

# *1 & 2 Corinthians*

**Bro. Frank Shallieu**

**(1979, 1997, and 2001 Studies)**

The following notes on 1 and 2 Corinthians were compiled from Bible studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1979, 1997, and 2001. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by **“Comment”** or **“Q”** (an abbreviation for **“Question”**) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

# FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

(Studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1979, 1997, and 2001)

**1 Cor. 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,**

The words “to be” and “our,” which are italicized and thus supplied in the King James Version, should be omitted to realize the simplicity with which Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. “Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Brother Sosthenes.”

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian brethren was written from Ephesus. Sosthenes was included in the salutation because he was originally from the Corinth area. As the former chief ruler of the synagogue, he had been a persecutor of Christians. However, when the Jews brought Paul to be judged by Roman law, Gallio, a civil magistrate, did not want to persecute Paul, for he considered the case to be a theological matter. After Sosthenes was beaten in Cenchrea, it appears that Paul sympathized with his enemy, consoling Sosthenes in his public humiliation. Evidently, Sosthenes was so moved by Paul’s message and attitude that he accepted the gospel, became a convert, and subsequently left to go journeying with Paul.

The Corinthian church was in dire need of help with all kinds of problems. In fact, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians is most unusual because of the diversity of problems that he addressed. One had to be a “Solomon” to try to bring some order out of the chaotic situation that existed in this church—and all in the name of Jesus, for all whom he was addressing were supposedly Christians. Paul had established this ecclesia on his first visit to Corinth, when he had come down from Macedonia through Athens into Corinth. Subsequently, the ecclesia had gotten into all sorts of problems for various reasons.

By opening the epistle with “Brother Sosthenes,” Paul was using a strategy that he thought would be helpful to the Corinthians. Not only did he state that he himself was an apostle, but also he showed that a former enemy against Christianity was now a brother.

**1 Cor. 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:**

Again the words “to be” should be omitted. “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.” The term “saints” applies to the consecrated in the *present age* because they are called to a *walk of holiness*. Paul was addressing those who had become disciples of Jesus Christ and were trying to obey.

There is another important lesson here. Paul was very generous in the way he opened his epistle despite all the class disputings and problems, for he realized that these individuals had all been previously called of God. He did not write them off but wanted to salvage the situation. Accordingly, before giving advice and admonitions, he properly and meaningfully commended the brethren for the steps they had already taken. For that reason, when a consecrated individual errs from the way but has not become too crystallized in the wrong, we should try to appeal to his former better instincts.

The “church of God” was not merely those in Corinth, for the province also consisted of Christians at Philippi, Macedonia, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. Therefore, Paul was saying, “To *all* the churches of God in this *whole* area.”

**Comment:** A discourse some years ago pointed out that the Corinthian brethren were quite

developed doctrinally, but they lacked character development. Because they were babes in this latter sense, they were experiencing many practical, common-sense problems that needed to get straightened out.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true.

**1 Cor. 1:3** Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 3 is characteristic of Paul's greetings—to wish God's blessing in this familiar pattern.

**1 Cor. 1:4** I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

In Paul's stay in Corinth of 1 1/2 years, he was influential in gaining many believers. While there in person, he had taken every opportunity to evangelize. When he spoke in the synagogue, he was more or less thrown out. Then he followed Jesus' advice when strong opposition was met, particularly from God's professed people, and shook the dust off his garments. Now Paul was thanking God for what had happened there in regard to the reception of the truth by both Jews and Gentiles.

In fact, Paul was always thankful for his brethren. He sincerely commended the brethren before admonishing them. Many commend others in an effort to influence them; that is, they use praise and compliments for *personal* gain and influence, not with a heartfelt motive. However, Paul was not just a talker with regard to his love and affection for the brethren. His words carried a lot of weight, as evidenced by his long epistles and the great energy, thought, sweat, tears, and prayers that accompanied them. When he commended the brethren, his heart was really in it. Later on, Paul would find fault with certain aspects of their Christian living.

**1 Cor. 1:5** That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

Although it is true that Paul commended the Bereans for searching the Scriptures daily to see whether the things he told them were true, this commendation of the Corinthians was very unusual. In understanding truth, they had considerable knowledge. Now we begin to understand why he said later, "Though I have ... all knowledge ... and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). It was good for Paul to commend the Corinthians at first, but it is one thing to have knowledge, and it is another thing to put it into practice. He was saying, "You have made remarkable progress in the area of knowledge."

"That in every thing ye are enriched by him [Jesus]." Paul carefully phrased his words, even in this introduction. He had a hopeful attitude that the Corinthians would comply with his instruction, for they had a considerable understanding of the general knowledge of truth. Here he was commending them for the degree of *progress* they had attained.

**1 Cor. 1:6** Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

The margins of some Bibles have "brought results"; that is, "Even as the testimony of Christ brought results." Paul's previous ministry among the Corinthians had been effective.

**1 Cor. 1:7** So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"Coming" is the Greek *apokalupto*. Paul was saying in effect, "Waiting for the uncovering, the *revelment* to the world, that Jesus is indeed the Messiah and that he is coming to establish his Kingdom." The revelation "Thy kingdom come," as promised in the Lord's Prayer, is yet

future.

“So that ye come behind in no gift.” What about gifts in the early Church? Since there was no complete Bible back there, no collated New Testament, the most the Corinthians might have had was the Gospel of Matthew and possibly Mark. Therefore, Paul was saying that not only did they have knowledge, but when they consecrated, each individual got a special gift. The gifts, which included speaking in tongues, prophecy, knowledge, interpretation, and healing, were like a blessing or a reward. If a Christian had a gift, that gift was not sufficient for him to make his calling and election sure, but it was an evidence of acceptance. Paul appreciated that God had called these Corinthian brethren and that He had evidenced the acceptance of their consecration in this particular fashion. A gift might be a musical talent, the ability to quote from memory any part of the Scriptures that existed at that time, or the ability to mechanically prophesy a future event. Paul was saying that the Corinthians’ getting together at a meeting could be a wonderful blessing because of the gifts that were available. The various brethren were like members of a body, with each having a particular value, and they had more value communally than separately. But then Paul had to say, “Do not all talk at once. Do things decently and in order so that all will get the benefit. I would rather be able to speak five plain words that can be understood than 10,000 words of oratory that are way over the heads of the hearers” (1 Cor. 14:19,40 paraphrase). In short, Paul was addressing a church that had been called and confirmed as bona fide Christians by outward signs, but they had various problems.

**1 Cor. 1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1 Cor. 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Paul was saying in verses 8 and 9, “You were originally called of God, and He is faithful and concerned for your welfare. He wants you to make your calling and election sure, and He will be with you to the end, as long as you do not cut Him off.” Since God is faithful, the duty of the Christian is to also be faithful as part of his covenant relationship with God by accepting Jesus Christ as the Redeemer and as the Advocate on behalf of the Church.

God will “confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless.” What is the difference between “blameless” and “faultless”? To be faultless is to view the matter as it is—technically with no ameliorating factors. To be blameless implies that one has some problems but that God can forgive the individual because of the heart intention. The individual does not will to do wrong. Rather, there is a weakness of the flesh or a spur-of-the-moment act, etc., and there is a daily applying for forgiveness of shortcomings and transgressions. Daily the robe of Christ’s righteousness must be washed in the blood of the Lamb and the wrinkles of inactivity pressed out. Examples of activity are witnessing, visiting the sick, correspondence, telephone calls, doctrinal teaching, and hospitality. Inactivity is doing nothing, being a sponger.

**1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

Verse 10 starts to state the problem. The ideal is to “all speak the same thing, ... [have] no divisions ... [and] be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Paul was concerned about the divisions in the Corinthian ecclesia. However, he was not referring to radical doctrinal divisions, for he had already said they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge. They already knew the truth. The problem was *personalities* and the way the truth should be conducted.

Divisions (schisms) existed, and Paul desired unity. The divisions back there were a little different from those we think of today. The Corinthians were all meeting together in the same place, whereas divisions today often cause separations and entail bitterness. The schisms in Corinth were based on problems that existed peculiarly with both Greek and Jew. It was the habit of those under Jewish instruction, as well as those under Greek instruction, to be identified with a teacher. For example, Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the best instructor of the Pharisees at that time. Thus a person was identified with a particular school and, accordingly, was classified in his thinking.

The Corinthians came into the truth from both Jewish and Greek backgrounds. The Jewish leaders were trying to help those under their tutelage understand Judaism, and the Greek leaders were helping the Greeks with the philosophies. To rally around a leader was not wrong per se, for the two sides did not oppose each other. Each side was merely favoring a particular style of thinking, so even with the different cliques, the two sides could live together somewhat in harmony. But Paul saw an inherent danger, nevertheless—a wrong understanding of the basic concept of the calling. Paul wanted to straighten the matter out and nip it in the bud.

Paul knew the brethren he was writing to, for he had started the class in Corinth. Thus he had a special interest in and concern for how they developed. He wrote a minimum of three letters to the Corinthians, and probably more. This first epistle was at least the second letter he wrote to them. A clue is 1 Corinthians 5:9, “I wrote unto you in an [earlier] epistle not to company with fornicators.” Of the letters written, 1 Corinthians was specially preserved, and it is very instructive. In fact, it is the best epistle for a practical understanding and application of the truth. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans was skillfully done with regard to the doctrine of faith versus works, and his Epistle to the Hebrews brings in the relationship of the Tabernacle to the Christian through types and shows that Christ is the true High Priest. However, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians treats many of the nitty-gritty problems a Christian is confronted with in everyday living—problems that are both serious and frustrating. The epistle is unusual in the sense of addressing problems that arise in the school of Christ, and the apostle gave instruction as to how these difficulties might be resolved. Along these lines, this epistle is perhaps the most comprehensive in trying to reconcile differences within the ecclesia.

**1 Cor. 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.**

It was reported to Paul by the “house of Chloe” that there were contentions among the Corinthians. Since the words “which are of the house” were supplied, Chloe was either an individual, a family, or a locality. Paul was informed of the problems in the Corinthian church and thus did not witness the problems firsthand. As we proceed, we will see that he got information from other sources as well.

**1 Cor. 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.**

“Now this I say” meant Paul was coming to what was on his mind and heart, namely, the problem of divisions. And notice, “*Every one of you saith.*” There were no exceptions in the ecclesia, even in the house of Chloe. Therefore, all of the brethren needed instruction on this matter. They all had their favorites and felt that a particular individual best represented their beliefs.

Four leaders were identified: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. Since Paul had introduced the truth to the Corinthians and started the class, it is understandable that some would look to him in a special sense for instruction and because of his knowledge. Apollos, who had just been in Corinth, was “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures” (Acts 18:24). A goodly portion of

the Jewish segment would have been more sympathetic to Cephas (Peter), whose ministry was primarily slanted to the circumcision. The problem with using “Christ” in this context was that those who said, “I am of Christ,” were implying the others were not, whereas *all* Christians are of him. Such a superior attitude was sectarian. We may see faults in other Christians, but we must recognize the *family* relationship that *all* are of Christ. And we should guard against the attitude of thinking we are the *only* ones who have everything straight.

What was being said here? Did Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ have different teachings? Was there a doctrinal difference? No, the difference was in the manner of preaching and the type of personality. The emphasis on “I” was wrong. It was like saying, “I am superior; I am the true one.” The emphasis should have been, “We are *all* of Christ.”

If we backtrack and look at the beginning of this letter, we will notice how carefully Paul thought out these problems before starting to write. It is significant that he addressed the letter to the “church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with *all* that in *every* place call upon the name of Jesus Christ *our* Lord, both theirs and ours” (verse 2). The tendency was to think the others were not under the Lord’s guidance. Even if one is going in a wrong direction or has a wrong doctrinal concept, we must not think he is not identified with God or in the family. We may not condone a particular course of action or approve certain doctrinal teaching, which is usually on a relatively insignificant point, but at least, we should recognize that we are *all* in the family together. Divisions may occur for the sake of expediency, that is, for our own spiritual development. However, they should occur only when necessary, and even then, we should always have in mind that God called the individual—unless, of course, he has definitely gone out of the truth or done something that necessitates reserve according to Scripture. Otherwise, we are to think of others, despite their mistakes and idiosyncrasies, as being in the family together. Accordingly, Paul used the term “church of God,” for God is the Head over the Church in the largest sense, and he also used the term “Jesus Christ *our* Lord.” Paul wanted the Corinthians to get rid of their emphasis on “I,” the proper attitude being, “We are of God in Christ.”

The sanctified “in every place call upon [invoke] the name of Jesus Christ [in prayer].” When we are in serious trouble and/or are undergoing a severe trial, we go to God in prayer, invoking the name of Jesus. Friends may give advice, but we must weigh that advice as to whether it is scriptural. Since we *all* recognize Jesus as our Savior and God as our Father, since we *all* pray to the same God and the same Jesus Christ, we must always keep our *common call* in mind. In regard to the Corinthian church, Paul was concerned that unnecessary divisions be eliminated right away. Having this grander and nobler thought of a family relationship helps to cement the brethren together. From time to time, divisions must come, but if they are on a proper basis, those who are approved will be made manifest to God (1 Cor. 11:19). Stated another way, divisions have to come, but we want to be on the right side of the issue. To have an unnecessary division and then be on the wrong side of the fence would have a bearing on our destiny.

**1 Cor. 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?**

“Is Christ divided?” No! Again Paul was criticizing the attitude “I am of Christ.” The others were of Christ too, but they favored Paul, Apollos, or Peter. To emphasize the erroneous thinking, Paul brought in his own personality, asking in effect, “Was I crucified for you?” No!

**1 Cor. 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;**

Paul used common-sense reasoning with the Corinthians. To resolve the attitude “I am of Christ,” he took the novel approach of going one step higher—to God. Christ is the Lord and

Master of the Church, the messenger of the New Covenant, the Redeemer, the elder brother, the High Priest, etc. Paul used this cement in his reasoning in order to correct the “I” attitude.

Unity in the Church *today* is not along doctrinal lines but along the lines of political savvy and keeping mum on vital issues. Christians should combat this spirit.

**1 Cor. 1:15** Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

**1 Cor. 1:16** And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

**1 Cor. 1:17** For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul’s mission was to preach the gospel of “the cross of Christ.” The Greeks in the class at Corinth liked Apollos because he was a powerful orator. They viewed him from the standpoint of his eloquence and his evangelistic abilities. He could go out into cold territory among the Greeks and reason with them very effectively. Paul was not faulting the message of Apollos but the attitude of his admirers. A comparable danger today is admiring Pastor Russell rather than the message of truth. Listening to only one source and putting that source *above* the Scriptures is dangerous.

The work of baptizing was of a lesser nature than the work of Paul, who was an apostle. His objective was not only to honor the name of Christ and look for his chosen ones but also to help nurture and feed the brethren. These functions were more important than other aspects of truth, which were needed but were secondary. To keep evangelizing and getting individuals to consecrate without providing backup teaching is wrong. Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees for encompassing land and sea to get one proselyte who, when made, was more in danger of Second Death than before (Matt. 23:15). Evangelizing should be balanced with nurturing and teaching; the latter are essential for making one’s calling and election sure.

Paul was sent to preach the gospel with meaning and depth. The parenthetical thought “not with wisdom of words” embraces the rest of the chapter. Paul’s main objective was to preach the gospel *in depth*, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, but he would first digress about wisdom, which the Greeks loved. Paul began to philosophize on how oratorical wisdom was nothing in the final analysis.

