaching of truth in a foreign language, without the translation of that language, does not profit an audience that does not understand the language.

14:7-9 *Distinction in the sounds:* If a musical instrument is played without the noise of the instrument being orchestrated into a melody, then the sound of the instrument is unintelligent and unappealing to those who listen. In other words, the use of languages in the assembly that are not interpreted are as repulsive and useless as the sound of an instrument that is not played to the tune of composed music. ***The trumpet:*** If the one who blows the trumpet for battle blows the trumpet with a sound that is not distinct to those whom he would warn, then those who hear will not prepare for battle. ***Easy to be understood:*** Unless one speaks a language that can be understood by the assembly, no one will know what is being said. No spiritual benefit is accomplished unless what is spoken can be understood by those who hear.

14:10-12 There are many languages that are spo-

ken throughout the world. Each language is developed by words of a society that communicates the activities, events and interpersonal relationships of the society. **Foreigner:** The literal meaning of the Greek word here is "barbarian," that is, one who could not speak the Greek language. If the one who hears does not understand the language that is spoken, then he would be as a foreigner to the one who speaks. And if he cannot understand, then he cannot be edified by what is spoken. **Edification of the assembly:** Paul teaches that the one speaking in a language must speak in a language that is understood by the assembly. If the language is not understood by the assembly, then there is no edification of the members. The argument is that if the language cannot be understood, then the one speaking should be silent. Therefore, any speaking in the assembly of the disciples that is not understood by the assembly as a whole must be stopped.

14:13 *May interpret:* In order for the gift of languages to be used to edify the assembly, there must be an interpretation of the language that is spoken. Therefore, the one who has the gift of languages must pray for the ability to interpret what he speaks. Since the Spirit determined the gift, then the answer to the prayer would be the giving of the gift of interpretation by the Spirit (See 12:11). The answer to the prayer might be the coming of an apostle to lay hands on one in order that he receive the gift of interpretation (See comments At 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11). We must also keep in mind that the gift of languages was not specifically for the benefit of a local assembly. The practical benefit of the gift was for the rapid evangelization of the nations (vs 22; compare 12:7,10,11).

14:14,15 Paul takes his argument of this context to a personal level. One may of his own voluntary will pray in a foreign language. However, he would not be edified if he did not understand the language that he was speaking. **With the Spirit:** The context would demand that reference here is to the Holy Spirit. We must keep in mind that in the context of this verse Paul is discussing the Spirit-inspired activities of the assembly through the ex-

exercising of the spiritual gifts. He thus speaks here of inspired prayer and singing. Since the disciples who were converted out of pagan temple worship would not know how to word their prayers according to the word of God, the prayers of the saints were directed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (vs 26; see comments Rm 8:26,27; Ep 5:18,19; Jd 20). **Sing with the Spirit:** Since they did not have anything as song books, then it would be reasonable that the Holy Spirit would inspire certain brethren with songs that were according to the will of God and not after the manner of their former worship in pagan temples (Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). **The mind:** The songs and prayers must be understood. If they were not, then there would be no edification accomplished in the assembly.

14:16,17 It was customary that any individual could come to the assembly with a song or prayer (vs 26). If what these individuals were saying was not understood by the assembly, then the assembly could not consent to what was being said. If one gave a prayer of thanksgiving to God in a foreign language, then those who did not understand the language could not understand, and thus, give their consent to what was prayed. One may by inspiration say the right things in the prayer, but if it is not understood by the audience, then there is no edification of those who hear.

14:18 Paul traveled among many language groups throughout his journeys. Therefore, the Spirit blessed him with the gift of languages whereby he could quickly preach the gospel to everyone to whom he went. Though some of the Achaians prided themselves in speaking in languages, Paul here states that he spoke in more languages than all of them.

14:19 That I might teach: When he was among brethren in an assembly, Paul states that it would be useless to speak to the assembly in foreign languages because no teaching would be accomplished. He assumes that the Achaians here would deduct that the speaking in a foreign tongue in the assembly is useless if the audience cannot understand what is being said. Any speaking in a foreign language to an assembly that could not understand the language, was thus a manifestation of pride.

14:20 Do not be children: Paul refers back to what he has already said concerning their childish behavior in reference to the use of the miraculous gifts (13:11; see 3:1; Ps 131:2; Rm 16:19; Ep 4:14; Hb 5:12,13). The Corinthians were evidently being amused like children with the ability to speak in languages. Their puffed up attitudes with one another led them to be competitive concerning the use of their gifts. **Be mature:** They needed to spiritually grow up (13:11). In order to grow up, they must cease their competitive spirit with one another in reference to the gifts, for the gifts would pass away (13:8-10). Their speaking in a language that could not be understood by the assembly was a manifestation of their immaturity.

14:21 The law: The quotation here is from Isaiah 28:11,12. Therefore, the Holy Spirit classifies the book of Isaiah as part of the law (Compare Jn 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; Rm 3:20). **Other languages:** Isaiah was prophesying the captivity of Israel because of her rebellion against God. The invasion of Palestine by those who spoke a foreign language was a sign of God's judgment against Israel. Isaiah 28:11,12 was a prophecy in reference to God's presence in judgment upon Israel through foreign powers. So Paul quotes the Isaiah prophecy in the context of this discussion of languages. The presence of God was manifested in the disciples' speaking in languages. This was the "new languages" about which Jesus prophesied (Mk 16:17). God used the languages as a signal to the unbelieving Jews that the church was now His body of His people. Once the validation of His people was accomplished, then there was no more need for the languages.

14:22 Languages ... a sign ... for unbelievers: These were the unbelieving Jews. The gift of languages was a signal to unbelieving Jews that God was working among His people (See comments Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Languages were thus an aid in the evangelizing of the Jews because they signaled to unbelieving Jews that the church was God's new Israel. Languages not only helped in communicating the gospel to the lost, unbelieving Jews were drawn to the church, for the Jews knew the prophecy of Isaiah 28:11,12 (See At 2:11,12). The gift was being used extensively in the Corinthian assemblies simply because

there were a great number of Jews traveling through the commercial center of Corinth. **Prophecy ... for those who believe:** The gift of inspired preaching, teaching, praying and singing was given for the benefit of the disciples. Through the gift of prophecy, they were edified and directed according to the will of God. What Paul is instructing is that those who have the gift of languages need to understand the purpose of their gift. Those with the gift of prophecy need to be among the disciples for the purpose of edification.

14:23 Paul here gives instruction concerning the proper use of the gifts of languages and prophecy. **Assembly gathers in one place:** These gifts were given in order that one minister to others in an assembly context. The assembly, however, was not taken over by the Holy Spirit (vs 32). Nowhere in the entire New Testament is there evidence that the assembly of the saints was controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul here argues that if unbelieving Jews attend their confused and disorganized assemblies, they would think that the Christians were mad because of the simultaneous and confused manner by which they conducted themselves in their assemblies (See At 2:13). **You are mad:** One was considered mad if he emotionally lost control of himself. One was considered mad if he spoke outrageously and out of harmony with others. Any assembly of the saints that is conducted with people speaking in confusion at the same time is here judged to be madness. Paul's inspired use of the word "mad" in the context of the assembly of the disciples assumes that Christian assemblies are to be orderly. Assemblies of God's people should always be conducted in the spirit of maturity and sobriety. Assemblies of God's people can thus be identified when gathered people conduct themselves with order and integrity.