The concentration of Paul’s ministry was to see the success of those he ministered to, and he felt hurt if those he had helped begin the new life did not make their calling and election sure, thinking that perhaps he had failed in his duties in some way. For that very reason, he said he was with child until Christ was “formed” in them (Gal. 4:19). Paul wanted to do more than just initiate the light—he wanted to preach the *whole* gospel: “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Paul’s commission was to encourage and instruct (“mother”) the consecrated. He wanted *each* new creature to make his calling and election sure.

How would the Cross of Christ be made of none effect with the “wisdom of words”? What “words”? The Greeks loved oratory, but the important thing was *the Cross*. The truth has so many wonderful facets that we could spend our lives on the facets and not on the kernel of the matter, which is that Jesus is the Savior and his death is efficacious for the cancellation of sin. All are sinners, and he is the *only true way* of salvation.

Apollos was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, and the Bible does commend him, so where did he essentially differ with Paul? A group in the class esteemed Apollos because he spoke better than Paul, whose speech was described as “contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10). Paul purposely



spoke simply so that he would not detract from the Cross of Christ, and he spoke pointedly on nitty-gritty issues, stepping on toes if necessary.

Apollos was good in reasoning from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ, the predicted Messiah. He was mighty in getting converts, and he could prove to the Jews from their own Scriptures. However, Paul was a spiritual giant in understanding. He had great maturity of thought and was willing to sacrifice his own reputation, if necessary. If, in speaking to someone, a brother softens the truth lest he lose a friendship or eldership, that is compromise. Paul did not compromise truth, and the course he pursued alienated some. At the close of his life, he said, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from [have forsaken] me" (2 Tim. 1:15). Only the Very Elect, a minority, noted what Paul said and heeded the advice. Without the ability to strike people dead, to raise individuals from death, and to create miracles, it is questionable how many would have listened to him. He certainly would not have been seen as an apostle. Paul exercised those prerogatives until he got older and was put in prison near the time of his decease. Incidentally, some had *personal* enmity for Paul and tried to undermine his influence in very pernicious ways.

**1 Cor. 1:18** For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

**1 Cor. 1:19** For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Verse 19 is a quotation from Isaiah 29:14, "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Paul was not using that Scripture in context but as a principle. According to the Prophet Isaiah, God "will destroy the wisdom of the wise" in the sense that when the resurrection from the dead takes place in the Kingdom, the ones who have been admired like stars in the scientific world, in the political arena, in power and influence, etc., will be ashamed that they had absolutely no understanding of what God was doing during the Gospel Age.

When Paul said, "For it is written, I [God] will destroy the wisdom of the wise," these were strong words for the Greeks, whose weakness was revering wisdom. Here is an example of how Paul did not waste time getting to the nitty-gritty of a matter. He stepped on the Corinthians' corns right away.

**Comment:** Paul was greatly endued with the Holy Spirit, so his words had penetrating power.

**Reply:** Paul's power was not in the oratorical sense. Not only was his speech "contemptible" from the standpoint of not saying what others wanted to hear, but his bodily presence was weak. However, his reasoning was *powerful* to those who would listen—whether he wrote a letter or spoke in person. Paul did not hesitate to speak out—and *loudly* if necessary—for his concern was to help the brethren. Time was short, and he would not be intimidated.

**Comment:** For verse 18, the NIV has, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are *perishing*, but to us who are *being saved* it is the power of God."

**1 Cor. 1:20** Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Paul was talking about the class in Corinth. In other words, "Look among yourselves. Who are the great ones here? None of us. We are nobodies as far as the world is concerned." Today, for example, televangelists have millions of followers, and who are we? The majority of us are

poor and in need of a Physician and a Savior. God likes people to recognize their need and humble themselves and become disciples of Jesus. If faithful unto the end, they will receive immortality and be on the throne.

Of course it is better for the unconsecrated to be trying to benefit mankind than to follow sinful pursuits. For example, many scientists do noble works, but they do not see the value of the unknown God. They do not think about God, whereas the Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God”; their testimony is international (Psa. 19:1). Evidence of the presence and power of God is around us everywhere, but He has been quiet. He is a God who hides Himself because He is looking for those who are hungering and thirsting after Him (Isa. 45:15).

“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” At present, the world does not know that the admiration they have for others is foolishness, but they will know. And that is God’s purpose.

The question “Where is the wise [man]?” was a reference to the Greek contingent in the class. “Where is the scribe?” was addressed to the Jews. “Where is the disputer of this world?” pertained to the Greeks, who were known for disputing. When the questions were put together, it was like one standing on the sidelines as an observer and thinking, “Where do these characteristics get them with regard to God’s Word?” People can have all the wisdom and eloquence in the world, but they will die and be forgotten, whereas simple, straightforward truths, if *acted* upon by the Holy Spirit (power) of God, bring salvation. Incidentally, the class in Corinth was predominantly Greek.

“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” Yes, because with all the learning of the Greeks—whether it was Plato or Socrates or another—what did they leave of value as respects God? They used purely natural reasoning with regard to the life hereafter; hence there was not a real hope.

**1 Cor. 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**

The “foolishness of preaching” means that God, in His plan of selecting future joint-heirs to be with Christ, used the strategy of preaching to “save them that believe.” Of course “preaching” meant the manner of preaching that is recorded in Scripture, which was done in various ways. In the past, some went from house to house on foot. Now messages and preaching can easily be sent by telephone, computer, mail, television, and satellite. Paul went to the synagogue because the custom of the Jews was to give a stranger the platform so that they could hear what he had to say. Where there was no synagogue, the Jews went outside the city, such as when Paul preached to Lydia of Thyatira and others by the river (Acts 16:13,14). Also, Paul preached to fellow workers while making tents. All of these are examples of the “foolishness of preaching,” rather than being in a grand cathedral with a nice pulpit and rostrum and addressing thousands of people. Humble methods were used by men who were not scholars but were enthused with the message. It took a great deal of humility to accept them and their message. The Holy Spirit’s energizing of a person can supersede intellectualism.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). Jesus not only thanked God but saw God’s wisdom in choosing a class of “babes.”

In verse 21, Paul was saying that with all their talking, these wise ones admitted they did not know God. They reasoned from things that are seen—they exercised their minds using *natural* observations of the laws of science and the heavens—but without the Word of God, they could go no higher. They could not answer the questions: Why are we here? Where are we going?

What about the expression “the foolishness of preaching”? What is foolish about preaching? On the one hand, the Greeks were noted for disputing and oratory but all for *pleasure*. No cost was involved. On the other hand, preaching involved *repentance* and *sacrifice* (suffering with Christ) and *changing one’s life*. Those who responded properly and consecrated could be forgiven of their sins and enter the race for the prize of the high calling. But the preaching was foolishness to those who were worldly-minded. Most people reject the Bible as being too common and near at hand, but they are interested in something new and vague and mysterious. For example, they listen to conjectures on the origin of man being millions of years ago. The principle was the same with Noah. Only his family was converted when, *for 120 years*, he preached righteousness and dispensational truth about a coming Flood. In fact, the people laughed at him for building a boat on dry land when it had never rained (Gen. 2:5,6).

When witnessing, we should constantly study our motives and not compromise on truth just to get one to study with us. Of course we can sometimes overrule a prejudice by using a certain technique, but we must get down to the nitty-gritty of the objective before long and not delay indefinitely for years. “Preaching” implies that a cost is involved in listening and accepting.

**1 Cor. 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:**

National characteristics were that Jews required a visible, tangible sign, and the Greeks sought after after wisdom. Wanting a “sign” also carries into our society in different ways. For example, some make “healing” a test, claiming that if a person can heal, he must be of God. The subject matter being discussed is considered less important than having a body cured. Astrology is an example of following signs. (Incidentally, it was not wrong to ask for a sign from Jesus at the First Advent, but it was wrong for an “evil and adulterous generation” to ask from a wrong motive, as stated in Matthew 12:39. Many of God’s people of the past—Gideon, Abraham, Moses, and others—looked for signs, and they were given signs because of the right motive.) The Jews were looking for a sign for the sign’s sake instead of looking for a change in their life. In fact, many Jews hate the doctrine of repentance. They think reformation comes through the mind—by reading and understanding—but *obedience and application* are needed in connection with knowledge. All the education in the world will not lift up the masses.

**Q:** If a Christian preaches repentance to a Jew, doesn’t that topic come across as an indictment? The attitude of the Jew is, “Why should I repent when I have been faithful to the Law?”

**A:** Yes, the Jews feel they are being persecuted. Gentiles have an advantage over the Jews in more readily seeing that they are fallen.

**Q:** In what sense is it proper for a Christian to set stipulations in prayer when he does not know what path to take in a trial? Is it permissible to ask for a sign?

**A:** Generally speaking, asking for a sign is not a wise policy because then one is walking by the sign and not by faith. However, there are cases where one almost needs a sign. At such times, it is all right to pray for the manifestation of a sign, but the prayer should be done with the proper attitude. “Dear Father in heaven, If it should please you, I would appreciate some indication or providence because I am too confused to think or reason out of this situation. If it would be in harmony with your will, please give me some clue as to what I should do.” Of course we should not tempt the Lord in trying to force Him to give a sign, but we can ask if He would mind doing so.

**Comment:** In our ignorance, we sometimes do things that we would change as we mature. We later see the inconsistency. Actually, we are expected to grow in wisdom, so we should develop understanding in handling the affairs of life.

**Reply:** When one is newly consecrated, the Lord sometimes allows liberties that He would not grant later on. The very petition can betray a lack of knowledge and understanding. Just as we do not expect a child to reason as an adult, neither does the Lord expect adult reasoning from a spiritual babe. But as one grows, more thought should be given to the petition.

“The Greeks seek after wisdom.” Basically, the Greeks loved learning because it was a mental exercise that did not cost anything.

**1 Cor. 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;**

The Cross was a stumbling block to the Jews for several reasons: (1) Jesus was a *human* sacrifice. However, the Jews had animal sacrifices in the past. (2) A cross was used for vile criminals. It was not merely Jesus’ dying as a human sacrifice for the cancellation of sin but also the teaching of the Law that he who “is hanged [on a tree] is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:23). This so-called Savior died on a cross, whereas the Word of God states that such a one is accursed. (3) Jesus was a humble Nazarene, not a glorious Savior who freed the Jews from Roman bondage and raised them to the pinnacle of power on the earth. The fact that God permitted the Crucifixion “proved” to the Jews that Jesus was not the Messiah. (4) They lacked humility. (5) His birth was considered illegitimate (John 8:41).

Responsibility for the Jews to know Jesus was the Messiah increased when the report went forth of his resurrection, and there were 500 eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:6). Also, no one ever denied the earthquake, the darkening of the sun, and the rending of the Temple veil at the time of his death. If the Jews had been in the right heart attitude, they would have said, like the centurion, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

The Pastor did not originate the doctrine of the Presence, but he had the courage to publicly and consistently preach it. His public espousing of this unpopular doctrine had a separating influence. Faithful Christians expose popular errors and advocate unpopular truths. And the Pastor courageously defended the teaching that Christians have a part in the sacrifice of Christ—the doctrine of the Church’s share in the sin offering. These teachings marked him as separate and distinct in connection with dispensational truth, yet he was not an apostle but a servant, one of the seven messengers to the Church.

The Cross was foolishness to the Greeks. A comparable attitude or principle today would be those who ask, “What seminary did you graduate from? Do you have a doctorate of divinity?” People look for titles, training, and background in order for one’s words to mean anything. And clerical clothing is considered a badge of authority.

**1 Cor. 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.**

Jews and Greeks in the church at Corinth had taken the step of humbling themselves and accepting Jesus as their Savior. Paul was speaking to a class who had noted the “wisdom of God.” “Christ [is] the [true] *power* ... and the *wisdom* of God” for all who are called. Two of God’s attributes are mentioned here.

**1 Cor. 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

The supposed “foolishness of God” is wiser than the wisest of men, and the supposed “weakness of God” is stronger than the mightiest of men. In Corinth, the Greeks outnumbered

the Jews in the ecclesia, and the weakness of the Greeks was wisdom. Most Greeks aspired to be philosophers and teachers and thus to be honored. Therefore, their energies went toward acquiring wisdom and understanding. What do the Scriptures say about the objective of being a teacher? “My brethren, be not many [of you] masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [and responsibility]” (James 3:1). Properly controlled, to desire to be a teacher is a good ambition, but “be not many.” The danger to the Greeks in the ecclesia was that all wanted to be teachers because of their previous background. Therefore, they had to be unschooled with regard to some of their former thoughts.

Another danger to the Greeks because of their background was the high priority placed on physical strength and appearance. The ideal men were strong athletes in the Greek games, and women were glorified for beauty, as exemplified in statues. Thus the Greeks considered education, appearance, and physical strength to be very important. Paul was not physically strong, and his stature and bearing were not impressive from their standpoint. He did, however, have the wisdom they had plus his own, which they did not have.

**1 Cor. 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:**

Not many wise, not many mighty (strong), and not many noble in appearance are called.

**1 Cor. 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;**

How truly amazing that God has “chosen the foolish things of the world”! The *great* God in heaven, in selecting His Church and the family He will live with, not only condescends to men of low estate who are in this sin-sick dark world but takes people from different strata who are not the wisest, the noblest, or the mightiest. In fact, many of them are poor in this world’s goods, but when He gets done with them, there will be a big change—and even in the present life, there is a radical change.

**1 Cor. 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:**

**1 Cor. 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.**

God has chosen the “base things of the world, and things which are despised.” True Christians are considered nothing from the world’s standpoint, but God has chosen them. And the whole motivation for God to do this—the reason He has used this method—is so “that no flesh should glory in his [own] presence” and ability. God is raising up 144,000 to be in the divine family, and not one of them will be able to think he has gotten there because of personal merit—deeds, flesh, or background. On the shoulders of the high priest were two black onyx (epaulet) stones, on which were written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, six on each shoulder, according to birth. (In contradistinction, the names on the jewels of the high priest’s breastplate were arranged according to divine office, that is, as they will shine in glory.) The black shoulder stones show what the 144,000 formerly were in the present life down here. They were taken out of their low, humble estate (the humus, or dirt), raised to glory, and set as jewels. The names on the shoulders and the names on the breastplate are the same, one being according to birth down here and the other being how God will put them in the body to be honored and glorified in the Kingdom. Many people glory in their *own* flesh, in their *own* supposed wisdom, but God chooses those who previously were *nothing* and makes of them *jewels of glory*.

**Comment:** If we try to interest someone in the truth and consecration, we should not

camouflage the Christian walk in any way. Instead of giving a flowery introduction, we should set forth the cost and the denial of self so that the individual has a better opportunity to consider whether or not he wants to enter the race.

**Reply:** We will discuss this point in the next chapter, which brings up a subject that requires thought as to why Paul did one thing on one occasion and another thing on another occasion.

**1 Cor. 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:**

Verses 29 and 30 are the meat of chapter 1. Verse 29 gives the philosophy of why God calls the meek and the humble: "That no flesh should glory in his [own] presence." Verse 30 answers the problem in the class at Corinth with regard to divisions, as stated in verse 12, "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." In verse 30, Paul tried to discredit the "I" type of thinking: "But of him [God] are ye [all] in Christ Jesus, who ... is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Paul took "I" out of their vocabulary and inserted "we" and "us." The real one is Christ, but we need to have a *family* outlook.