14:24,25 Convinced ... convicted: In contrast to languages that the unbeliever could not understand, those who prophesied would be able to instruct the unbeliever concerning what he must do to bring his life into harmony with the will of God (See At 2:36-38; Hb 4:12). **Falling down:** The result of the preaching of the cross will bring repentance in the lives of those who are honest

and sincere. **God is certainly among you:** The assembly of the saints should be conducted in a mature manner by which the unbelieving Jews can know that God is among His people who conduct themselves with dignity (See Is 45:14; Dn 2:47; Zc 8:23; At 4:13).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ASSEMBLY

14:26 All that Paul here mentions had come to them by the inspiration of the Spirit. **Psalm:** The Achaians had come out of a pagan culture of idol worship. It would certainly not have been appropriate for them to sing the songs of the temple of Aphrodite in the assembly of the Lord's people. Therefore, the Spirit possibly guided certain individuals to come to the assembly with songs that were according to the will of God (See Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). If anyone had a song to teach the assembly, they must be given the opportunity to introduce and teach the song. Since their assemblies in houses were participatory, any individual could come with a song or teaching for the edification of the group. **Teaching:** Through the songs, the inspired prophets taught the word of God by singing to the assembly. **Revelation:** Reference here would be to truth revealed to the individual who had not previously known the truth. Though all truth was first delivered to the early disciples through the Christ-sent apostles, it was impossible for new converts to remember all that was delivered. Therefore, through the gift of prophecy the early Christians were reminded of that which was delivered to them through the apostles (See comments Jn 14:26; 16:13). Through the gift of revelation, disciples were given special wisdom that was needed in unique situations concerning what the disciples must do. **Interpretation:** If there was one present who addressed the assembly through a foreign language, then there had to be someone present who could interpret (vs 13). If there were no interpreters present, then the one speaking in a foreign language had to remain silent. The fact that an interpreter had to be present was evidence that the one speaking could not speak the language of the local assembly. The speaker was a visiting prophet who needed his message interpreted for the local assembly.

There would have been no purpose for God to reveal a message through a local prophet in a foreign language to a local audience who could not understand the language of the prophet. **Done for edification:** Edification refers to the benefit the entire assembly enjoys from the ministry of the gifts. Therefore, in the assembly, the ministry of each member was to be directed toward the benefit of the group and not the benefit of the individual (vs 7; see 2 Co 12:19). The assembly of God's people is always centered around edification of the whole group (Hb 10:24,25). Assemblies are to be opportunities wherein each member is to receive mutual edification by other members. Assemblies of God's people are based on the participation of the whole group to edify itself through the word of God. The nature of the house assemblies throughout Achaia were participatory. If one had something that contributed to the edification of the group, then that person was given the opportunity to share with the whole group.

14:27 In turn: Those speaking in languages were not to speak at the same time. Prophets were not to teach at the same time or in competition with one another. In each assembly there were to be no more than three who would speak in languages. If a foreign language was used in the assembly, there must be one who could interpret any language that was spoken. Paul's instructions here would certainly apply to all assemblies of the saints. Nowhere in these instructions does he allow everyone in the assembly to be speaking at the same time. In fact, the instructions are given in order to stop such confusion.

14:28 If no one were present who could interpret the languages that were spoken, then those who spoke in languages were to keep silent. **Speak to himself:** He must not speak publicly, but meditate to himself concerning what he would say. In the privacy of his own home he could pray aloud.

14:29,30 As with those who speak in languages, so with the prophets in reference to how many should use their gift during the assembly. No more than three prophets should speak to the assembly. **Others judge:** There were certainly those in the assembly with the

gift of discerning spirits (12:10; 1 Jn 4:1; Rv 2:2). There were others who taught the word (prophecy). When the prophet spoke, those with the gift of discerning spirits would determine the truth of that which was spoken. This was possibly God's system of checks and balances that guaranteed that young disciples not be led astray by every wind of teaching (Compare Ep 4:11-16). However, in reference to the instructions in verses 34 & 35, the wives of the prophets were not allowed to participate in making judgments in reference to what their husbands were saying in public. They were restricted to voicing their judgments privately with their husbands at home.

14:31 *One by one:* If while one prophet was speaking, another had truth revealed to him, then the one speaking must sit down and allow another prophet to speak. One prophet, therefore, should not be allowed to dominate the speaking in the assembly. Even if the Spirit came to one with a message, the Spirit was subject to the prophet, and thus the speaking was controlled by the prophet in order to maintain order. The responsibility for keeping order in the assembly, therefore, rested on the shoulders of the participants, not the Holy Spirit.

14:32 *Subject to the prophets:* The Holy Spirit did not take over the assemblies. The spiritual gifts that came from the Holy Spirit were in subjection to the one who possessed the gift (See comments 2 Tm 1:6). Therefore, the Holy Spirit nowhere took control of an individual in such a manner that he or she was out of personal control. People who allow themselves to become emotionally out of control are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. They are the victims of their own emotional hysteria and self-deception, and thus should not be allowed to disrupt the assembly by speaking in gibberish. The assemblies of God's people are not to be patterned after the disorderly madness that was characteristic with pagan temples. The assemblies must be conducted orderly and with sobriety (vs 40).

14:33 *Not a God of confusion:* The Holy Spirit does not lead men into conducting chaotic assemblies with hysterical worshipers. Any assembly of religious people that is chaotic is not from God. Such assemblies are not

a testimony to the unbeliever that God is present (vs 25). They are only assemblies that testify to the fact that biblically ignorant religionists have allowed their behavior to go uncontrolled in order to find emotional satisfaction in speaking uncontrollable gibberish that they have deceived themselves into believing are the “tongues” of this context. The entire context of what Paul is here teaching is contrary to religious assemblies that have come under the disruption of members who have emotionally lost control of themselves. Paul’s instructions here emphasize assemblies that are in order, not disorder.

14:34 The context of the following statements concern the speaking of the prophets who were teaching in the assembly. **Let your women keep silent:** The women were not allowed to speak publicly when they had a provincial assembly of all the members of Achaia. To continue to correct these chaotic general assemblies, Paul instructed that women keep silent (See 1 Tm 2:11,12; Ti 2:3,4; 1 Pt 3:1). The women must not speak out in a manner that would either disrupt the assembly or usurp the authority of men who led in the area-wide assembly. If they disagreed with the message of their prophetic husbands, they must save the discussion concerning the application, or possibly disagreement, until they were at home. In the expression of singing, women are not behaving out of order in the assembly (Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). Thus reference here must be limited to a specific problem that prevailed in Achaia. The problem was probably some dominant women in Achaia who were manifesting their non-submissive spirits in the assemblies. These instructions, therefore, should be taken in the cultural context of the Achaia problem. When speaking in the assembly, some wives of the prophets were behaving in a dominant manner by which they were disrupting the general assembly. **To submit themselves:** The women should behave in the assembly in a way that portrays the character of a submissive individual to God’s designated leadership. It has always been a principle of God since the beginning of time that the women work in a submissive relationship with men in matters of spiritual

leadership (Gn 3:16-18; compare Ti 2:3,4; 1 Pt 3:5,6). In this discussion, Paul sought to bring this principle into the context of the area-wide assembly. **The law also says:** The principles herein taught by Paul had previously been taught to the church by him in all cities where he had preached the gospel. These were principles that were in conformity with the law of God of all time, and thus applicable to the behavior of the church throughout the world. They were principles that were based on the foundation of maintaining order in the assemblies of the saints. The assemblies must be characteristic of sober minded people, not disorderly meetings as was characteristic with pagan temple assemblies.