While it is true that wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are a logical sequence in the truth, Paul purposely used the word "wisdom" because that is what the Greeks were seeking. (In other words, Paul could have said that Christ is the revelator, or channel of information, with regard to the future life, but he intentionally used what was in their vocabulary.) In fact, Paul repeatedly used the words "wise" and "wisdom" in this first chapter in order to denigrate following leaders for their wisdom. The real wisdom the Greeks were looking for came not from man but *from God through Christ*. The teacher, the one the brethren should have looked to for instruction, was Christ, who was sent by God to be the instructor to the Church. Stated another way, the consecrated are taught *of* the Father but *by* the Son.

The phrase "of him" is significant; namely, "But *of God* are ye in Christ Jesus." God sent His wisdom through the teachings of Jesus, and Jesus said, "The words that I speak are not mine but my Father's, who sent me" (John 14:10; 17:8 paraphrase). Christ has the wisdom, but he made it clear that his wisdom came from his Father, who sent him and taught him what to say.

The *Berean Manual* has a number of comments for verse 30, as follows:

1. For the clause "Christ ... is made unto us wisdom": (1) "In that we are to accept his will and thus have the spirit of a sound mind." (2) "In that through him we have the knowledge of our own sinful condition and need of a Savior." (3) "In that through him we know of the greatness and absolute justice of God." (4) "Wisdom is the principal thing."

2. For the clause "Christ ... is made unto us ... righteousness": (1) "In that he now in his righteousness represents us." (2) "Justifying us, bringing us who are deficient up to the just or perfect standard." (3) "Justification comes by hearing of God's grace, confessing wrongdoing, believing the message, repenting of sin, and, as far as possible, making restitution for the wrongs done."

3. For the clause "Christ ... is made unto us ... sanctification": (1) "In that through his power and merit we are accepted as living sacrifices." (2) "True sanctification will mean diligence in his service, in declaring good news to others, in building up one another, in doing good to all men; increasing love to the Lord, to the brethren, to our families and to the world." (3) "The term sanctification means set apart, consecrated or marked out for a holy use or purpose." (4) "Our devotion should be as that ... of a dutiful child towards a beloved parent; swift to hear, quick to obey, not seeking our own wills, but the will of our Father in heaven."

4. For the clause “Christ ... is made unto us ... redemption”: (1) “*Apolutrosis*, deliverance, in that he will in due time deliver us.”

The point is that Paul’s message had to bring about a change in the individual with regard to sin. Not only did the mind have to rise to a higher level, but the Corinthians had to realize that a cost (sacrifice) was involved. The doctrine of *repentance* was strange to the Greeks, who thought that the wisdom of their philosophers could lift them up.

When Paul wrote that Jesus “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” those who said, “I am of *Christ*,” would have felt justified. But Paul made clear what he meant as the epistle continues. If we study carefully Jesus’ manner of life, his parables, and his teachings as examples for us, we will be led to other subjects. Especially when one is relatively new in the truth, it is helpful to consider the life and manner of Jesus.

**Comment:** Verse 30, which states that God made Jesus wisdom, can be used to show that Jesus is “wisdom” in Proverbs 8.

**1 Cor. 1:31** That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Paul was quoting from Jeremiah 9:24, “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” There and also here in verse 31, the reference was to Jehovah. The thought is, “He that glorieth, let him glory in *Jehovah*,” and not in Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. Paul was telling the Corinthians, “Boast not in man, but if you must boast, then boast in what the *Lord* has done for you.”

**1 Cor. 2:1** And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

Verse 1 repeats the same point. Paul took a lot of time on the subject of wisdom, drumming away at the Greeks’ wrong concept. But he introduced one extra thought here: “not with excellency of speech,” that is, oratory. The Greeks wanted to excel in oratory and admired those who did. A powerful, distinct voice was a requirement so that a large audience could hear. Eloquence, an extensive vocabulary, and knowledge of the philosophies were revered. Although a good manner of delivery is helpful, Paul wanted them to see that the *message* was more important than the messenger.

Paul had the rhetoric and the knowledge, but he had two drawbacks. (1) His voice was not powerful, and (2) he lacked stature. The *message* is what mattered, and it was quite different from what men were accustomed to hearing. Earlier the people were astonished at the doctrine and message of Jesus, which were different from the teachings and vocabulary of the schooled scribes and Pharisees.

“When I came to you.” Paul had visited Corinth before he wrote this epistle. He was first used by the Lord to start this class while on a missionary journey through Asia Minor and up into Macedonia, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, and then Corinth. Some writers feel that this epistle was written from Ephesus and that a visiting brother from Corinth, who happened to be in the area, took the letter to the Corinthians.

Paul was at Ephesus for 3 1/2 years, and it is believed that afterwards, since there was a direct boat link between Ephesus and Corinth—a regular nonstop route back and forth—he took advantage of this means of transportation to go back to see how the class had prospered. When he returned, however, he was shocked to find that conditions were not the best, for

many of the brethren were beginning to be adversely affected by the environment of sin and licentiousness in Corinth. While there on this short visit, he did his best to correct the situation, but apparently, he was very gentle in his first recriminations and tried to counsel them as to their responsibilities as Christians. However, instead of seeing Paul as using reasonableness and moderation in exhorting them to correct the problems, the Corinthians interpreted some of his words as weakness. When he wrote (verse 3), “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,” his words were misunderstood. The “weakness” referred to his previous moderation and gentle counsel, which he now saw were not effective. Hence he would speak in much stronger terms in this epistle. The “fear” and the “trembling” pertained to what he felt was his responsibility. Having established the class at Corinth and then seeing the deterioration, he was heavily burdened as to how to resolve the situation.

To repeat, Paul had thought his counsel during the short visit would correct the problems. But following the visit, those of the house of Chloe, who were visiting Ephesus, told Paul face to face about the circumstances that existed. Paul thought conditions were bad on his short return visit, but they were getting worse.

This first epistle treats at least a dozen acute problems. In fact, 1 Corinthians is the most varied epistle of Paul’s entire writings because it treats all kinds of subjects. He did not write off the top of his head but thought hard about each problem and what advice to give. The resulting epistle is very beneficial for the Church down here at the end of the age, for Paul’s counsel alerts us to certain present dangers.

Paul mentioned that he came not in the manner of his reputation; that is, his doctrine, zeal, and success in converting both Jews and Gentiles to Christ were known. Therefore, when he returned to a location, people gathered, thinking they would be listening to an outstanding orator. And the Greeks sought after wisdom and oratory. Since he was aware of their expectations, he did not want to use oratorical abilities but instead preached with purity and simplicity. Being thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he spoke with earnestness and forcefulness and laid the facts on the table with sincerity and power. The simplicity of the gospel was what was needed, rather than stories, which appealed to the Jews. Paul got the point across with no frills. He was determined not to use his capability of language and vocabulary but to present the facts in simplicity and sincerity so that when individuals were converted, they would rely on the gospel, the message, the Word of God (the Old Testament at that time). Paul said he “came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, ... [but instead declared] the testimony of God [the way God speaks].”

**1 Cor. 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**

Paul did not mean that he *always* spoke about Jesus and the Crucifixion. Rather, because the source of all wisdom is Christ, he was determined in all of his thinking and preaching to center the minds of the brethren on the Lord. He did not emphasize Jesus’ greatness in the flesh but the necessity for a Christian to suffer and to be humiliated in the present life. Consequently, when Paul centered the Corinthians on Christ, he was not like the Greek philosophers, who concentrated on their *own* flesh, appearance, powerful voice, and intellectual knowledge. Instead Paul concentrated on the knowledge he had of God. Opposite to the thinking of the Greeks, which puffed them up with pride, the Christian must be abased and suffer in the present life in order to be exalted later. *Adherence to principle and faithfulness to consecration vows cost the Christian something all his life.*

Why did Paul approach the Corinthians with the introductory theme of wisdom and being “determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”? There were two points: (1) Paul did know other subjects but felt it necessary to center their thinking



on Jesus. (2) In this epistle, he was addressing their problems. Since it was necessary for Christ to die on the Cross, Paul would have emphasized sin and the need for the forgiveness of sin through repentance. And since it was necessary for the Messiah, who was sent of God, to die in order to establish a foundation for their justification and redemption, he would have brought that point close to the heart of those who were living a very effete life in a sinful city. In exercising forgiveness and mercy on fallen man, God was looking for those who felt the need of a physician. Paul's power, zeal, and drive were more meaningful than smooth talk.

Paul had certain physical impediments, for he was not tall of stature, he had a problem with his eyesight, and his voice did not have the resonance that was expected of an orator. Although he had the language, the vocabulary, and the sound reasoning that could have been used in any way he wanted, he wisely chose a simple manner. He used guile (strategy) only on those occasions where prejudices existed among people of honest heart.

**1 Cor. 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.**

Why did Paul say he was with the Corinthians "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"? Although there are no details—and in addition to the thought presented earlier—he was apparently sick for a time while at Corinth. And he was even at one time very much depressed and at a low point in his life until he got a message from brethren in another church that revived his spirit (2 Cor. 1:8).

With regard to "fear," Paul was not a coward. (Remember how he wanted to go into the stadium in Ephesus, where the multitude could have torn him apart—Acts 19:28-30.) A serious physical illness, accompanied by low vitality, can mentally affect a person for a while, and that is probably what happened to Paul. In sickness, one can doubt his own thinking. For example, problems become exaggerated in the mind, causing the individual to question whether he is really doing the Lord's will, and things that are done wrong are magnified beyond their proper proportion. In such a low, weak spell, Paul could have had this opposite experience.

For another example, consider Jesus, who was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, in the Garden of Gethsemane. He feared that he would die and thus become extinct, yet this same Jesus had been confident and courageous all during his ministry in his knowledge that the Father was helping him. He had said, "I know that my Father always hears me because I do His will." His prayers in front of the multitudes showed his closeness to the Father and were not just petitions. In courage, he was unflinching, repeatedly tongue-lashing the scribes and Pharisees with words such as, "Ye whited sepulchers!" He gave no inclination of fearing what man could do to him, but in Gethsemane, he had a different experience and did fear death. Jesus was extremely depressed and low in vitality at that time—so much so that he said he could almost die.

Therefore, it is possible that Paul had a severe illness in Corinth. For the brethren to see the great, powerful Apostle Paul in that weakened condition would have been a humiliating experience that made him even more "little." Sometimes appearance and weakness improperly lower one in the sight of other people, whereas the message or thinking far exceeds the importance of outer adornments.

**1 Cor. 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:**

Paul preached "not with enticing words of man's wisdom," yet he spoke with power to impress the message. He lacked stature and a noble appearance, but he spoke "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." At Lystra, for example, Barnabas was called Jupiter because of his appearance, and Paul was called Mercurius "because he was the chief speaker"

(Acts 14:8-12).

**1 Cor. 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**

Paul's fear, too, was that the brethren would not have their consecration truly centered in Christ. If their consecration was on the proper basis and Jesus was the motivation of their lives, Paul would have more assurance, when he left them, that they would make their calling and election sure. He did not want the brethren to be dependent on him as a person but on Christ. Thus he was careful in his ministry, with regard to what he did and said, out of concern that the brethren properly acknowledge Christ as their Head.

How did Paul try to make sure that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men"? He *reasoned* on the Scriptures—that was his "wisdom." For example, the brethren of Berea did not take for granted that because Paul was an apostle, they should just listen to and believe everything he said. Instead they searched the Scriptures to see if what he said squared with God's Word. Paul appreciated their diligence and attitude—that they would base their faith structure on the *Word of God* rather than on the philosophy, or thinking, of men (Acts 17:11).

In chapter 2, as well as in chapter 1, Paul kept ranting on wisdom because that was the basic weakness among the people of Corinth. Their schooling, from youth up, emphasized *worldly* wisdom, and that train of thought had to be broken before he could go into the bulk of his message a little later. For that reason, Paul prayed, "I [was] determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (verse 2).

In other places—that is, depending on where he was—Paul used a different strategy or technique. For instance, in Athens, which was also in Greece, he called on nature and natural reasoning to introduce his talk, rather than to speak immediately about the Crucifixion. Choosing the topic of "The Unknown God," he showed that we all come from this one God, and then, eventually, he brought out Christ (Acts 17:23). Note: Paul was not downgrading spiritual wisdom but *natural* wisdom.

**1 Cor. 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:**

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect"; that is, God's mysteries are revealed to those who are *mature* in their consecrated thinking on His Word. This maturity is not based on age but on *development*. Paul did not speak "wisdom" at first, for he was more interested in feeding and developing the brethren so that they could mature more and more. As a general rule, the nature of the questions shows somewhat the depth of the sincerity and the development of the one who asks them.

Later Paul gave the Corinthian brethren a little tongue-lashing, saying they should have been more advanced than they were. He wanted to bring them up to a certain point of maturity. The wisdom of God is made available to the consecrated who are the more mature.

Aquila and Priscilla were in the church at Corinth, and no doubt they were quite advanced, for they helped Apollos to see the truth more clearly. Hence one segment in the ecclesia was more advanced than another segment in the knowledge of mysteries, the deeper truths. Stated another way, one must grow and mature in order to receive greater spiritual wisdom.

**1 Cor. 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:**

God has His mysteries and "hidden wisdom," which are supplied to those who are faithful up

to a certain level. “God ordained [the hidden wisdom] before the world [that is, before the Creative Days] unto our [the Church’s] glory [in the future, in the Millennium and beyond into the ages of ages].” The calling of this class is in the present life; their inheritance of the divine nature will be received in the near future.

The irony is that the Greeks desired wisdom and Paul was talking about wisdom, but they were turned off by his appearance, his mannerism, and his style of reasoning. He had the very thing they were searching for—“the *wisdom* of God.” A person’s prejudice can prevent him from seeing the truth on a matter, the principle being that though seven wise men give a reason, the person is still a fool without an answer (Prov. 26:16). Much depends on the heart condition of the one listening to the truths in Scripture, and prejudice is a big factor.

Paul was saying that he did preach wisdom, but that wisdom was a matter of development. He could speak more of the wisdom of God to those who were mature. What is some of God’s wisdom? The very way the Bible opens tells about the Creator. What other book in the world, then or now, in more than 6,000 years, goes into the detail of the physical creation—its stages, how it was done, and why it was done? God’s plan is shown in the Scriptures. Realizing man had fallen—and because He loved the world—He sent His Son as a Savior. God cannot violate His own principles—He cannot lie, He cannot countenance sin, He has to be approached through the proper channels (the converted speak to Him through Jesus), etc. Not only is God seeking a Bride class for his Son, but also He has in mind the conversion of the world in the next age. That conversion means a resurrection from the dead. What other religion teaches a doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? Other religions believe that at the moment of death, one goes through a door into another life or that the door is shut and a person perishes. They do not have the doctrine that death is a sleep in which there is no consciousness or memory, but that the individual will be awakened in the future, in the Kingdom Age, when Jesus calls and all in their graves come forth (John 5:28). This doctrine was a completely new thought. None of the princes, philosophers, or religions of this world have such a teaching.

**1 Cor. 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

**Comment:** Verse 8, plus the witness of the Gospels, proves that, generally speaking, the worldly and religious leaders who crucified Jesus did not know he was the Son of God. Also, Acts 3:17 states, “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.”