14:35 Ask their own husbands: If the wife of a prophet sought to correct her husband in the area-wide assembly, as she might do in a house assembly, then she would be out of order. She would be manifesting a spirit of disorder. The wife of a prophet must not seek to voice a disagreement in judgment with her prophet husband while he is speaking in the provincial assembly. She must wait until they are at home before bringing up the matter of disagreement. **Improper:** It is shameful for the wives of the prophets to behave in a disrespectful manner in reference to their prophetic husbands in an area-wide assembly. Doing such would publicly embarrass their husbands before the assembly.

14:36 Paul concludes his instructions to the Achaians concerning their pride that was manifested in their assemblies. He was here sarcastic in asking them if the word of God originated from them. Or, he asked if it were only the Achaians who received the word. Since they had not been the origin of the word that they obeyed, then they must listen to the instructions that he was giving.

14:37 I write ... the commandments of the Lord: This statement should put to silence the arrogance of those who would presume that "God spoke to them" something that was contrary to the words of the inspired Paul. If they speak in order to contradict what was revealed through this letter, then they were speaking lies (See comments 2 Pt 3:15,16). Any prophet, therefore,

who stood up and spoke anything that was contrary to what Paul had revealed was speaking against the commandments of God. Assemblies that behave contrary to the instructions that he gives here are not assemblies that bring glory to God. They are assemblies that have been created after the desires of men (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

14:38 Not recognized: If anyone would reject what is said by Paul, then let him suffer the consequences of his rejection of the commandment of God. Those who reject God's commandments through Paul will bring God's judgment upon themselves because of their arrogant attitude. Their attitude would not be personally against Paul, but against God, for it was by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that these directives were written to the disciples in Corinth. Those who would argue against what was herein revealed have set themselves against God, for it was God who revealed these instructions to man.

14:39,40 Desire to prophesy: Paul concludes by exalting the gift of speaking by inspiration (12:31). However, those who have the gift of prophecy should not look down on those who have the gift of languages. There is one Spirit, and thus, the Spirit is working through both the gift of prophecy and the gift of languages. **Properly and in order:** Their general assembly of all the members in Achaia must be decent in the sense that the assembly must not portray an atmosphere of confusion. The prophets, and those gifted with languages, must speak in order to edify the entire assembly. If they conducted their area-wide assembly of all the house groups in an orderly manner, then all the members would be edified. These assemblies were not to be an opportunity for preachers to exalt themselves, or manifest a spirit of competition. Neither were the women to publicly speak in these assemblies, but reserve their comments for their homes. The general assembly, therefore, must be about praising God and not about drawing attention to any one disciple.

Chapter 15

DEFINITION OF THE GOSPEL

In order to emphasize what is more important than

miraculous gifts, Paul explains in this chapter fundamental truths concerning our salvation and the foundation upon which our faith rests. He answers the questions of some of those who were questioning the resurrection of the body at the end of time (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). In his defense of the message of the gospel, Paul explains that our hope is for a raised body that will be changed for eternal dwelling.

15:1 I declare: The nature of the good news (the gospel) is that it is declared to all men. **The gospel:** The word “gospel” comes from the Greek word *euangelion*. The word means “good news.” However, within the word itself there is no definition of what the good news is. It is in these first few verses of this chapter that Paul explains the central message of the good news of God for man in reference to his salvation and hope. **I preached:** The good news is preached (Gl 1:11,12). It is preached through the medium of words. Therefore, the gospel is not the medium by which it is communicated to others. It is not the words of the teachings of Jesus. It is not the words of the New Testament. Paul is here using written words to explain the gospel, but these inspired words are not the gospel. **You received:** When one receives something, he accepts it as truth. Therefore, the gospel can be accepted into one's thinking as truth (11:23). However, to accept it as truth means that one responds to or obeys the gospel. One cannot claim that he has received the gospel if he has not obeyed the gospel. One obeys the gospel by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6; 1 Pt 4:17). **In which you stand:** Paul metaphorically used the word “stand” to explain the gospel as that upon which one bases his emotional stability and spiritual well-being (See Rm 5:2; 11:20; 2 Co 1:24). In other words, the gospel must affect the behavior of the individual because it affects the mind. When one receives the gospel, he receives it into the totality of his being. In this way the gospel brings peace of mind and hope for the future (Compare Ph 4:6,7).

15:2 By which also you are saved: It is through the power of the gospel that one is saved (Rm 1:16). However, if one does not obediently respond to this gospel,

he cannot be saved (See 2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). The gospel is God's only hope that is given to man for his salvation (Compare At 4:12). Though Paul here has not explained how one is saved by the gospel, he has affirmed that one is saved by the gospel. **If:** This word adds a condition to one's salvation by the gospel. We must continue to believe the word by which the gospel was communicated to us. If we do not, then we can fall away from the saving effect of the gospel. **Believed in vain:** The gospel was preached to the Corinthians. They obeyed, and subsequently, Paul affirms here that they must continue to believe the words by which he communicated the gospel to them. In this chapter, he addresses some among the disciples who were doubting the resurrection event of the gospel, and thus, undermining the faith of others. It is necessary, therefore, to continue in one's belief in the words by which the gospel is communicated to us. In our case today, it is necessary that we believe in the testimony of the gospel as it is recorded in the New Testament (Compare Jn 20:30,31).

15:3,4 In the first two verses of this context Paul only talked about the gospel, using words that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The inspired words are the medium through which the event of the gospel is communicated today. In verses 3 & 4 he explains the centrality of the good news (the gospel). It was an event of history, not a document of words. **First of all:** The first thing that Paul delivered to the Corinthians upon entry into Corinth was the gospel (1:23; 2:2; 11:2,23). This is the first message that must be delivered to the unbeliever because the gospel is the only means by which one can be saved (At 4:12). Paul delivered to the Corinthians the same gospel he had received (At 22:16). **Christ died for our sins:** All men have sinned (Rm 3:23). Sin separates us from God (Is 59:1,2). And in separation from God, one is spiritually dead and doomed to condemnation (Rm 6:23). Therefore, one needs good news concerning his spiritual state of death. The good news is that Jesus died for our sins according to prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures (Ps 22; Is 53; Dn 9:26; Zc 12:10; 13:7; At 3:18; 1 Pt 1:11; 2:24). The first great news of the gospel event is

the death of the incarnate Son of God for our sins. **He was buried:** Jesus died and was buried in a tomb outside Jerusalem. The tomb was evidence of His death. When it was found empty, it was evidence of His resurrection. **He rose again the third day:** Jesus was buried in order to be raised from the dead. It is good news that Jesus died for our sins. It is also good news that He rose to manifest His power over physical death (vs 17; Ps 16:10; 110:1; Is 53:10; Hs 6:2; Mt 12:39,40; Lk 11:29,30; 24:26; At 2:25; 1 Pt 1:11). The gospel, therefore, is the death of Jesus for our problem of sin. It is His burial and resurrection for our hope. Through His death, Jesus answered our problem of spiritual death (Rm 5:12). Through His resurrection, He answered our problem of physical death (vss 20-22). In order to connect with the historical event of the gospel, one must obey the gospel by being crucified with Jesus, and subsequently dying with Him. In death there must be a burial, as they buried Jesus after He died on the cross. In the same manner the one who has died with Jesus is buried with Jesus, and subsequently raised with Him to walk in newness of life (See comments Rm 6:3-6).

THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS

15:5 In the context of this chapter Paul is confronting those who were denying the bodily resurrection. After reminding them of the centrality of the gospel for our salvation in verses 1-4, his first point of argument is the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead for our hope. If Jesus was raised, then we can trust that we will be raised by Him when He comes again. **He was seen:** Paul's proof of the resurrection of Jesus is the testimony of those who saw Jesus after the resurrection (See comments Mt 28:9,10). The resurrection would have meant nothing if Jesus had not been witnessed to be alive after His death. **By Cephas:** It is not clear in the chronology of appearances when this appearance took place (Lk 24:34). **The twelve:** See Mt 28:17; Mk 16:14; Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19,24-29. At the time of these appearances, Judas Iscariot had already hanged himself. Therefore, Paul's reference here is to the original eleven Christ-called apostles, and to Matthias, who was later added to their number (At 1:15-26).

15:6 Five hundred brethren: This must have been a marvelous occasion. We do not know where this appearance took place, though it could have happened in Galilee. At the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, many of the five hundred brethren were still alive. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, then any one of these disciples could have denied the resurrection. An appearance before such a group of people also disproves any theory that the apostles invented the resurrection story. Since all these people could give their testimony to having experienced Jesus after His resurrection, then the appearances of Jesus can be answered only in the fact that He was actually raised from the dead.

15:7,8 Seen by James: This appearance is not recorded in the records of the gospel (vs 5; see Lk 24:50; At 1:3,4). **One untimely born:** The last person to whom Jesus appeared was Paul (9:1; At 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). Jesus appeared to Paul for a special purpose. He appeared to him in order to call him into apostleship to be a witness to the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel (At 9:15). The Christ-sent apostles were called during the ministry of Jesus. However, Paul was called after the ministry of Jesus, though he was personally called by Jesus.

15:9 Least of the apostles: Paul was defending his apostleship to those who denied such. He manifested his confidence in his apostleship by humbly expressing his relationship to the original twelve. In Ephesians 3:8 he stated that he was "*less than the least of all the saints*" (See 2 Co 12:11; 1 Tm 1:15). He stated such because he persecuted the disciples (At 8:3). By making these and other statements concerning his apostleship, Paul manifested his confidence in his apostleship. Men who proclaimed themselves to be Christ-sent apostles (Rv 2:2), and thus trusted in the approval of men to maintain their self-proclaimed position, could not make such statements. Paul was thoroughly confident in his personal calling into apostleship by Jesus on the Damascus road. He needed no approval of man in order to be assured of his Christ-sent apostleship.

15:10 By the grace of God: The calling of Paul into apostleship illustrates the work of God through His grace

(Ep 3:7,8; 1 Tm 1:12). Paul did not earn his call into apostleship. He was not a self-proclaimed apostle. In fact, his persecution of the church placed him as far away from God as one could possibly be. However, God knew that Paul was a sincere and honest personality, and thus, He provided for him the opportunity to respond to the miraculous appearance of Jesus. ***I am what I am:*** Paul could claim no meritorious accomplishment for either his calling or his salvation. All was by the grace of God (See comments Rm 5:1,2; Ep 2:1-10). ***His grace ... was not in vain:*** All that God did toward Paul because of His grace was not a wasted effort. It was not useless because Paul responded with thanksgiving (See comments 2 Co 4:15). Before he responded in obedience to the gospel, he legalistically labored under the legal system of Judaism. He wrote that he advanced greatly in his former religious life (See comments Gl 1:13,14). ***I labored more abundantly:*** When God's grace was extended toward him, he worked more abundantly than when he lived under a legal system of religiosity. Grace will always motivate one to work harder than legal religiosity. When one is motivated by grace, he cannot do enough in thanksgiving for his salvation. When one is motivated by works, he sees how little he can do, and still feel confident in his salvation (See comments Ep 2:1-10). There are thus two concepts of motivation in reference to one's beliefs concerning his salvation. Through a legal understanding of one's relationship with God, one seeks to trust in his ability to perform the law of God in order to merit salvation. In contrast to this belief, when one is motivated by grace, he works out of gratitude for what God has done for him (2 Co 4:15). A legal system of religiosity never brings peace of mind and assurance of salvation simply because one is always in question concerning his ability to perform. However, through a grateful response to grace, one trusts in God's grace, and thus, he has peace of mind because of grace (See intro. to Gl).

15:11 *Me or them:* Both Paul and the twelve apostles preached the same gospel (See comments Gl 1:15-24). Therefore, the Corinthians had received the same gospel message that was preached throughout the world.

THE BODILY RESURRECTION

15:12 Some of the false teachers of Achaia were being inconsistent in their preaching and teaching. They were teaching that Jesus was raised from the dead, but at the same time, denying that there would be a general bodily resurrection of the dead at the end of time (See comments Jn 5:28,29; compare At 17:32).

15:13 If there is no such thing as a bodily resurrection from the dead, then Jesus was not raised from the dead. The general resurrection of all at the end of time and the resurrection of Jesus either stand or fall together. This matter goes beyond the concept of just a resurrection. Jesus was bodily raised from the dead in order to be proved to be the Son of God (Rm 1:4). Paul's argument is that if there is no bodily resurrection at the end of time, then Jesus was not bodily raised from the dead. Some Gnostics believed that only the spirit of Jesus was raised. This teaching may have been promoted by some in Achaia. What one believes concerning the resurrection of Jesus will greatly affect what he believes concerning the general resurrection of all at the end of time (See comments 1 Th 4:14).

15:14 *If Christ has not been raised:* The fact of the resurrection to come is dependent on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. Not only is Jesus' resurrection the proof of His sonship (Rm 1:4), it is the evidence that we will be raised when He comes again. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation upon which our preaching has validity and our faith has substance. There would be no such thing as Christianity if Jesus were not raised from the dead.

15:15,16 *Found false witnesses:* The personal witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus proclaimed that He was raised (At 2:24). If Jesus were not raised, then all of the witnesses who claimed that He was raised were liars. What Paul is affirming is that the entirety of Christianity stands on whether Jesus was raised from the dead. If there were no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, then Jesus was not raised from the dead. Some in Corinth were possibly denying the resurrection because they had not experienced personally a resurrection of the dead.

However, one does not have to experience personally the work of God if he relies on the valid testimony of those who have personally experienced the miraculous work of God. We believe because we trust the witnesses who first experienced the resurrection of Jesus. Our faith is thus based on the written record of the word of God (Rm 10:17). We believe in the future resurrection because of our faith in the inspired written testimony of those who actually experienced Jesus after His resurrection. We do not need to experience a resurrection today in order to have the faith that is necessary to walk as a person who is pleasing to God (See comments 2 Tm 3:16,17).