**Reply:** They were not all condemned as a class, only a segment of them. “Many” of the Pharisees, although a minority, relatively speaking, came into the truth in the early Church (John 12:42; Acts 6:7). If the Jews had known Jesus and what he stood for, they would not have crucified him.

**1 Cor. 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.**

**1 Cor. 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.**

The “eye [of natural man] hath not seen, nor ear heard ... the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us [the consecrated] by his Spirit.” Paul was paraphrasing Isaiah 64:4 to draw a practical lesson. The public—the natural man and even the believer until he consecrates and is begotten by the Holy Spirit—does not understand the deep mysteries of God. One must come into the “family” in order to grow in such understanding and mysteries. *Only the consecrated* are entitled to know some of the deep

spiritual things.

What has God prepared for “them that love him”? The hope of the high calling is glory, honor, immortality, and to be kings and priests. There is no higher hope. Those who faithfully obey God’s precepts and follow His counsel have the hope of attaining to a state that nothing on this earth can be compared to.

“By his Spirit.” Paul was speaking of God’s Holy Spirit of revelation, understanding, and remembrance. The Bible is the most widely published book in the world, but how many really understand it? It is true that the Bible has been a blessing even superficially, but it takes God’s invisible power to enlighten one as to the significance of even His *plainly stated* Scriptures.

“The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Not only does this “Spirit,” the mind of Christ, give us the zeal to know the Lord, but it is a *consuming* zeal so that when we know a little, we want to know a little more, and when we know a little more, we want to know still more. The Holy Spirit searches the deep things, and God rewards those who hunger and thirst after knowledge of Him primarily. “The secret of the LORD is with them that [reverentially] fear him; and he will show them his covenant” (Psa. 25:14).

**1 Cor. 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.**

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” Human beings look at one another along the lines of discernment on earthly things. Some people have savvy, meaning they are knowledgeable in the things of the world. They have a political cleverness; they have street knowledge. Through experience and observation, they know the traits and peculiarities of a human being on the earthly plane.

Just as there is this savvy, or “spirit of man,” on the earthly plane, so there is the same thing on the spiritual plane, which is completely separate and distinct from the animal, the physical, the baser instincts of man. Even the better instincts of the natural man cannot reach up to the Holy Spirit of God, which is a revealing spirit.

**1 Cor. 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.**

“We have received ... the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are *freely* given to us of God.” God gives the Christian this special spiritual understanding (“the spirit ... of God”), which is separate and distinct from the spirit of the world, and He gives it *by grace*.

If we want to know about God, about His thinking, and if we want to obey Him, He is pleased to satisfy our desires for increased understanding—just as a father is interested in the development of his son. When we approach our desire from that standpoint, God freely gives us understanding. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men *liberally*, and upbraideth not; and it *shall be given* him” (James 1:5).

**1 Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

Verse 13 states the principle by which the Holy Spirit operates; namely, it compares “spiritual things with spiritual” things. The Holy Spirit interprets spiritual truths to those who possess it, giving line upon line and precept upon precept, “here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:10). One who is spiritual (consecrated) can talk to another person who is spiritual (consecrated); they understand each other because they both have the same mind of Christ.

**1 Cor. 2:14** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Spiritual things are “foolishness” to the natural man, but to the consecrated, they are the opposite (1 Cor. 1:24). The spiritual man receives the things of the Holy Spirit.

**1 Cor. 2:15** But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

“He that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth—KJV margin] all things.” This discernment happens in two ways. Most Christians, if they were adults before consecration, had the spirit of the world (savvy, worldly knowledge) before becoming spiritual. Now they have spiritual understanding, but they also know the wiles and tactics of the Adversary. Having been in the flesh, they know the subtleties of enticement and the dangers of association with the wrong environment. They have the knowledge of what they came out of plus the new field of knowledge—the spiritual things of God. As a result, Christians have quite an education. The worldly person knows only his level of thinking and cannot judge those who are spiritual because he has no understanding along that line.

**Comment:** As stated in the *Expanded Biblical Comments*, only those who are spiritual, that is, only those who receive the Holy Spirit, examine or discern “all things,” meaning they are “able to understand and properly estimate both human and spiritual things in the light of the divine plan,” yet they themselves are discerned or understood by no natural man.

“Judgeth” and “judged” are the same Greek word, *anakrino*, meaning “discerned.” The spiritual man has an advantage in that, to some extent, he can understand both natural things, because he was formerly natural-minded, and spiritual things.

The truth is so far above the head of the natural man that he is not capable of rendering a proper judgment. It is like talking a different language. Because the natural man does not perceive the motives of the consecrated, they seem foolish to him. Only a spiritual person can judge a spiritual person with regard to right and wrong.

**1 Cor. 2:16** For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

“Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he [God] may instruct him [the individual]?” The answer is, “We (the consecrated) do! God can instruct us because we have the mind of Christ.”

The rhetoric of the schooling Paul received shows in his writing. Before he said, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, but God has revealed spiritual things to us.” Then he asked, “Who knows about God’s mind?” The implied answer is, “We do, for God has instructed us.” Someone natural-minded might accuse us of being presumptuous in saying we know the mind of God, but the Scriptures say that we do.

Paul often used the question method, bringing up a question and then answering it, to stimulate thinking. In Romans 10:6,7, for example, Paul raised a hypothetical question: “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise [the heart of faith speaks this way], Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) [Has anyone been up in heaven to disclose these things to us?]” We sometimes think, “Oh, if only the Pastor were here, he would explain that subject. But he is up in heaven, and who can go up there to ask him? He is dead according to the flesh, and who can raise him up for that information?” But the information is the *Word* itself, which was left behind. We do not have to

go to heaven or into the grave, for the Bible is right next to us on the table. Likewise, with regard to Christ, we do not have to say, “Oh, if only the Lord were here,” or “It is too bad we did not live at the First Advent so we could have asked Jesus.” From an emotional standpoint, it would have been nice to see Jesus in the flesh, but from a doctrinal standpoint, the needed sayings were recorded for us. And so Paul continued in Romans 10:8,9, “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Believing in Jesus was the crucial message.

Thus Paul raised a question with the Romans and then instructed out of the question. The church at Rome contained both a Roman and a Jewish element, and the mixture caused confusion on where to draw the line. “Do Gentiles have to obey the Law with its ceremonies?” was the issue, and the Jews were offended because the Gentiles were not circumcised. All in the class, Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, wanted these questions settled. They thought, “Oh, if only the Lord were here to straighten out this mess.” But the Lord was there, using the Apostle Paul, who said in effect, “The word, which we preach, is that in confessing the Lord Jesus, these barriers are erased. Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, since you have confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and believed from your heart, you are all sons of God and on an equal basis.” Paul gave in a nutshell the thinking that would bind together the Jews and the Gentiles so that they would not have doubts or reservations about each other.

**Q:** Isaiah 40:13 reads, “Who hath directed the spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?” Here the implied answer is, “No one.” Wouldn’t the emphasis be the same here in verse 16?

**A:** No. Reading Isaiah 64:4 will help: “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.” Everything is negative in that text, for only God knew prior to the Gospel Age. Now, however, Paul could say, “It is no longer true that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, because God has revealed some of the things He has prepared” (1 Cor. 2:9,10). The Prophet Isaiah was trying to show that the mind of God is so far above us it is as high as the heavens are above the earth, but Paul was saying that is no longer true because God has now revealed some of the deep things of His own thinking. Some of the previously awesome mysteries are being revealed to those who are truly His and who have exercised themselves on spiritual things.

There are different types of reasoning. For example, Jesus used parables to teach lessons, but the chief lesson of every parable was *contrary* to our human instincts—it was *opposite* to what we would think. This method brings up *very deep, startling* truths. In the Parable of the Penny, the early morning laborers worked all day but got the *same* wage as the individual who worked only one hour. In the Parable of the Pounds, Jesus said, “Unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him” (Luke 19:26). Again the lesson seems to be contrary, for the natural question is, Why should the one who is wealthy or has great abilities be given more? However, those who have more face more temptation not to give it up. Therefore, if they give their all to the Lord, they will be more honored than the faithful poor person because of having sacrificed more. In short, to put more on the altar when there is more to give is a greater sacrifice.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus was the “neighbour,” the “good Samaritan,” to the wounded man. The principle of the Law was, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18). Therefore, the neighbor would normally be the one who is helped, but in the parable, the one who did the helping (Jesus) was the neighbor. At his First Advent, Jesus went around doing good, restoring sight, healing the lame, preaching righteousness, etc., but the scribes and

Pharisees and others criticized him. Through the parable, Jesus wanted the analogy to be drawn that he was the neighbor and that, therefore, the lawyer addressing him should practice the Law and do good and exercise mercy to him. Jesus was saying in effect, "I am your neighbor. Why don't you treat me as such?" The lawyer was forced to answer the parable correctly, identifying the Samaritan who helped the wounded man as the neighbor, but still the scribes and Pharisees criticized and persecuted Jesus.

Jesus' technique was to *startle* the listeners so that they would realize he was no ordinary man. Paul used a similar technique—raising startling questions and giving startling answers—in order to leave an impression. Something that is said or done too softly is not remembered.

"But we have the mind of Christ." Public ministers of God's Word should not give an uncertain sound like a little tin horn but should be *firm* (1 Cor. 14:7,8). They should be well versed in Scripture and speak with a "thus saith the LORD," being mighty careful to speak according to that Word. For that reason, James cautioned, "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). Teaching brings responsibility as well as rewards.

**1 Cor. 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.**

**1 Cor. 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.**

**1 Cor. 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?**

Imagine if an elder spoke to the congregation this way! The brethren would be very much offended to be called "carnal" and "babes in Christ." Paul was saying, "I fed you with milk in the past because you were not able to bear meat—and you still cannot bear it." In the first chapter, he commended the Corinthians for having utterance in all knowledge (1 Cor. 1:5). How would we harmonize this commendation with the criticism of verses 1-3 here in the third chapter? The Corinthians were faithful in the sense that when they heard about Christ, they repented, dedicated their lives, and were active. They went about witnessing and preaching the gospel to others in Corinth, which was a sin city. In other words, they did not put their light under a bushel but faithfully confessed and professed the baby knowledge that they had. Now Paul was criticizing them for having stagnated in their beginning knowledge. A warning is not to get swallowed up in a work to the detriment of growth in knowledge and understanding. One can associate with an organization to do witness work and then for 40 years preach baby milk to others and be so absorbed in the work that he himself is not fed. The nature of the witnessing is proper because babies should not be fed meat, but the problem is that the individual does not develop. And so the Corinthians were faithful in all utterance to *others*, giving all the knowledge they had, but they themselves did not progress mentally with the meat so that they could grow up from babyhood to adulthood. That was the principle here in verses 1-3. Otherwise, Paul's earlier commendation would be a contradiction.

Paul identified the Corinthians, for the greater part, as babes. They would be babes in character development and in discerning only the basics "until Christ be formed" in them (Gal. 4:19). The goal of a follower of Christ is to copy the Master as much as possible in the imperfect life on this side of the veil. Paul wanted to speak to the Corinthian brethren on more advanced spiritual things, but he could not do so because of their condition as babes. Nevertheless, he would try to bring some benefit out of the confusion that existed in the church at Corinth.

"There is among you envying, and strife, and divisions," but what kind of envying? With one

saying, “I am of Paul,” and another saying, “I am of Apollos,” the implication is that leadership was involved. Some favored one leader, and others favored another leader.

**Comment:** The Apostle James said, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:14-16).

**Reply:** James concurred with the reasoning of Paul, adding that the spirit of the Corinthians was “earthly, sensual, devilish.”

**Comment:** Paul said, “Every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe” (Heb. 5:13).

**Reply:** Yes, the Corinthians were babes along moral lines. All Christians, regardless of age at the time of consecration, start as babies. From that point on, each one has a responsibility to grow and not to remain as a babe.

**1 Cor. 3:4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?**

The danger of a divisive spirit, the spirit of carnality, exists all the time. For those in the church systems, the danger today is saying, “I am of a certain denomination.” For those in present truth, the danger is saying, “I am of Pastor Russell.” The tendency is to quote him rather than the Scriptures. Even the great Apostle Paul said, “Who am I?” In the final analysis, if all others should forsake us, we would still have God and Jesus as our foundation. While we may favor the teachings of certain individuals, we should always have in mind that the Word of God is the faith structure of our character development.

The nominal Church would use verse 4 to prove the need for ecumenical worship—for Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc., to all meet together. How would we refute this thinking? (1) Denominations are different from apostles and leading personalities. (2) The churches hold certain creeds that are not scriptural. Paul was not encouraging compromise on fundamental principles in God’s Word.

In the beginning, four were named with regard to divisions: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. Now just two were being used as an illustration—Paul and Apollos.

**1 Cor. 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?**

**1 Cor. 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.**

**1 Cor. 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.**

**1 Cor. 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.**

Some in the class said, “I am of Paul,” and others said, “I am of Apollos.” In other words, some favored Paul’s type of ministry, and others favored the ministry of Apollos. Here Paul pointed out, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but [God’s] ministers [servants]” by whom *He* did the teaching. True, Paul “planted” (started the class at Corinth), and Apollos “watered”—“but *God* gave the increase.”



The fact that Paul founded the class should have borne some weight, unless he went out of the truth, had a character aberration, or taught glaring doctrinal error. Lesson: Unless there is a valid reason otherwise, a principle is that we should be reluctant to discard too hastily those whom God uses to bring others into the truth. Of course one can go to another source for development, but that is different from the more radical treatment of discarding.

“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one.” Paul emphasized this point a little later. Water is essential to make a garden prosper. Apollos was zealous and influential, he was fluent in his delivery, and he had power—real substance. In short, he was a blessing. When Apollos went to Corinth, some in the class liked him so much that they said, “I am of Apollos.” The emphasis on “I” was the problem. Paul corrected the attitude to “We are of God.”

“Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase [causes the seed to prosper].” To have a variety of teachers was good, although for a person to develop in a concentrated way, it was natural to favor the teaching of a particular individual. The danger was in hearkening *only* to his teaching.

After Paul founded the class and left Corinth, he went to the continent and then back to Jerusalem with a donation from the saints. Next he went to Ephesus, where Apollos had just been and taught about the baptism of John. Meanwhile, Apollos had gone on to Corinth by the time Paul got to Ephesus. Notice that Paul did not criticize Apollos and tell about his need to be instructed by Priscilla and Aquila with regard to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul wanted to lift the minds of the Corinthians *above* the “ministers” to *God*. Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and even Christ were *God’s* ministers—*God* had sent them. Paul was saying, “Neither is he that plants the seed or he that waters anything, for *God* gives the increase.”

Paul realized that when he and Apollos died, the hopes of the Corinthian brethren would die too, unless they got the higher thought that *God* had sent them as His ministers. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know and trust that *God* would continue to supply their needs when the servants were off the scene. Thus Paul was lifting the thoughts of the brethren without denigrating Apollos and by including himself: “Who am I, and who is Apollos?” He was willing to be nothing for the betterment of the Church.

“Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.” When a consecrated individual dies, his life is under review. God grades all of the consecrated, one above another.

**1 Cor. 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.**

**1 Cor. 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.**

“For we are labourers together with God.” Paul was saying, “Apollos and I are in this work together. We are both God’s servants—and not only we but *you* also. We are *all workers together*, and *God* works in *all*.” Verse 9 can also be thought of as applying to the whole Church throughout the age; that is, “All of the consecrated and I are labourers together with God.”