15:17 *Your faith is vain:* The only justification for the existence of the church is the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. There is no reason to believe in a future resurrection if Jesus' body is still in the tomb. Eternity for the Christian depends on an empty tomb. ***Still in your sins:*** If Jesus were not raised from the dead, then He was just another Jew who died at the hands of Roman executioners. He was not the sacrificial Lamb of God, and thus, there was no atonement for sins (See At 20:28; Rm 4:25).

15:18,19 *Perished:* If Jesus were not raised from the dead, then those saints who have died, have ceased to exist (See comments 1 Th 4:13-18). They are gone forever. ***Most to be pitied:*** If we believe in a future resurrection without the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, then our faith is baseless. If we trust in Christ in this life without any hope of a resurrection, then our trust is confined to this world. If we have hope of an afterlife without evidence of our own existence after death, then we are a group of people to be pitied by the world. This is the case of all religions of the world that are not based on the resurrection of Jesus. Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and the host of man-originated religions, are religions of men to be pitied. They have a vague hope of an afterlife without the evidence of the resurrection of the founders of the religions.

15:20 In this context Paul is discussing physical death and physical resurrection, not spiritual death which he discusses in Romans 5:12. ***The firstfruits:*** This metaphor is taken from the Old Testament. The firstfruits of the

Jewish harvest were presented in a feast to celebrate the beginning of the harvest (Lv 23:9-11; Nm 15:18,19). The firstfruits of the harvest were the indication of the greater harvest that was to come. Jesus was not the first to be resurrected from the dead. However, He was the first to be raised never to die again (At 2:24; 1 Pt 1:3). Therefore, He is the representative in resurrection of all those who will be raised in Him when He comes again (vs 23; At 26:23; Rv 1:5).

15:21 *By man came death:* When Adam sinned against God, he was driven from the tree of life, lest he eat thereof and live forever (Gn 2:17; 3:6,19,22-24; Ez 18:4). As the representative of all humanity, he separated humanity from the tree of life. Therefore, "*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment*" (Hb 9:27). As physical death came into the world by the sinful actions of Adam, so resurrection from the dead came by the righteous actions of Jesus (Dn 12:2; Jn 5:28,29; 11:25; compare Rv 22:14).

15:22 The consequence of Adam's sin was the physical death of all humanity, because all humanity through Adam was driven from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24). The consequence of Jesus' obedience, was the resurrection of all the dead. ***In Adam ... in Christ:*** The argument could be made that the phrase "in Adam" would refer to all those who are physically descended from Adam, and thus, Paul has in mind all humanity. We must keep in mind that "in Christ" refers only to those who are the spiritual descendants of Christ. These are those who have been immersed into Christ, and thus, have come into contact with the life-preserving blood of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Gl 3:26,27). Therefore, Paul states here that only those who are in Christ will be raised for eternal dwelling when Jesus comes again. This would be in the thought of what Jesus said in John 5:24 that those who come to Him have passed from death into life. The Christian has passed from death into life in this life because he has been buried with Jesus, and subsequently, raised with Him in order to walk in hope of a bodily resurrection to come (Rm 6:3-6). The unrighteous will be raised, but there is no statement in Scripture that they will be

raised to exist forever. They will be raised to experience another death, and subsequent, destruction (See comments 2 Th 1:6-9).

15:23,24 His own order: This is the order of resurrection. Jesus was first raised never to die again. When He comes again, there will be the resurrection of the saints, who also will never die again because they will be in the presence of God (1 Th 4:15-17). In this context, Paul speaks only of the resurrection of those who are in Christ. This discussion is not in reference to the lost. **The end:** This is the end of the physical world as we know it (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-13). The resurrection will take place a moment before the end of the world. When the kingdom reign of Jesus has been delivered to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and all powers of darkness are terminated, of things on earth and of the unseen world, then will come the end of this dispensation of time and the world.

15:25,26 He must reign: Jesus is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tm 6:15; 2 Tm 2:11,12). He now has all authority over all things (Mt 28:18). There is nothing that is in existence that is not now under the authority of Jesus' reign (See comments Ep 1:20-22; Hb 2:8; 1 Pt 3:22). Jesus will reign with this control until the last enemy is destroyed (Ps 110:1; Mt 22:44). **The last enemy ... is death:** Not only is physical death the enemy of the living, it is the enemy of Jesus because it was brought into the world through sin (vss 20-22; Gn 3:22-24). Jesus will destroy physical death by the resurrection (2 Tm 1:10; Rv 20:14; 21:4).

15:27,28 God, the Father, put all things under the authority of the kingdom reign of Jesus when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father (See Ps 8:6; 110:1; Dn 7:13,14; Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2; At 2:34; Hb 2:5-9). All things in heaven and earth, except the Father, were put under the rule of Jesus. When all things have been completed in reference to the eternal purpose of God for creation, then the Son will submit Himself to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son will not give up His deity in this transfer of reigning control. He will submit Himself to the authority of all that is God in order that

there be the sole authority of the kingdom reign of God throughout eternity (See 3:23; 11:3; 12:6). Since Paul is revealing things to us that have not yet occurred, nor are in our realm of being, then we must not suppose that we understand everything that is said in this context. These are matters of God, and thus, beyond our full comprehension. The Holy Spirit reveals them to us in order to comfort us concerning events that are yet to happen. He wants us to be fully assured that God has all things under control, regardless of the presumptions of men who think they have God figured out.

15:29 Baptized for the dead: Paul challenges his readers' thinking by presenting the question that if God does not have all things under control through the present kingship of the Son, then why would one who is dead in sin be baptized for the old man of sin? Believers are baptized in order to wash away the sins of the old man (At 2:38). They were baptized in order to be raised a new man (See comments Rm 6:3-6). However, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Paul reasons that it would be foolish to be baptized in order that we be raised at the end of time. In other words, one's baptism in water for remission of sins makes sense only if there is a physical resurrection at the end of time.

15:30-32 Stand in jeopardy: Paul, and the others who witnessed the resurrected Jesus, walked by fact. They walked by the fact that they had actually witnessed Jesus after His resurrection. Because of their personal witness to the resurrected Jesus, they were willing to risk their lives for the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus (At 15:25,26; 2 Co 11:23-28; Gl 5:11). **Boasting in you:** Paul was able to boast in the conversion of the Achaians because they had submitted to Christ (See Rm 15:16; 1 Th 2:19). **I die daily:** As a result of his commitment to accomplish his Christ-given mission to preach the gospel, Paul daily gave himself to his destiny (Rm 8:36; 2 Co 4:10; see comments Gl 2:20). **Fought with beasts at Ephesus:** We have no record of this struggle. Reference could possibly be to events that occurred during the two years while Paul was in Ephesus when he could have been thrown to wild animals because of his preaching (See At

19; 2 Co 1:8). This could have been the time when Aquila and Priscilla risked their lives for him (Rm 16:3,4). Paul argues here that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then his persecution for preaching the gospel is of no value toward the future. If there were no resurrection to come, then this life is all there is. If this were true, then we must live as if this were all the life that we could enjoy (See Ec 2:24; Is 22:13; 56:12; Lk 12:19). **Let us eat and drink:** This was the philosophy of life of the Epicureans. They believed that happiness was attained by enjoying the pleasures of this world. Paul's argument is that if this is all the happiness we will enjoy, then we must live as the Epicureans and enjoy all that life has to offer.

15:33 Evil company: The deception is in the fact that one can keep company with those who live and believe contrary to fundamental teachings, and yet, not be influenced by their teachings (5:6). Paul's argument is that if they continue to fellowship those who were denying the resurrection, then eventually they would start living after their world view, which world view was expressed in verse 32.

15:34 Awake to righteousness: One should not be deceived into thinking that his beliefs do not affect his behavior. In the context of this discussion, the erroneous belief that there would be no resurrection of the dead led some to live unrighteously in this life. Since they did not believe in the resurrection, they followed the Epicurean world view of following after the pleasures of this life. They thus sacrificed righteousness for worldly pleasures. Therefore, Paul exhorts here that they should repent to a life of righteous living (Rm 13:11; Ep 5:14). **No knowledge of God:** The arrogant false teachers who thought that they knew God—reference could possibly be to Gnostic beliefs—were actually ignorant of God. If one lives carnally, while at the same time claiming to know God, then he does not know the God of heaven (Compare 1 Th 4:5). Therefore, those who claimed to know God, but lived according to the flesh, should be ashamed.

15:35 In the following context, Paul answers the two questions that he poses here. However, neither he nor we can fully understand how the dead are raised. Nei-

ther can we fully understand the resurrected body (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Jn 3:2). He writes concerning those things that are beyond our comprehension.

15:36-38 Foolish one: Paul addresses those who are truly empirical in their thinking, and thus do not think beyond that which is of this world. Paul begins his illustration with the sowing of seeds that must first be planted in order to transform into something completely different (See Jn 12:24). **What you sow:** What goes in the ground is not the same as what comes out of the ground. As a seed, the body dies and is buried in the ground. However, when it sprouts forth from the ground, it goes through a transformation. And so it will be with our resurrection. The body that goes into the ground will not be as the body that will be resurrected. The body that is buried is the seed from which the new body is raised. **God gives:** The God who created our bodies in the first place is able to give us a glorious body as Jesus (Ph 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2). As God has empowered seeds to transform through death and sprouting, so He will empower our buried bodies to transform into an immortal body.

15:39-45 In the creation of living flesh, God created different flesh in man, fish, birds and other animals. Therefore, it should not be difficult to understand that He can again create a habitation in which we will dwell that is different from our present bodies. **Heavenly bodies:** God also created the stars, moon, planets and galaxies. **Earthly bodies:** God created all earthly bodies of fish, animals and man. The celestial and terrestrial bodies are different. Each body, however, has its own glorious presentation as the work of God. **Raised imperishable:** The body that we now have will decay away when it dies and is buried. However, when it is raised, it will be a body that will not die. If it will not die, then neither will it decay (See Dn 12:3; Mt 13:43). **Raised in glory:** The body that we now have loses its honor and dignity when it dies and is buried. However, when we are raised, we will be changed into a glorious body. Jesus will transform our lowly body so that it will be conformed to His glorious body (Ph 3:21; see Lk 20:36; Cl 3:4). **Raised in power:** The body we now have does not have the power to survive physical death

(Hb 9:27). However, the body that will come forth from the grave will have power over physical death. **Raised a spiritual body:** Our present body was designed for dwelling in this present physical environment. However, the glorious body we will have will be especially prepared for eternal dwelling in the new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3:13).

The first man: The physical body of Adam that was made from the dust of the earth became a living soul only when God breathed into it the breath of life (Gn 2:7). **The last Adam:** Paul refers to Jesus who will breathe into our mortal bodies life, and thus, we will be raised from the dead (Rm 5:14,21; see Jn 5:21; 6:57; Rm 8:2; Ph 3:21; Cl 3:4).

15:46,47 Adam and our physical bodies have come first in God's plan for our eternal dwelling. After the fulfillment of God's purpose for the creation of this world, and our physical bodies, then comes the spiritual body to dwell in the eternal environment that God has planned for the righteous (2 Pt 3:13). **First man:** Adam is the father of us all since he was the first to be created (Gn 2:7; 3:19; Jn 3:31). Our present bodies originated from the elements of this earth, as Adam was created from the dust of the earth. **Second man:** Jesus originated from heaven, and thus, our new bodies will originate from God (Jn 3:13; see comments 2 Co 5:1-8).

15:48,49 Since all men have been born after the nature of Adam, then we will suffer because of the limitations of the body that we have from the dust of the earth. However, those who are born after the image of Jesus will have a glorious body after Him (Ph 3:20,21; 1 Jn 3:2). **Image of the heavenly:** When John wrote, he did not understand the nature of the resurrected body that is to come. He only revealed that we would be as Jesus (1 Jn 3:2). We do know that our body will not be after the image of the dust of the earth. Though we do not understand what we will be, we do know that our body will be heavenly in nature in order to dwell in a heavenly environment (Rm 8:29; 2 Co 3:18).

THE RESURRECTION EVENT

15:50-53 **Flesh and blood:** The nature of our present body is not made to dwell in the environment of heaven

to come (Mt 16:17; compare Jn 3:3-5). A body that dies and decays will not dwell in an environment where there is no death. **A mystery:** Paul here reveals what will happen at the time of the resurrection. It is a mystery in the sense that this is the direct revelation of God through the Holy Spirit. Though the details and the nature of the transformation that will take place is a mystery, we are metaphorically given a picture that is sufficient to satisfy our curiosity as to what God has promised to do. **We will all be changed:** The body that is buried is the seed from which the changed body will be made by God through resurrection. Our bodies will be changed from being perishable, dishonorable, weak, natural and mortal (vss 42-45). **In a moment:** The resurrection and transformation will not be a process that will be carried out over hours, minutes or even seconds. All will take place at the last moment of earth history (See comments 1 Th 4:13-18). **Must put on the imperishable:** Our present bodies must be transformed into the glorious body in order to dwell in the heavenly environment to come. It must put on the ability to exist without end (2 Co 5:4).

15:54-57 Death is swallowed up in victory: The changing of our bodies will be the end of death. Physical death will be terminated (See comments Rv 20:11-15; see Is 25:8). Hades is the abode of the spirits of those who have died. However, after the resurrection and transformation, there will be no need for hades because death will no longer exist (See Hs 13:14; see comments Lk 16:19-31). **The sting of death:** Physical death came into the world when Adam sinned. His sin resulted in his being driven from the garden of Eden and away from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24). His sin, therefore, resulted in physical death being suffered by all humanity (vss 20-22). Adam only introduced death because he was the first to sin. However, all men have sinned (Rm 3:23). **Power of sin:** It is law that manifests our sin (Rm 6:12-15; 7:7-13; 8:2,3). Therefore, because we sin against law we deserve death (Rm 6:23). We deserve death because no man can live perfectly in order to be saved by the merit of keeping law (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). **Thanks be to God:** We can have victory over sin only through the grace of

God that was manifested on the cross through Jesus (Ti 2:11). We can have victory over the grave only by obediently responding to the grace of God. Our thanksgiving, therefore, must be to God for providing Jesus who gave us victory over death through the cross (Rm 6:3-6; compare 2 Co 4:15).