“Ye are God’s husbandry [field, vine], ye are God’s building.” James 5:7 calls God the “husbandman”: “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.” Precious fruit is the result of the tillage. And Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1).

Notice that God is mentioned three times in verse 9 as the unifying factor. If all of the groups

looked back to their initial drawing, they would see that they had a common start. They all miraculously got the truth in the beginning, but as they began to develop, friction and divisiveness entered their midst.

Paul admitted he was “a wise masterbuilder,” being a little above the others in that he was appointed to be an apostle, but *God* had done the appointing. “Ye are God’s building according to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder.” Paul’s statement was not pride, for he had to let the Corinthians know of his authority to teach. On the one hand, he humbled himself, and on the other hand, it was needful to tell them he was not an ordinary teacher. He wanted them to come to their senses, for there was a wide difference between his background and that of the class. Paul was trained at the feet of Gamaliel, a teacher so famous that he is even mentioned in secular history (Acts 22:3). Moreover, Paul “was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5). His handicaps or impediments—poor eyesight, stature, voice, and appearance—all kept him humble and thus helped him develop a more Christlike character and make his calling and election sure.

Paul had laid the foundation by starting the class, and Apollos had built on that foundation, yet they were “one” in that they were both *ministers* of God doing the same work. Nevertheless, Paul inferred his superiority by saying that God had made him “a wise masterbuilder.” He was trying to make the Corinthians think. A *Manna* comment says that we should act and speak under all circumstances for the *honor and glory of God*, even if doing so brings recognition and honor to ourselves. In other words, sometimes we have to elevate ourselves, and sometimes we have to denigrate ourselves—whichever is more suitable for seeing Jesus more clearly. Paul was trying to help the Corinthians, to balance them and get them to think. He praised them for their knowledge; he criticized them for their lack of knowledge. He put Apollos on the same level with himself; he did not put Apollos on the same level. Incidentally, a general principle is that “new” teachers should not override an apostle (or even a brother long time in the truth who has good knowledge).

“But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon [how he builds on the foundation].” Anyone in a teaching capacity has to be careful that his teaching is in harmony with God’s Word. *All* are God’s building—both the teacher and the one(s) being taught. It is important how ministers do the building as well as how the recipients of the teaching let their characters be built. There is a responsibility on both.

**1 Cor. 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is [already] laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Jesus is the “foundation,” the *Rock*. This statement was strong—there is *no other way* for salvation than through Jesus (Acts 4:12). If Jesus had not said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), where would we be? Yet he also said, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” and he invited those who were humble and teachable (Matt. 11:29). The point is that self-laudation, to a certain extent, becomes expedient under peculiar circumstances. Jesus’ message left an imprint throughout history, whereas, in comparison, other philosophies have nothing tangible to offer.

**1 Cor. 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;**

Paul listed two types of categories, or triads, each with subdivisions: (1) gold, silver, and precious stones and (2) wood, hay, and stubble. Also, the triads were given in descending order. In the first triad, gold was the best, next came silver, and then the precious stones. The second triad was also in descending order, wood being the most valuable, hay next, and lastly the stubble. Hay was more valuable than stubble because of its usefulness as bedding and fodder for animals. It is significant that all three burn, whereas none of the three metals or

stones burn with ordinary heat; that is, they *withstand* heat.

Paul advocated building on the foundation with quality materials. Many look for quantity in fellowship. They like to attend large churches with thousands of people and excellent choirs, but the result is like a social club. Instead God is looking for quality. The Christian does not have quality to start with, but little by little, he grows in grace and understanding.

One who starts the race must have confidence that God called him. If he is obedient and diligent, exerting every effort possible, God's grace will enable him to win. And the Christian is supposed to have the objective to *win* the race, not just to finish it, for all must finish to even get life in the Great Company (1 Cor. 9:24). God will judge all of the consecrated as to their individual worth, and He will not ask more than what they are capable of by His grace.

**1 Cor. 3:13** Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest." The maxim of verse 13, pertaining to *character development*, has applied throughout the Gospel Age. Other Scriptures treat the dispensational aspect, but here the application is to all Christians.

God tries *every* Christian's work. The fire *throughout* the age was an *individual* experience to manifest what value was in a person's work (character development); that is, somewhere in each life—in the middle or at the end—the Christian was tested to the core. However, at the end of the age, there will be a special dispensational *collective* experience, or fire. The principle with all of the consecrated is, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

"For the day shall declare it." In what way will the "day" declare "every man's work"? Down through the Gospel Age, each Christian got his test with fire and sooner or later went into the tomb. God, Jesus, and the angels knew whether an individual built with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble, for they could see the test and how the individual met it, but the world did not know. Therefore, the "day" was the day of trial for the individual. In his "day" of testing, the mettle of his character was exposed, or made manifest, to the angels but not necessarily to the public down here, who may have viewed a saint in a derogatory fashion, while the Lord viewed him in a complimentary fashion, or vice versa. The point is that the trial reveals character development. For instance, Paul said that divisions, siftings, and schisms are necessary in order to make manifest to God, Jesus, and the angels those who are properly exercised (1 Cor. 11:19 paraphrase). In other words, if a chasm opens before an individual, he must take a step backward, forward, or sideways. Decisions in life are forced upon the Christian, and how he reacts to them is a test.

The "day" that declares "every man's work" can also be considered from another standpoint. In the Gospel Age, the fire makes apparent to God, Jesus, and the angels who will make the Little Flock, although God determines which category (gold, silver, or precious stones). In the Kingdom Age, it will be revealed to those down here who are in the Little Flock, and it will also be revealed who are the Great Company. Thus there are two aspects to the "day." (1) Down through the Gospel Age, the day of trial has been contemporary with the life of the individual, and the audience who knows of the manifestation is limited to those above. (2) The yet future day of the declaration of rewards, the Kingdom Age, will reveal to the world who made the Little Flock and who is in the Great Company.

"Fire" represents the Christian's testing time. The fire can be tests of doctrine, faith, morals, character, service, or something else. Incidentally, the more prominent the individual, the greater the danger, the severer the trial, and the more the Adversary is interested in his

downfall. Thus the experience would be correspondingly greater.

What actual lasting value “works” have will be made manifest later. From one standpoint, the importance of works (character development, witness efforts, use of talents, etc.) is shown here, and from another standpoint, the importance of grace is shown. We do a work hoping to please the Lord, and in pleasing Him, we hope to get a higher life. If we do the work well enough, we hope to get the highest form of life. However, the expectation and the reality are not always the same. God judges us by faith and not by works, but imperfect works are essential to manifest the type and the degree of our faith. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling chiefly through character development, but there are other aspects (Phil. 2:12). Works are expected, but we are to examine how we build. In other words, building is essential, but the building must be done with the *right* motive and *in harmony* with God’s will.

**1 Cor. 3:14** If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

In this illustration, characters of gold, silver, and precious stones will abide the fire. All three represent different degrees of value, or merit, of the Little Flock. In other words, there will be differences of rank, honor, and value of those who comprise the Church in glory. Gold represents those in the Little Flock who get top honor, a special commendation, namely, the apostles and the messengers to the Church. Silver represents unusual, superior Christians who are next in rank. The precious stones represent the rest, the majority. If the superstructure abides the fire, the individual will get the reward of the Little Flock.

**Q:** Is there any validity in picturing The Christ as a pyramid? Jesus will be at the top, the apostles and messengers next, the silver somewhat more numerous, and the precious stones the majority at the bottom.

**A:** Yes. All who are ultimately in God’s family, including the Church, spirit nature, and human nature, will fit into a pyramid. When God’s plan is complete at the end of the Millennial Age, all of these categories will have been developed in sequence of honor and glory.

“If any man’s work abide ... he shall receive a reward.” If the work does not abide, he does not receive a reward as respects the Little Flock. He may get life in the Great Company, which is a wonderful blessing, but that is not considered a reward, or special honor. It is merely a salvation where the soul is not lost.

**1 Cor. 3:15** If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Verse 15 is contrary to normal logic, but Paul’s method helps to bring out a point that will be seen as we proceed. The wood, hay, and stubble are all burned; that is, they are destroyed, yet the individual is saved. Therefore, this illustration is not picturing the destruction of the individual but the destruction of his *work*. The gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble represent what individuals build upon the foundation Christ Jesus, the quality of their workmanship. Individuals whose works are completely shattered will not get honors but, rather, great disappointment, shock, and loss in connection with their expectations of the high calling. Stated another way, their hopes of being part of the Little Flock are destroyed. All of their efforts in the present life with regard to obtaining the prize of the high calling are of no avail, but their life is preserved. Hence the gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble represent workmanship, and whether or not one will receive a reward depends on whether it abides. If the workmanship abides, there are different scales of honor in the Little Flock. If the workmanship is destroyed but the individual is saved, there are different degrees of honor in the Great Company. Incidentally, hay burns quickly, but stubble burns furiously. With the

Great Company, who will be servants before the throne, there will be distinctions of service (Rev. 7:15). One lesson is that character “works” are helpful and important in determining the destiny of a person, and even with those whose works are destroyed, distinctions are made.

“He himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” Fire and tribulation purify. In the Time of Trouble, the Great Company will wash their robes “in the blood of the Lamb,” that is, in the tribulation period (Rev. 7:14). The fire will awaken them to their need of purification, and through purification, they will be saved. (Those who are not awakened by the fire will not be saved, will not get life.) The works of the Great Company will be destroyed, and their hopes and ambitions will not materialize. Nevertheless, here in verse 15, Paul was presenting the thought of building on the foundation in an encouraging way. Yes, the Great Company will suffer loss, but as long as they hold to the foundation, they will get life. They must prove their faithfulness in the final analysis as overcomers, not as more-than-overcomers.

Judges 19 is the account of a Levite, whose concubine was abused all night by a multitude of Benjaminites until she died. He found her in the morning where she had crawled and expired with her hands on the threshold. She represents the Great Company class, who hang on to the foundation and get life. The incident is very sad, emotional, and traumatic. The Levite was so overwhelmed that he cut up her body into 12 pieces and sent a piece to each of the tribes to clean out the mess that existed with this type of people. Homosexuality became so pervasive in the tribe of Benjamin that when it was cleaned out by the other tribes, none would have remained in the tribe if the Lord had not intervened.

In another picture, the scapegoat was brought by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness to die (Lev. 16:21,22). In the New Testament, Paul named two individuals of the Great Company (scapegoat) class whom he remanded over to “Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved” (1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Cor. 5:5). Here the fire destroys the flesh and its works—the human nature with its hopes and ambitions—but the individuals do get life. On the one hand, those of the Church lay up treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones in heaven in the present life—the treasures are there on deposit—so that when they die, they inherit the treasures. On the other hand, the treasures of wood, hay, and stubble never get up in heaven, for they are not acceptable. Therefore, when the Great Company die, all their hopes and ambitions, as well as the flesh, are destroyed. Nevertheless, their spirits are saved by being given a resurrection as a secondary spiritual class.

The foundation Rock, Christ, is common to all six categories. However, one must be careful how he builds upon that Rock platform. The one common salvation for all six categories is life. In one class, the works on top of the foundation are transferred to the heavenly realm, and in the other class, the works on top of the foundation are destroyed.

Two basic types of works are built upon the foundation Rock, Christ Jesus. One class builds with combustible materials; the other class builds with relatively noncombustible materials. The fire destroys the wood, hay, and stubble but does not destroy the gold, silver, and precious stones. With regard to the Great Company class, the wood, hay, and stubble, which are burned, do not refer to the soul, or being, of the person. To a certain extent, the faith works, or character, might be damaged or set back for a while, but the soul and the foundation of Christ are not burned. In other words, the fire can burn down the entire superstructure, but it cannot damage the foundation. The person’s relationship to Christ is pictured in the foundation.

The “works” do not refer to building materials. An example is the Apostle Paul, who lost all of his possessions when he was shipwrecked. The Little Flock build a superstructure in heaven, whereas wood, hay, and stubble are not laid up in heaven. In other words, the Great Company do not build a proper superstructure, and when the wood, hay, and stubble are destroyed, only the foundation remains. When those of the Little Flock die, they have spiritual treasures in

reservation for them in heaven. When those of the Great Company die, they have only their souls. Therefore, the fire pertains to the critical point in life, which is either death itself or some other time in a Christian's career when he reaches the point of no return of either making or not making his calling and election sure. When that crisis comes, then whatever a person does from that time on, treasures are there only for the Little Flock. The Little Flock and the Great Company can do *visible* works before public or brethren, but the nature of their character building will not be discerned until the Judgment Day. To a certain extent, we can judge a person by his fruits, but not in the final sense of the ultimate outcome (Matt. 7:16-20). We can certainly judge whether one supports a wrong principle, but we cannot judge his final destiny.

**Comment:** Based on the picture here of combustible materials, one of the failings of the Great Company is not taking a firm stand on certain issues.

**Reply:** Only the Little Flock lay up "treasures" in heaven, and these treasures *abide* because they are of gold, silver, or precious stones.

**1 Cor. 3:16** Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

**1 Cor. 3:17** If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

In verses 16 and 17, Paul used the illustration of a temple edifice. "Know ye [plural] not that ye [plural] are the temple of God." From a certain standpoint in the present age, the Church is likened to the temple of God, in which His Spirit dwells.

"If any man defile [destroy—KJV marginal reference, Greek *phtheiro*] the temple of God, him shall God destroy [Greek *phtheiro*]." Most translations favor the thought of "destroy," which seems to be correct because of the purpose Paul had in mind, of which these illustrations were only subsidiary lessons.

"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Paul was speaking of a *class* here. Just as a temple has *one* base, so the "temple class" (all Christians) have *one* common platform—Christ. The six categories—gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble—are built on *one* foundation (Christ), and the temple class has *one* platform (Christ). Moreover, *individual* stones are built on the one platform into a holy edifice. The Apostle Peter said that Jesus is the chief cornerstone of the temple of God and that the individual temple stones (the Church) are built up into him (1 Pet. 2:5,6). And Paul said here, "Which temple [stones] ye are." However, in verse 17, he was describing those who do not get life because they destroy the *foundation* of the temple. The foundation was being eroded, not just the superstructure.

In this third chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul gave three illustrations:

1. *Soil and planting.* As servants, Paul planted and Apollos watered, but *God* gave the increase, using human instrumentalities to bring about fruitage. Although the Church is responsible to do the work, it is God who supplies the sunshine, the air, the water, and the workers who till the ground. Without His blessing, there would be no fruitage. God supplied the supernatural superior things that Paul and Apollos could not provide and then sent Paul as the master builder and Apollos with the watering can. All are a part of God's arrangement, or providence, with regard to the development of the Church class in the soil. All grow up in *common* ground. The force of Paul's point is clearer in the next two illustrations.

2. *Building upon the one foundation.* Six classes, as represented by gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble, are built on the one foundation. *Diversity of works* is emphasized by the

different materials on the *one* platform. In the first illustration, which was one of agriculture, or ground in which seed was planted and developed into produce, Paul did not categorize the produce as wheat, barley, etc., but simply said God supplies the necessary help for the produce to grow. Thus Paul started out with a *general* lesson of the brethren in Corinth. Originally, there was just ground. Then along came Paul, who planted, putting seed in the ground; that is, he started the ecclesia. Next came Apollos, also of God, as a further blessing to this nucleus class, especially the Jewish element, by bringing new ones into the truth. In addition, Apollos edified and helped the brethren to progress. Accordingly, Paul gave a second illustration, which pertained to building on the one foundation with different materials.

3. *The temple.* To understand this third illustration, we must return to 1 Corinthians 3:9, “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.” The first illustration showed being “labourers together with God.” As “God’s husbandry,” the Corinthians were His cultivated field, or farm, in which produce was grown. Paul was showing the collective aspect in saying, “We [*plural*] are labourers together with God,” “Ye [*plural*] are God’s husbandry,” and “Ye [*plural*] are God’s building.” In other words, *all* of the Corinthian brethren were laborers together, God’s husbandry, and God’s building. They had been using the pronoun “I,” with *each one* thinking he was specially treated of the Lord as an *individual*. “I am of Paul [who is straighter in the truth]” was the attitude. Paul wanted the brethren, if possible, to grow in *unity*. In reality, in the final analysis, there must come divisions, but in the meantime, while they were together in unity, that was their opportunity to learn, feed, grow, and develop. Therefore, Paul was emphasizing the fact that *we* are God’s workmanship. Later the Lord would stir up the nest, adding thorns, so that the exercise of flight would be exhibited.

In the temple, or third, illustration, Paul showed the *collective* work of *one* temple. All are being built into one temple, and if, in God’s sight, any man destroys this temple, God will destroy that individual in Second Death. In other words, defiling the temple has to do with *improperly* destroying the unity. The point is that any division which occurs *must be in harmony with God’s Word*. If division is done not on a proper basis but on the basis of jealousy, a power struggle, or any other wrong motive, then the destroying of what God is putting together incurs a Second Death penalty.

Paul was emphasizing the importance of exercising care in the experiences of life. It is like the responsibility in marriage; namely, whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder. With an ecclesia too, the putting asunder would be a great danger to the individual unless it was done according to what the Lord has expressly instructed. In other words, division is to be done only on the basis of *obedience* to the Word of God. We *obey* the unity because God’s Word *commands* it, but we also *part* when God’s Word *commands* us to do so—and not where we rationalize and make an arbitrary problem. Matthew 18:6 states the principle: “But whoso shall offend [stumble] one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea [for at least he would be resuscitated from the tomb].” Jesus was saying that one who is responsible *in God’s sight* for causing another to abandon his consecration and leave the truth also incurs Second Death. Of course sometimes an individual stumbles himself by his own reaction in failing to take a proper step.

Unity is important, so the issues and experiences in life must be examined. Those who are troublemakers (brambles)—those who have the disposition of criticizing and undermining and bringing forth nothing constructive—are in a dangerous condition. How, then, do we harmonize the fact that Jesus criticized during his entire ministry? *Every* criticism he uttered was a *proper* one, a valuable one, based on the Word of God and its principles. However, criticism done with the wrong motive is disruptive and divisive and stumbles others. Incidentally, “stumbling” does not pertain to offending the feelings of a person; “stumbling” is causing one to go out of the truth. Sometimes it is necessary for feelings to be hurt in order for

the individual to get a lesson.

In review, the three illustrations, in sequence, are planting in common ground, diverse building on one foundation, and being built collectively into one temple. A strategist, a mastermind in his reasoning, Paul was trying to show that the Corinthians should have harmony.

In Rome, the capital of Italy, both Jews and Gentiles were in the same class, but the seat of the Roman Empire was obnoxious to the Jew because of oppression in the land of Israel and forced subserviency to the empire. Moreover, the Gentiles in Rome felt they were superior to the Jews. Corinth, a free-going, busy, influential cosmopolitan commercial center, was a different situation. Through business enterprises and commerce, the city had much wealth, and people could interact in a more liberal fashion than in a provincial area where differences were more pronounced. Thus the problem in Corinth was not a Jew-versus-Gentile situation but temptations through association with the world and pleasure. Of course there were excesses in Rome too, but not so much in the class itself. Hence Paul treated the Corinthian and the Roman ecclesias differently—his messages and approaches were not the same.

**1 Cor. 3:18** Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

A man can “deceive himself” by getting so confident in his relationship to the Lord that he overspeaks, departing from the Lord’s counsel and Word. In speaking his *own* vagaries, he leads others astray.

**Comment:** A dangerous belief is “once in grace, always in grace.” Those with this belief feel they can do anything they want and still be saved.

**Reply:** We believe that those who hold this doctrine and refuse to listen to the Lord’s counsel will receive an extreme penalty. Perhaps, in the final analysis, the number who fail to get life will be equal to those who get life. To make such a statement about grace and completely disregard the Lord’s Word is very serious (Rev. 22:18,19). The Lord calls us by grace, but He does not need us. He shows mercy and kindness by calling us and giving us not only redemption but also the opportunity to run for the prize of the high calling. If, subsequently, we boldly declare the opposite of what the Word of God teaches on a fundamental principle, what remains for us? We must guard against overspeaking.

**1 Cor. 3:19** For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Paul showed earlier that the true wisdom is Jesus Christ. Why now, after completing a moral lesson using three illustrations, did he return to the subject of wisdom? He was again tackling the problem of the Corinthians’ saying, “I am of Paul” and “I am of Apollos.” Some liked Apollos because of his fluency and oratory. Paul was less in appearance, but he had sharp, penetrating wisdom as a logician. Some preferred the outward show, build, looks, and voice of Apollos to the superior wisdom of Paul. Paul was trying to shatter both attitudes by getting the Corinthians to think of the wisdom of God. All should focus on Christ. The class should not be split over the wisdom of two individuals, Paul and Apollos.

**1 Cor. 3:20** And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

**1 Cor. 3:21** Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

**1 Cor. 3:22** Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;



**1 Cor. 3:23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.**

“The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain [empty]. Therefore let no man glory in men.” In other words, “Let no man glory in his own leadership, and let not those who are being led glory in the one who is leading them.” After mentioning the three personalities, Paul spoke on a very high level. He was way up in the stratosphere in his thinking: “Whether ... [it is] the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours [ours].” To a certain extent, we see this principle illustrated. For instance, a person may be poor, but if he has sufficient food for the day, clothing, and a house to sleep in, he can go down the street and enjoy seeing expensive jewelry in a shop window without having to possess it. Seeing the jewelry does not create a reaction of wanting to acquire it. Instead the individual sees the *beauty* around him, including the beauty and wonders of nature. And that was the thinking of the Apostle Paul—he was satisfied. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6) is the principle. One can look contentedly on the goods of this world, appreciating and admiring their beauty, and not have to own them. If the Christian has this attitude, the good things of the world and the beauty of nature are his in the sense that he gets pleasure from seeing them.

These closing thoughts in chapter 3 are so sublime that they merit further consideration. Paul presented a tremendous plateau of thinking: “Do not glory in men, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, for all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” If we recognize that God's providence was manifested in the way we came into the truth, in what He has done for us, in our experiences in life, and in the messengers He has sent, then we will realize He is leading us in every circumstance—even if we have no elder or are forced into isolation, for example. If we realize that God's providence is over all of our experiences—from our calling to the end of our course—this thinking will support us, sustain our hope, and give us an anchor to keep us from going back into the world.

If we have the slant that Paul was presenting, then everything is different. We become observers. We can look in the store windows and enjoy the beauty of all the merchandise but not be enticed by them or feel we have to obtain them. We can view the beauties of nature and not feel we need money to buy a hundred acres to retire in. And to have the submissive attitude of “whether we live or die” is a glorious climax, for it shows we are ready to go if such be the Lord's will. If we live, that is very nice, and if it is our time to die, we meekly accept the situation and see God's hand in it. As we come to that climax of life, we want to, if possible, die with assurance. However, even Jesus had doubts at the very end of his life—and maybe we will too—but doubts are interspersed with encouragements.

In verse 23, not only was Paul emphasizing the (plural) “ye” aspect, as opposed to “I”—“ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's”—but he was bringing the thinking of the Corinthians up to the highest level, to *God Himself*. In comparison, who were Paul, Apollos, and Cephas? Christ is above the others and is the only foundation, but even he said, “The things that I say are not mine, for they originated with the *Father*. What *He* taught me, I am telling you.” The highest credit goes to God as the Husbandman, the One who gives the increase to the things of this life for the spiritual good and development of the Christian.

**1 Cor. 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.**

Verse 1 is based on the reasoning of preceding chapters. Paul had spoken of the class at Corinth as being “yet carnal” and in need of instruction because of their divisions (1 Cor. 3:3). In wanting to bring them up higher, he raised an interesting point here in verse 1. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were the three prime examples used in the earlier lesson (1 Cor. 3:22). Of the three, only Paul and Cephas (Peter) were apostles, yet the brethren were to account all

three as “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Paul could have taken the tack that Apollos was not an apostle, and then the contest would have been between Peter and him. However, Paul did not attempt to judge along that line. Because the Corinthians needed another lesson, he did not say here, “Since I am an apostle, you should listen to me.” With some favoring Paul and others favoring Peter, a personality cult could have developed. To *feed* on admiration for Paul might lead to deprecating Peter, and vice versa. Generally speaking, there would be a danger in thinking more and more favorably of one and less and less favorably of the other. Paul did not want to pursue the issue on this apostolic level, for the higher lesson was to recognize all three as ministers of God and Jesus. Earlier in this epistle, Paul raised the issue to the even higher level that the mysteries are *of God* and by Jesus. At a lower level, the mysteries are by the apostles, and at an even lower level, they are by teachers, prophets, etc. The whole class at Corinth should have had their hearts and minds centered *in God* and looked to *Him* for teaching and guidance in all of their affairs. In the final analysis, the Father does the teaching, and all of the others are His ministers in helping to develop the Church to make their calling and election sure.

Today, whether the brethren know it or not, they tend to idolize Pastor Russell, who was not an apostle. But even if he were an apostle, it would not be proper to say, “Bro. Russell said this” and “Bro. Russell said that.” Paul cautioned the brethren not to say, “I am of Paul,” and then think of only him, for that would be giving him inordinate credit. He was trying to raise their thinking to the highest possible level that the truth is *of God*. Teaching and guidance come through the ministers and mouthpieces *of God*.

Paul commended those of Berea for hearing with all readiness of mind and then searching the Word of God before judging whether these things were so (Acts 17:10,11). He commended them for critically analyzing his teaching, even though he, an apostle, was doing the instructing. The Bereans tried to square Paul’s teachings with *God’s Word*. Thus we should not be concerned about what others may think. We need the *whole* Word of God, including the Old Testament, and should not specialize in just certain books of the Bible. An elder may be blessed with talents along one line, but he should not teach that all Christians are being judged on the level of that specialty.

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were “ministers of Christ”—representatives, messengers, and servants sent by Christ to minister to the spiritual needs of the brethren at Corinth—and they were accountable as “stewards of the mysteries of God.” Down through history, stewards have been on different levels. For example, in Egypt, Joseph was a steward of Potiphar, a high government official. In that capacity, Joseph’s responsibilities were to take care of the estate, make sure food provisions were ample, see that wages were paid to the laborers, and keep a record of revenues and expenditures. A steward in Greece was even responsible for bringing up the children in his master’s family and for obtaining the best tutors for their education. Hence the term “steward” had much more significance in the past than it does today. The point is that stewards have a lot of responsibility, particularly special messengers sent of God, and as a steward, Paul was concerned about the welfare of the Corinthian brethren.

In summary, verse 1 gives the proper perspective: *we are of God*, and *Christ is the wisdom of God to us*. Paul wanted the consecration of the brethren to be based on God and not on personalities, not even an apostle.

**1 Cor. 4:2** Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

In the Church at large, “stewards” are representatives of Christ, but in the highest sense, they are chargeable to God. Therefore, whether or not they will be rewarded for their work would depend on how God measures their performance. It is required of stewards that they be “found *faithful*.” There is always that doubt in the present life, but God and His Word are sure.

We must be careful, for we can fail—and so can others.

**1 Cor. 4:3** But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

For Paul to say, “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you,” suggests that certain members of the ecclesia were judging him. Some judged him favorably, thinking “I am of Paul,” and some judged him unfavorably, putting Apollos or Cephas above him. But Paul was saying, “I will not be a man-pleaser, trying to favor the clique that favors me, for my stewardship is not in this ecclesia at all but is of God.” He was not frightened as to how the brethren in Corinth might judge him, for his salvation and standing were predicated on what God thought of him, not man. Many ministers, wanting to be regarded highly, tickle the ears of their congregation by saying pleasant and comfortable things (2 Tim. 4:3). And brethren sometimes compromise truth and try to speak in between viewpoints in order to attract both the liberal and the conservative elements. In contrast, Paul spoke the plain, unvarnished truth with no animosity or partiality to any of the brethren.

“I judge not mine own self.” Paul was saying, “I have tried to be as faithful as possible, but God will make the determination. I recognize the responsibility of my position, but in the final analysis, the One who sent me will adjudicate as to whether I have been faithful to His Word.”

**Comment:** Paul wrote to Titus, “A bishop [an elder] must be blameless, as the *steward* of God” (Titus 1:7). A list of additional qualifications follows.

**Reply:** The requirements for elders, as stated in Titus and 1 Timothy, are given as guidelines for those in the ecclesia who vote by raising the hand.

With regard to all of the consecrated, the proper opinion is what God thinks of us, not what others think or even what we think of ourselves. Whether we think too highly or too lowly of self, what really matters is God's opinion of us. We should try to be balanced in our assessment of self, but in the final analysis, God will do the judging.

**1 Cor. 4:4** For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

The Revised Standard reads, “I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted [justified]. It is the Lord who judges me [either favorably or unfavorably regardless of what I think].” In other words, “As far as I am concerned, I am innocent of any charges, but in the final analysis, whether or not I am approved is up to God.” Paul was not aware of anything particularly wrong he had done wrong, but he was not justified thereby, for God might think otherwise.

Paul was not trying to justify himself, but he was trying to show he regarded his responsibility very seriously. Therefore, he was trying to be as faithful and as impartial as possible. He would speak as needed and try to rectify the situation in the class so that there would be harmony without any compromise of principle or favoritism to one side or the other. And God would judge him, not the members of the ecclesia.

Paul was taking a neutral position, for God was judging him. Some viewed Paul unfavorably and some favorably, but at the end of the age, God will make manifest, in the *true evaluation*, whom He approves and whom He disapproves.

**1 Cor. 4:5** Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the

**hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.**

“Therefore judge nothing before the time” in the condemnatory or unfavorable sense. With regard to a severe judgment, where one has done evil, Romans 12:19 comes to mind, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Paul was referring to things done in the dark, but we are an open book to God, for He knows the counsel of our hearts. As we try to do His will and please Him, we are at least trying to overcome our evil propensities.

In the dispute between Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, the brethren contended for one above the others. For example, those who contended that Paul gave the best advice favored him and denigrated the others—an improper attitude.

God “will make manifest the counsels of the hearts,” that is, the purposes and motives of the heart. Even though imperfectly expressed or manifested by the deeds of the flesh, the intention could be perfect. Although an onlooker may judge rightly in most cases, there are errors in judgment. One may have thorough approval of God but not thorough approval down here by fellow man or even fellow brethren.

**Comment:** If taken out of context, the admonition to “judge nothing before the time” could be damaging and, therefore, needs to be qualified. We may observe and judge certain things, but we are not to judge final destiny or verdict.