15:58 In view of the future resurrection, Paul calls on his readers to remain faithful (Ep 6:10,14; 2 Pt 3:14). They must not move from their hope. One's hope of resurrection to immortality that is to come should move one to remain committed. **Always abounding:** Our thanksgiving for what God has done for us through Jesus should move us to abound in the work of the Lord (vs 10; 2 Co 4:15; Ph 2:12,13; Ti 2:14). **Labor is not in vain in the Lord:** Good works that are accomplished by those who are outside the Lord are profitable to the betterment of society. They are beneficial to the preservation of society. However, they are in vain in reference to one's salvation. John wrote that their works will not follow them because they will not go into eternal glory as the righteous who are in the Lord (Rv 13:14). Those who are not in the Lord do good works in vain, for they are not in a covenant relationship with the Lord. No one who is outside Christ will be saved. Therefore, it is imperative that one come into the Lord in order that his labors follow him into eternal glory (See comments Rm 6:3,4; Gl 3:26,27).

Chapter 16

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

16:1 There was a great famine in the area of Judea during the reign of Caesar Claudius. This famine occurred between A.D. 41-45 and was prophesied in Acts 11:27,28. Another famine is mentioned by Josephus that occurred between A.D. 44 and 48. It was in the context of this famine that Paul gives instructions concerning a special contribution. The historical context that leads up to what he states in these few verses is that the Gentile disciples that Paul had converted had determined to send a contribution to the Judean Jewish disciples. This request was made by Paul, and subsequently, the Gentile disciples were eager to contribute as part of the one or-

ganic body of Christ (Gl 2:10). As a result of Paul's plea, the Achaian disciples (2 Co 9:1,2; 8:10), Macedonia (Rm 15:26) and Galatia were all generous to make this special contribution. Their actions manifested their unity as the body, and thus, relaxed tensions between Jewish and Gentile disciples. The contribution manifested the truth that they were all of the same universal body. Their contributions also manifested the fellowship that should be characteristic of disciples throughout the world when brethren in any one region of the world are suffering from hardship that is inflicted by nature.

16:2 *The first day of the week:* The opportunity to take up the contribution was on Sunday when the saints gathered in their homes. This was the regular assembly time of the saints (At 20:7), and thus, this assembly presented itself as the ideal time to take up contributions for the famine. ***Put something aside:*** Paul instructs that each member determine what he or she can give. The special collection was brought together and stored until the coming of Paul. Individual control of one's money was thus relinquished to the control of the community of God when the individual contributions were made. The contribution was made for a specific purpose, and thus, every member knew that the totality of the contribution would go to the famine victims of Judea. ***As he may prosper:*** No percentage or set amount was determined for each member to give. Each disciple had the responsibility of determining how much should be given according to his or her prosperity (See At 20:33-35; 2 Co 9:6,7). ***There be no collections when I come:*** Paul did not want his presence among them to be identified with contributions (See comments 9:4-15). When he later came to collect the contribution, he stayed approximately three months (At 20:1-3). According to what he commanded here, he did not want them to take up any contributions while he was in their presence. He wanted to continue to challenge the false teachers in Achaia to support themselves instead of living off the brethren. Since he did not want the collecting of contributions to take place when he was present, he wanted them to take care of this matter before his arrival.

16:3,4 Whomever you may approve: Paul was cautious concerning the handling of money. He did not want the responsibility of handling their contribution for the famine victims because there were some greedy and dishonest brethren in their midst who assumed that he was the same (See At 20:33-35). Paul did not want to give them an opportunity to slander him after their own unrighteousness. If the opportunity presented itself that he be able to go to Jerusalem, Paul said that the designated brethren with the contribution should go with him (See 2 Co 8:4,19).

FUTURE PLANS

16:5,6 Paul was on his third mission journey when he wrote this letter (At 19:21; 2 Co 1:15,16). He had planned to visit Corinth at an earlier time, but was hindered in doing so (At 20:1,2; 2 Co 1:15,23). However, he is now on his way, sending this letter before in order to make sure that the problems mentioned in this letter were corrected before he arrived, as well as the contribution for the disciples in Judea. **Spend the winter:** As it worked out, he did spend the winter with them (At 20:2,3). **Send me on my journey:** Paul uses the Greek word *propempeo* (See At 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rm 15:24; 2 Co 1:16; Ti 3:13; 3 Jn 5-8). This is the word that is used to explain the financial support of the one who is on a journey. The early Christians housed the early evangelists. They then supported them on their way to evangelize the lost. This does not contradict what he said in verse 2. He did not want them to support him while he residentially worked in their presence. He supported himself by making tents while located with them for the winter. What he lacked was made up by the disciples who came from Macedonia. However, when he left to go out on his mission to the lost, he encouraged them to fulfill their responsibility to evangelize the lost through support of an evangelist.

7-9 If the Lord permits: Paul prayed for the Lord to be with him. He asked others to pray for him. However, the answer to our prayers is for the Lord to decide (At 18:21; Js 4:15). **Tarry in Ephesus:** Paul evidently wanted to wait in Ephesus because of an opportunity that pre-

sented itself during the Jewish feast of Pentecost (Lv 23:15-22). It may have been that he wanted to prepare those Jewish disciples who lived in Ephesus and were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. Once they had been prepared to go to Jerusalem to preach to those who came to Jerusalem for the Passover, then he could go on to Corinth. **Door has opened:** The open door about which he here speaks could have been the opportunity he had in Ephesus to speak for three months in the synagogue of the Jews (At 19:8). This would certainly have been an opportunity, since he was usually able to speak in the synagogues only for one or two Sabbaths before being prohibited from speaking further (At 17:2; 18:4). If the opportunity was his speaking in the synagogue of Ephesus for this great period of time, then he was grounding the Jews in the faith, for certainly, some of them were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. He eventually moved from teaching in the synagogue to teaching in the school of Tyrannus (At 19:9). This opportunity continued for two years. As a result, all Asia heard the word as disciples went out from Ephesus to all Asia (At 19:10). When Paul saw an opportunity to edify the church and evangelize the lost, he took it. He delayed his plans to go to the Macedonian and Achaia disciples in order to seize the opportunity to stay almost two and a half years in Ephesus. It is also worthy to note that he delayed his collection of the famine relief until he took advantage of the great open door that was made available in Ephesus for the evangelization of Asia. Saving the lost took priority over the famine relief work of Judea (See Gl 2:10).

16:10 If Timothy comes: Paul had desired Timothy to precede him to Achaia in order to exhort the church to repent in those areas of sin about which he wrote in this letter (At 19:22; 2 Tm 1:2). He did not want to go to them with the rod. **Without fear:** Paul here wrote to protect the tender nature of Timothy (See comments 1 Tm 4:12). He knew that the arrogant teachers would seek to intimidate Timothy from teaching in order to rebuke those who were teaching error. The sending of Timothy could possibly have been Paul's way of determining the arrogant false teachers. How they treated Timothy

would determine who was listening to Paul. **He does the work:** Timothy was one who was dedicated to the work of preaching and teaching (Ph 2:20; 1 Th 3:2). As Paul, he had committed himself to preach sacrificially the gospel to the lost and edify the church.

16:11 Let no one despise him: No one was to show disrespect for Timothy because he came as a representative of Paul (See comments 1 Tm 4:12; Ti 2:15). **Send him forth:** Paul here asks that they also fulfill their financial responsibility of supporting Timothy when he left Achaia to go to other places for the work of edification and evangelism (See vs 6). In the 1st century, the inspired prophets worked among all the disciples. They did not locate with one group of disciples for great periods of time. The examples of Paul and Timothy clearly indicate that the work of an evangelist was to move among the disciples in a particular region, and the lost throughout the world, in order to carry out their responsibility of edification and evangelization. In the absence of the written word of God, the Holy Spirit edified the disciples through the inspired preaching and teaching of evangelists as Timothy, Titus and Paul. In the Achaian situation, Paul did not want to receive financial support from the church when he staying for an extended period of time at a particular location. However, as in this situation, he exhorted the members to financially make it possible for both Timothy and himself to be set forward on their journeys in moving among the early Christians and the lost.

16:12 Apollos: Paul strongly urged Apollos and other brethren to go immediately to Achaia. He possibly wanted Apollos to go before Timothy. Apollos had been there before, and thus, he would have been received by them in order to correct the prevailing problems (1:12; 3:5; At 18:24-28). **Not his will to come at this time:** Neither Paul, nor any other of the Christ-sent apostles, exercised any apostolic authority over the church or individuals. If they had, then Apollos would have been quite rebellious on this occasion. Apollos did not want to go to Achaia at the time Paul wanted. He also may have had an open door of opportunity as Paul (vss 9,10).

FINAL EXHORTATIONS

16:13,14 Watch: They were responsible for being cautious about false teaching (Mt 24:42; 1 Th 5:6; 1 Pt 5:8). **Stand:** They were responsible for continuing in the faith (15:1; Gl 5:1; Ep 6:10; Ph 1:27; 4:1; Cl 1:11; 1 Th 3:8; 2 Th 2:15). **Behave like men:** They were responsible for maintaining a courageous stand in times of persecution (7:26). **Strong:** They were responsible for standing up in the face of adversity (Ps 31:24; Ep 3:16; 6:10; Cl 1:11). The responsibility to carry out the above admonitions lies on the shoulders of each disciple. We will be held accountable for our own faithfulness. **Done in love:** Christians are to behave toward each other with a spirit of love in their relationship with one another (Jn 13:34,35; 1 Pt 4:8).

16:15 Household of Stephanas: Stephanas and his household were some of the first converts in Achaia (1:16; Rm 16:5). After their conversion to the Lord, they determined to serve. Paul says here that they dedicated themselves to the service of the saints (2 Co 8:4; Hb 6:10; see comments Mk 10:35-45). We must keep in mind that the entire household dedicated themselves to serve. This would certainly include Mrs. Stephanas. She dedicated herself to serve the church. In this verse, Paul speaks of the ministry of service that was carried out by Stephanas and his household. It was not that they claimed some authority, and thus demanded submission. In the following verse, Paul speaks of the responsibility of the members to submit to the service of the household of Stephanas.

16:16 Submit yourselves to such: This is not submission to an autocratic leader, or one who has assumed authority over others. Jesus said that such authorities would not be among His disciples (Mk 10:43). The context here, as well as submission of the church to one another (Ep 5:21), was that they humble themselves and submit to the sacrificial service of the household of brother and sister Stephanas, and the rest of his household (See comments Hb 13:17; compare At 6:3). The church is a group of slaves who seek to serve one another. In Achaia there were those who were puffed up, and thus, they refused the service of those as the household of Stephanas. Therefore, Paul here admonishes that members must submit

to being served by one another (Ep 5:21; 1 Th 5:12). **To everyone who works with us and labors:** Not only were they to submit to the local service of the household of Stephanas, they were to submit to men as Timothy and Apollos who labored and worked in the area of evangelism and edification. They were to simply listen to what the prophets (evangelists) were saying, and follow after their example. We must not assume, therefore, that because the word “submit” is here used that there is inherent authority in the one or ones to whom submission is to be given.

16:17-19 What was lacking on your part: The Achaian disciples had not yet followed through on their promise to help with the famine victims. However, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus personally helped Paul. The church as a whole did not take the initiative to help, but these three disciples did. Paul seems to give an indirect rebuke to the members for their lack of concern (See 2 Co 11:8,9; Ph 2:30; see comments Ph 4:10-18). **Refreshed my spirit:** Paul was greatly encouraged by the attitudes of the three brethren who came to him from Achaia (Cl 4:8). **Aquila and Priscilla:** This husband and wife mission team helped Paul in the preaching of the gospel in Corinth and Achaia (At 18:1-3,18,19,26; Rm 16:3-5). **Church ... in their house:** In this statement, *ekklesia* would better be translated “assembly.” The early Christians met in the homes of the members. They had no church buildings, and thus, they met in small groups throughout a city, but remained as one church in the city (Rm 16:5; Pl 2). The church consisted of multiple assemblies throughout cities and regions in which she existed. A “church” in a city was not defined by all the members being able to assemble together at the same place on Sunday. “Church” is not defined by the assemblies of the members, but by those who have obeyed the gospel, regardless of where they are seated on Sunday. When one obeys the gospel, God adds that person to His people, the church (At 2:47). The baptized believer is thus a member of the church wherever he is when he obeys the gospel. If a person is baptized during the week, he is thus added to the church before he has a chance to meet with the church. One’s

covenant relationship with God depends on the fact that he has obeyed the gospel. Those who have obeyed the gospel remain in their covenant relationship with God regardless of where they are on Sunday, or any other day of the week.

16:20,21 *The holy kiss:* The customary practice of greeting of the culture in which the early Christians lived was the holy kiss. Paul here exhorts that such be practiced in order that the disciples manifest their acceptance of one another (Rm 16:16). The practice of the holy kiss manifested their close fellowship and affection toward one another. ***My own hand:*** Paul personally signed this letter in order to authenticate its origin. However, it was written by Sosthenes while Paul dictated it (1:1).

16:22 *Accursed:* This Greek word (*anathema*) means to be destroyed (See Gl 1:8,9). The Holy Spirit is serious about our love of the Lord. All those who do not obediently love the Lord will eventually be destroyed from the presence of the Lord (Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). Therefore, there will be no hope for those who do not turn to God in order to be obedient to His will. ***Come, O Lord:*** This is from two Greek words (*marana tha*). The phrase is a short prayer that the Lord come (Jd 14,15; Rv 22:20). As all faithful Christians, Paul was looking for and desiring the coming of the Lord (2 Pt 3:14). If one is not looking for the coming of the Lord in order to deliver us from this world, then he is attached to this world. His mind is on things of this world (See comments Cl 3:1-3).

16:23,24 Paul concludes the epistle as he often introduces his messages. All is centered on the work of God through His grace (Rm 16:20). It is because of God's grace that we are who we are. Therefore, our gratitude is to Him for His gift of grace (2 Co 4:15). He would have wrote to the Corinthians, "*Only let your behavior be worship of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*" (Ph 1:27). In these words Paul exhorted them to live the gospel that they had formerly obeyed.

Commentary by Roger E. Dickson

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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