**Reply:** That is right, for later on in the epistle, Paul talked of the type of judging we should do. We may observe certain matters, but we cannot render the verdict.

The caution was not to overjudge, not to “hyperjudge.” For example, all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, and generally speaking, the Lord’s servants have all experienced persecution even by fellow brethren, and thus are judged incorrectly (2 Tim. 3:12).

**Comment:** “Until the Lord come” would be after the marriage, when The Christ is complete and returns to earth’s atmosphere. At that time, every man’s work—that is, the work of the consecrated—will be made apparent, and the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.”

**Reply:** In the Kingdom, it will be seen that the Great Company have nothing commendable on the foundation, no lasting superstructure, and the Little Flock have a palace. Thus the day will make manifest as to who has the house and who does not have the house, as to who gets the “praise of God” and who does not. Paul was not emphasizing Second Death here but was trying to encourage the brethren. He was saying that of the faithful, some are really faithful, and others are a little negligent. He was trying to repair the damage between these two classes.

“Then shall every man have praise of God.” Here Paul was speaking favorably about Apollos, Cephas, and himself. All three were sincere representatives who did a good work along one line or another.

**1 Cor. 4:6** And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Paul was saying, “By purposely speaking in a language you can understand, I am taking the bull by the horns. I am bringing in two personalities, Apollos and myself, to give you a *practical* illustration rather than to talk about a nebulous hypothetical principle. By my speaking about the nitty-gritty situation in the class, you should be able to judge it.”

**Comment:** The RSV reads, “I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brethren, that you may learn by us to live according to scripture, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.”

Worldly wisdom would say to attack the proponents of error, but instead of speaking about the particular personalities in the class, Paul intentionally made Apollos, Cephas, and himself the objects of attention. What a wise method to avoid stirring up antagonisms among the various divisions in the class! Paul did not talk about the special credentials the class attributed to Apollos, Cephas, and himself but simply said, “I planted, Apollos watered, and God gives the increase.” Here he gave no further details and avoided other personalities in the class. (Later, however, Paul had to mention personalities because some persisted in opposition.)

“That ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” Being “puffed up for one against another” is the principle that being for one person is usually at the expense of someone else. Moreover, Paul gave the admonition “not to think of men above that which is written.” There are differences of honor: God first, His Word second, Jesus Christ third, the apostles fourth, the messengers to the Church fifth, and then prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11). Paul was now trying to show that he was an apostle, not just a member of the class who was doing a lot of talking and criticizing. The various ones were “puffed up” and forgetting certain things that he would subsequently call attention to and strike a raw nerve.

**1 Cor. 4:7** For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

The puffed-up leaders were taking sides for or against another individual with the result that cliques were developing. Paul used himself to show that such judgment was wrong. He was coming down to their level and talking plainly about the realities of the situation, for he wanted them to see the need for unity in the one common salvation.

Not only did leaders get the Corinthians to take sides initially, but swaying the brethren to think their way might have been just an expediency for subsequently forgetting Paul, Apollos, and/or whoever the personality was and assuming improper leadership themselves. In other words, the leaders used the favoring of Paul, Apollos, etc., as a platform to advance *themselves*. This same spirit led to the development of the clergy. Instead there should have been common communication and understanding, based on God’s providence and Jesus Christ, that others, including the apostles, are just ministers.

The same principle applies to Bro. Russell’s teaching. Some could say, “We want to set the spiritual food in order and have a nice clean table.” But who would decide what is the clean provender to be used? Even the Pastor did not set up a platform on the reign, the smiting of the image, and the Church’s share in the sin offering because they are not proper criteria for an ecclesia basis. Teachers are another matter, however, for the brethren elect the teachers. If the level of the brethren is lower, then the quality of the leadership is lower. As the brethren develop, they should expect better leaders so that they do not stagnate on that level.

**Comment:** An Old Testament example is Korah’s rebellion. When Korah magnified himself as a leader, Aaron’s rod budded to show whom God favored for leadership.

**Reply:** The democratic principle was ostensibly being used to grasp improper leadership.

Paul had brought the message of truth to Corinth, and this message was *miraculous*. When Jesus asked, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not

revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:15-17). In other words, “You were called out of darkness into this favorable light because of God’s providence in coming your way and drawing you.” Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father ... [first] draw him” (John 6:44).

Paul had introduced the gospel of the crucified Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, in Corinth and was steadfast under the most severe conditions. Observers knew he was convinced of what he was teaching, and holding fast cost him a lot. Even Crispus, ruler of the synagogue, was converted by the power of the message. Paul was saying, “You have forgotten that all of you got the truth through my ministry, and now some of you are preaching as if you are apostles.” Some from Corinth happened to be in Israel during Jesus’ First Advent, and because they had personally seen and heard him—even though they were not converted then—they later claimed to be apostles and felt Paul was not an apostle. However, Paul not only heard Jesus’ voice and saw him but saw him in a way nobody else did—as one “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). The Corinthians had to be acquainted with the facts.

“Why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Due recognition is to be given to the one whom God or Jesus used to bring us into the truth—unless, of course, that individual goes astray.

**1 Cor. 4:8** Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

Paul used constructive sarcasm in speaking of the attitude of the Corinthians—their boastings, their pride, their glory. They felt that they did not need anyone and that they were on their own, whereas there was much they still needed to learn, especially from an apostle. Paul said in effect, “Even now *you* are reigning as kings, yet at this present hour, *we* are having the opposite experience.” They thought that they were “full” and “rich” and at the mark of perfect love, and that now they could sit back on their laurels as mature Christians.

**Comment:** Verse 8 is similar to the message to the Laodicean period of the Church (Rev. 3:17).

**Reply:** Yes, much of the wording is the same. “You think you are rich, but you are poor. You think you are clothed, but you are naked. You think you can see, but you need ointment to make you see.”

**Comment:** To say we have “the truth” is a way of saying we are rich.

**Reply:** Although Jesus’ criticism of Laodicea applies to the nominal Church, the spirit of nominalism can creep into our midst with the attitude that we have everything we need through the Pastor’s writings. Jesus said, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1 Kings 20:11). We must not be satisfied, feel we have secured the crown, or think we can enjoy the fruits of victory and do not need the armor anymore.

Verse 8 also shows, in a secondary lesson, that when the reign of Christ begins, the true Church will be with him. Accordingly, Paul was saying that if the Corinthians were reigning, he would be reigning too, but how could that be when he was having persecuting experiences? Paul had to draw attention to himself and to others like him in order to get his point across.

**Comment:** There must have been a lot of worldliness in the Corinthian church, since the brethren were not being persecuted for their beliefs.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true. The brethren were prosperous, for Corinth, a wealthy urban center,

was on the mercantile route with a lot of traffic.

**1 Cor. 4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.**

“God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death.” The doctrine, character, and lives of the apostles gave the brethren a “manual” on how to put the gospel into practice. They demonstrated that the Christian life entails suffering privation, persecution, etc.

With regard to being “appointed to death,” being set forth last for destruction, Paul used an illustration of a practice in those days when Rome was the ascendant power. The Romans built amphitheatres, or stadiums, in many of the prominent cities for theatrical purposes and gladiatorial contests. The contests early in the day were between professional gladiators, who had a means of protecting themselves. The gladiator who won received honors, and the one who lost died. The contests could be long or short depending on the skill of the gladiators. As the day proceeded, the contests became more and more vicious. Next, the gladiators were not given anything to protect themselves, and they were even put in the arena naked and given knives or spears to fight among themselves. The blood from every wound that was received could be seen by the cheering crowd. Then, to fill up the day with entertainment, imprisoned Christians were forced into the gladiatorial ring against overwhelming and hopeless odds of hungry lions, for example. These Christians, who were doomed for death, satisfied the lust of the crowd. And if Christians were pitted against each other to see if one would break his principle by murdering the other, the victor was turned over to the lions anyway. Meanwhile, the spectators ridiculed the hapless victims. These practices show that wrong doctrines and philosophies are like drugs and intoxicants when imbibed inordinately. By feeding on these doctrines, the adherents became increasingly sadistic. In rare cases, a gladiator was successful for a number of years, until he was advanced in age; then the public felt he should be honored, acclaimed by the ruler, released, and given money for “retirement.”

Paul used this illustration of gladiators from the standpoint of the spectators who watched the contests; that is, the life, doctrine, and death of the apostles were of instructional value to both men and angels. The apostles all died violently (like Christians in the ring with lions) and did not budge from their faith. They were all condemned in the sense that they would die anyway, being “appointed [un]to death.”

While men (the public) and angels needed to consider the lives of the apostles, Paul saw that the Corinthian class needed these lessons as well. Some in the class were not being persecuted but were honorable, well esteemed, and affluent, while the apostles, who were having the opposite experience, were examples of how to carry out Christian living. The Corinthians should have analyzed the situation to see that persecution and suffering were proper for a Christian and proof of his faithfulness. A Christian should not be esteemed for his knowledge and lack of persecution.

“For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” In several translations and also in the King James margin, the word “spectacle” is “theater.” The apostles were a spectacle in the sense of an *amphitheater*, as explained above. Therefore, Paul was saying, “Your standing with Christ is based on the principle that if you suffer with him, you will reign with him.” We live in a very unusual day, for Christians 250 years ago had to pay a price just to be a Christian. To not be a Catholic was to be a heretic. One’s life was in jeopardy because he did not know from one day to the next when the end would come. Today’s libertine society is one of “love,” in which doctrinal differences and principles do not matter, generally speaking. But conditions will change in the coming church-state hour of power (Rev. 17:12).

**Comment:** Romans 8:36 reads, “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we

are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

**1 Cor. 4:10 We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.**

Verse 10 is sarcasm. Some of the Corinthians thought they were “wise in Christ”; that is, they had a high opinion of their interpretation of principles, and they thought they had excellent understanding.

Not only will Paul be rewarded for his suffering with Christ, but he will occupy a high place in the Little Flock. He was trying to show that faithfulness to Christ and God is not a popularity contest, which it was with the Greeks. The Greeks honored the orators, who were put on a pedestal and almost worshipped because of their eloquence—and not because of suffering for righteousness’ sake. The Greeks looked for wisdom, and the Jews were stumbled by the Cross.

**1 Cor. 4:11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;**

**1 Cor. 4:12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:**

**1 Cor. 4:13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.**

“Even unto this present hour” when Paul was writing this epistle to the Corinthians, the apostles hungered, thirsted, were naked, were buffeted, had no certain dwelling place, labored, were reviled, were persecuted, were defamed, and were made as the filth of the world. If the apostles had not been examples of suffering, it is possible that Christians could have read the Gospels and concluded that Jesus did all the suffering for us.

Notice the contrast. “Being defamed, we entreat.” The apostles exhorted and entreated on ordinary life principles, whereas some of the Corinthians *commanded*. For example, “I beseech you, brethren” (1 Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; 2 Cor. 10:1). Of course Paul was talking along general lines, for later he had to command with regard to a very serious matter.

**1 Cor. 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.**

“I write not these things to shame you.” On other occasions, Paul did use shame as a tool. For example, Paul used shame and sarcasm when he asked, “Do you have to go into court brother against brother? You are called to be the judges of the world, yet you cannot judge even the smallest matter. Must you go to court before the unconsecrated instead of trying to settle the matter among the brethren?” (1 Cor. 6:1,2 paraphrase). But here in verse 14, Paul’s purpose was to admonish, not shame, because he wanted the Corinthians to receive a lesson and thus change their conduct and policy in life. He was warning against teachers who gloried in their own sense of importance, even above the apostles. Instead of feeling it was necessary for the Christian to suffer, these teachers gloried in their love, generosity of spirit, and oratorical ability. They felt rich and satisfied. However, Paul taught otherwise, and he was warning of the danger of the doctrine that the reign had already begun. He reasoned that the reign could not begin while the Church was still in the flesh. Incidentally, the issue of the reign is with us today, and how we view it has a bearing on other related truths.

**1 Cor. 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.**



**1 Cor. 4:16** Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Because of their knowledge, the brethren in Corinth had an inflated view of their position with God, but Paul was more knowledgeable in correct doctrine than they were. And Paul sacrificed for and instructed them in love *as a father*. The Corinthians had only one “father,” for he had started the class. Paul applied the term “father” in a modified sense, for *God* had used him to found that particular ecclesia in Christ Jesus through the message of the gospel.

Paul said the Corinthians had “ten thousand instructors.” In reality, they may have had 20 or 30, but he purposely exaggerated the situation to get his point across.

**Q:** Since Jesus said in Matthew 23:9, “Call no man your father upon the earth,” how do we harmonize Paul’s statement here?

**A:** Paul’s *being* a father is a lot different from *being called* “Father.” Paul certainly did not want the title. “Pope,” meaning “father of fathers,” is especially obnoxious. “Pope John” and “Father O’Brien,” for example, are forbidden titles, and individuals accepting them are showing off in order to get the admiration and support of others. The Corinthian teachers were puffed up with “vainglory,” whereas Paul was willing to suffer anything for Christ (Phil. 2:3). Paul was using the term “father” in an *emotional* sense in that he was interested in the spiritual welfare of the brethren, their destiny. He humiliated himself in some cases in order to exhort them as a concerned parent would his own children. The biggest title Paul used was “apostle,” which means in Greek “one sent out” by Jesus.

**Comment:** Paul called Timothy “my own son,” and he travailed over his “little children” (1 Tim. 1:2; Gal. 4:19).

**Comment:** Paul was concerned for the spiritual welfare of the brethren, whereas the others were not. The same principle was stated by Jesus in John 10:13, “The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”

**Reply:** Yes, the motive is very important.

“Wherefore [because God used me to introduce the truth to you] I beseech you, be ye followers [imitators] of me.” In other words, “Listen to what I am saying and observe my behavior because this other teaching is not only wrong but also dangerous. I am warning you.” Paul’s teaching and conduct were scriptural, whereas others were leading astray. Based on the Greek, “imitators” is the preferable translation. The brethren were to gain lessons from noticing Paul’s behavior.

**1 Cor. 4:17** For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

Timothy would bring the Corinthians into remembrance of Paul’s ways, which were in Christ and taught “in every church.” In other words, Timothy would remind the brethren of Paul’s instruction and doctrine, which were consistent.

**1 Cor. 4:18** Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

**1 Cor. 4:19** But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

Imagine if Paul came to the Corinthians in power! He warned that he would come to them

later and manifest his power, if need be, to correct them. There are times when admonition is necessary and not brotherly kindness in the sense of sweet talk. (Sometimes tact and sweetness are more effective, and at other times, they are not.) Here Paul did not intend to reason and debate with the brethren. The issue was serious, and it needed to be terminated quickly one way or the other. Thus there are times when it is not advisable to delve into a subject to try to straighten out someone.

**1 Cor. 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.**

**1 Cor. 4:21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?**

Since knowledge and clarity in the truth are important, why did Paul say, “For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”? The strength and spirit of God must be behind the words; otherwise, they are empty. Those teachers in the class who were given to oratory and drawing elaborate pictures without the spirit or power of God and without suffering experiences in their lives were speaking without substance. They were following a course of emptiness.

What Paul meant in verse 20 was, “The kingdom of God is not in word [*merely*], but [*is also*] in power.” For example, Peter was sent to Cornelius with the “word” that Jesus is the Messiah. The “kingdom of God” is not just in word, for it has *power*. When Paul came to the Corinthians the next time, he would use his apostolic power as a “rod,” if necessary. In other words, if the Corinthians received his admonition, Paul would come to them in “love, and ... meekness.” Otherwise, he would have to come with a rod. An example of a rod on other occasions was when Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead or when Paul struck Elymas with blindness (Acts 5:1-10; 13:8-11).

The Corinthians did not think Paul would come back to Corinth because certain providential happenings delayed his visit. However, he did eventually go, as related in the Book of Acts. The Corinthians attached different motives to his not coming earlier, as will be seen in later chapters of this epistle.

In summary, in chapter 4, Paul gloried in his sufferings for Christ. He tried to say that since such sufferings do not bring wealth, fame, or health, those who suffer for Christ must have some other ulterior, superior motive than self-aggrandizement. Thus the sincerity of professed Christians can be seen to a certain extent by analyzing their lifestyle. Paul was saying to the brethren in Corinth, “Look at those who are doing all the talking and are so popular. Who are they? They are nobodies because they are living like kings and not suffering for Christ.” Paul was using sanctified common sense and speaking in a very earnest, open way. He did not glorify himself but said that *God* gives the increase. Yes, he planted and Apollos watered, but *God* gives the increase—and all are to be accountable to Him as stewards.

**Comment:** Verse 20 helps on the subject of the reign. “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” Many say Jesus is reigning, but when that happens, it will be with *power*.

**1 Cor. 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.**

Paul now, in chapter 5, began to talk about a specific problem in the Corinthian church: fornication. The epistle is subdivided into various topics. The sixth chapter begins with a question about how to resolve disputes among the saints: “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” And chapter 7 is Paul’s reply to a question about relations between a husband and a wife. Should the consecrated live a life of chastity, even though they are married? Paul had a list of about ten questions, and this

first epistle consists of his reasoning on specific issues the Corinthians were wrestling with. The consciences of some brethren were unnecessarily troubled on matters that should not have been a problem. With others, their consciences were insensitive on matters that should have troubled them.

“It is reported commonly.” Paul used a similar expression in 1 Corinthians 1:11 about the house of Chloe: “For it hath been declared unto me ... by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” While it was reported to Paul that the brethren were saying, “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” etc., he identified the source of his information. It is sometimes necessary to name the source of a report so that it can be either verified or disannulled. When a report is too fragmented, the source does not have to be revealed, but where sufficient specific information is reported, it can be important to reveal the source.

With regard to a blatant error in conduct, the scriptural advice or principle is that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16). Since Paul was not in Corinth to witness the immorality firsthand, it was important for him to state that many witnesses could testify about the truthfulness of the report. Notice that here in chapter 5, Paul did not say that the information was reported by the house of Chloe but that the situation was *commonly* known. Hence it was not necessary for Paul to divulge the source because there were *multiple* sources.

“Such fornication ... is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have [relations, or intercourse, with] his father’s wife.” The term “father’s wife” could refer to a stepmother or a mother-in-law relationship, as well as to one’s actual mother. Under the Law in the Old Testament, the term “father’s wife” covered all three possibilities, and in all three cases, the sin was equally atrocious (Lev. 18:8; 20:11,14). However, the assumption here is that the woman was a stepmother.

Corinth was known as a licentious city, as was Ephesus. The wording of verse 1 suggests there were other sins in the ecclesia besides this particular incident, but this type of fornication exceeded them all. Paul zeroed in on this gross sin as being an indicator of the condition of the church at Corinth.

A question that might arise is, Was the father alive or deceased at the time of the fornication? A clue that the father was still alive is in the next epistle, where the incident was spoken of again a year or two later. “Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, *nor for his cause that suffered wrong*, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you” (2 Cor. 7:12). In other words, the shame that was incurred in the class fell also upon the father. With the father being alive, the sin of the son with his stepmother was even more horrendous. And the son was still in the ecclesia.

**Comment:** Since the account deals with the son, not the woman, she probably was not a Christian.

**Reply:** That is correct. She was not consecrated; otherwise, the advice would have applied to her as well. Also, Paul did not discuss whether one party was primarily responsible or whether both were equally responsible.

**1 Cor. 5:2** And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Verse 2 is almost as startling as verse 1. Not only was the individual who had done this deed still in the ecclesia attending meetings, but the brethren were not mourning over the situation. In fact, not only were they not mourning, but they were doing the opposite—they were

*glorying in their magnanimity, their supposed love, for the fornicator (verse 6). By having the individual in their midst, they felt they were being very merciful, understanding, and forgiving, but they were being more loving than God.*

With the dispute going on in the ecclesia about who was most effective as a teacher and instructor of the Word, this morality problem was being neglected. The dispute about teachers was more along doctrinal lines, and of course doctrine is very important. However, there are degrees of importance, and doctrinal differences can be tolerated if they are not fundamental and do not violate principle. To give in on principle erodes conscience and firmness of character. In summary, then, the Corinthians were having back-and-forth arguments about Paul, Apollos, and Cephas and ignoring the immorality. Doctrines, principles, and moral behavior need to be considered in order for us to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Not knowing the difference between right and wrong will affect our moral behavior and conduct, so that type of doctrine is of primary importance. The Bible is approximately one-third history, one-third prophecy, and one-third moral behavior. All are important in understanding the mind of God.

**Comment:** Ephesians 5:3 reads, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”

**Reply:** Yes, and notice, “Let it [any of these sins] not be once named among you [from the standpoint of the public’s seeing a class tolerate the sin].” When a sin is publicly known, when it gets out into the public domain, a class is responsible for putting the transgressor out, at least for a time, from the presence of the brethren.

**Comment:** The word “mourned” is usually associated with death. And gross sin is sure death when a class does not act in the hope of saving the sinner’s life.

**Reply:** Yes, if the class fails to act, the transgressor continues to enjoy the fellowship instead of repenting. And in this case, where a son had relations with his father’s wife, even the heathen, who did not profess Christianity, would have been appalled.

Incidentally, the term “puffed up” was used in the previous chapter to indicate overconfidence in understanding—in words, thinking, and doctrine (1 Cor. 4:18). Based on that overconfidence, the brethren were reigning as kings, affluent, satisfied, and at ease, and they did not believe in the doctrine of suffering. Here in chapter 5, they were “puffed up” in the sense of *false* generosity, love, and mercy, imagining that their reasoning was superior to the plain statements of Scripture.

**Comment:** “That he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.” The individual was to be put out of the class and not just deprived of the privilege of sitting at the same table to eat spiritual food with the brethren. Many incorrectly feel that such an individual should simply be denied the privilege of fellowshiping in the fullest sense but that he can continue to attend meetings.

**Reply:** There should be no association whatever. The context later on will show that the separation should be both spiritually and physically.

Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians prior to this epistle. Although there is no record of the earlier letter, we indirectly get the gist of the contents by reading this letter. Among other things, Paul had mentioned his intention to visit the class at Corinth. No doubt the brethren had in mind some of the things that had happened with the authority of Paul and Peter. For example, when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the brethren and to the apostles about the distribution of their goods, they dropped dead, first the one and then the other (Acts 5:1-11). In

another incident, Elymas, a sorcerer on the isle of Paphos, was struck blind for trying to negate the preaching of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:6-11).

As a representative of Jesus Christ and a steward of God's gifts, Paul felt a personal responsibility. He had promised to return to Corinth, but at the time of this epistle, he had not yet arrived. Therefore, the brethren might have thought they could continue in their ways. Also, they would have heard about some of his difficulties and persecutions, such as being stoned and being beaten with 39 stripes. And by this time, some may have thought Paul would not return at all.

Incidentally, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still given today but in such a subtle way that sometimes the recipient is unaware, yet others can discern the gift. An attitude of "esteem[ing] other[s] better than themselves" is helpful for the new creature (Phil. 2:3). By considering what other individuals have overcome and their uplifting qualities, we will see how an individual is superior to us in a certain direction. Mutual respect for one another and remembering that God has called all of the brethren help to keep us humble and level-minded.

**1 Cor. 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,**

Verse 3 is saying that the matter was not to be parleyed over, for it was a clear-cut case. Paul could judge without being physically present, for it was obvious how the matter should be handled. Concerned that the class had done nothing, Paul had determined already that the fornicator should be barred from fellowship.

Paul was "present in spirit"; that is, although he was physically separated from the Corinthians, he was very much concerned and involved as if he were present with them, for he had judged the matter already.

**1 Cor. 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

The matter was so urgent that Paul was telling them to immediately, at the first opportunity, remove the individual from their midst and not wait for the end-of-the-year business meeting, for example. Some brethren are so unreasonable in their ideas of decorum that they feel one cannot resign as an elder until the end of the term, the next election. Paul was saying, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are next gathered together—that is, at the first opportunity—resolve this matter. You have to make a decision. You can use my letter and my thinking on this subject—you can use my endorsement—to put away the individual from your midst. And what I am saying harmonizes with Jesus' instruction." From a doctrinal standpoint, the Corinthians had to take a stand and thus act with finality. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" indicates that Paul's advice was a *commandment to be obeyed*.

Paul was telling the class to *vocalize* the excommunication by saying in effect, "In the name and power of the Lord Jesus Christ and with my consent." The excommunication was not to be done in meekness and weakness. The same is true in rebuking Satan in a trial of, say, materialization. He should be rebuked *with authority* in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Comment:** Rebuking in a group—when the ecclesia is gathered together—has more effect.

**1 Cor. 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

The fornicator was to be delivered "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh," so that,

hopefully, if rightfully exercised, the individual would receive a resurrection. If he was banished and came to his senses, if he repented and had remorse, and then did a thorough about-face, there was a strong possibility he would be recovered and get a resurrection (probably in the Great Company) “in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Verse 5 harmonizes with the picture in Leviticus 16 of the scapegoat, which was not part of the sin offering. Therefore, Paul was saying that if such a one were saved, it would be to the Great Company class. Although *individuals* of the Great Company class have lived all down the Gospel Age, the scapegoat is a *collective end-of-the-age* dispensational picture. The Great Company will go into the great Time of Trouble to wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). The same individual-versus-collective principle also applies to the Little Flock. The Church, the body of Christ, is not yet complete, but *individuals* have made their calling and election sure all down the age, and the sleeping saints were raised in 1878. Then, at the end of the age, the feet members will die *collectively*, as a class, before the great Time of Trouble.

Of course the Corinthians would not have fully understood this verse, but Paul knew what he was saying. Later, when he explained in the next epistle, his statement here made sense. For now, he was just giving his advice up front. The purpose of his rebuke was really to shock the individual into a sense of the enormity of what had happened and the necessity for remorse, repentance, and a change of conduct. Merely saying, “I am sorry,” was not sufficient. However, if the person who commits such grievous sin is crushed and the tears are streaming down, such an apology at least shows that the severity of the situation has registered. Then what has happened must be weighed. If the individual is properly motivated and he is excluded from fellowship with the brethren, the hope is that he will feel the loss so keenly in contrast with his experiences, in which the devil seems to be getting more and more power over him, that he will truly repent. Another factor leading to true repentance is that the doors may close when he goes to the Lord in prayer.

The purpose of excommunication is to bring the person to the recognition of what he has done and the need for reformation—not just to say, “I am sorry,” but to take corrective steps. However, Paul did not give an explanation at this time but merely said to deliver the individual to Satan for the “destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved.” In other words, Paul had the right motive in not comforting and embracing the individual in the short term, for doing so would have jeopardized that person’s eternal future. No, the individual had to feel the loss. *Long-term salvation* is of extreme importance in considering the welfare of another individual.

**1 Cor. 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?**

“Your glorying [in being so magnanimous and forgiving] is not good.” Of course the Corinthians did not glory in the individual’s taking his father’s wife. Rather, the glorying was in their forgiving attitude, in having so much love in their hearts that they could forgive that individual. Thus they were glorying in *themselves*—not in the deed but in their tolerance of and spirit toward the deed. The *Diaglott* has “boasting” instead of “glorying.”

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” because it lowers the standard of the group. Since a little leaven leavens the whole lump, if a class does not want to be leavened, the brethren will have to remove the leaven from the lump, from their association. *Compromise with evil* adversely affects *everyone* in the ecclesia. Paul was trying to awaken the class to the sense that if leaven was put into the lump and they did not expect that lump to become leavened as a result, they were going contrary to all reasoning. Thus he was saying, “Your reasoning is not sound because a little leaven in a lump leavens the whole.” He used common sense with a simple truth and illustration to awaken the Corinthian brethren to see that with all of their

philosophizing, their reasoning was wrong. Incidentally, it takes only a little leaven, or yeast, to make the dough rise. Thus the leaven has a far-reaching effect.

**1 Cor. 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:**

“Old leaven” is the sin of lust that Satan has always used as a tool. The Christian must keep the *flesh* under (1 Cor. 9:27). In different ages of past history, high levels of democracy and intellectuality were reached in various fields including music and art, but Satan has always been successful in the field of the flesh. The lust of the flesh is a weakness upon all people to a greater or lesser extent; it is an *old* temptation.

“Old leaven” can also be expressed as the old man, the old nature. Before one becomes a Christian, he has certain propensities that are catered to along various lines. Perhaps a hundred different paths that the old man takes are not profitable from the standpoint of spiritual (Christian) development.

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.” The Church is supposed to be pure, unleavened. The only way the Corinthian church could be pure was to purge out the individual who had committed fornication.

Paul was bringing in the Passover picture here. When he wrote this letter, he was at Ephesus, and he said he would stay there until Pentecost, which was seven weeks after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, Paul was talking about something that was about to happen: the Passover. Subsequently, down through history, Christians who had the proper understanding of the Passover remembered Jesus’ death annually, one day each year. For the Jews to keep the Passover satisfactorily, it was mandatory for them to purge out the leaven. Accordingly, near the end of Jesus’ ministry, the narrative mentions “the first day of unleavened bread” (Mark 14:12). Now Paul was drawing the lesson that just as the Jew back there, in order to keep the Passover satisfactorily, had to purge out the leaven, so the Christian, in order to keep the Memorial satisfactorily, the remembrance of Jesus’ death, had to purge out the antitypical leaven of uncleanness—malice, wickedness, etc. In other words, Paul was taking a convenient theme of the hour, as it were, and showing how it pertained to the very problem of the uncleanness of this individual in the class at Corinth.

“For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” This last part of verse 7 should really be incorporated with verse 8 to complete the thought: “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” This text is usually studied in conjunction with the annual observance of the Memorial. The brotherhood are urged to make preparation for the Memorial by purging out the old leaven so that they can partake of the emblems in the proper fashion. However, Paul’s main point here pertained to something that is necessary to observe throughout the *entire* year. Prior to Pentecost, Christ laid down his life as a Ransom for all (Christ our passover was sacrificed for us—past tense). What Jesus did for us is already accomplished. Paul was emphasizing that the slaying and eating of the Passover lamb in the type preceded the seven-day observance of eating unleavened bread. In antitype, the seven days correspond to the seven periods, or epochs, of the development of the Church in the Gospel Age. Therefore, from Pentecost through the present time is represented by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In other words, the purging out of the old leaven so that the lump will be holy occurs throughout the *whole* Gospel Age. When Paul said, “Let us keep the feast,” he was not talking about the literal slaying of the Passover lamb but about the *seven-day feast that followed*—the Gospel Age.

**1 Cor. 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with [1] old leaven, neither with [2] the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of [1] sincerity and [2] truth.” In other words, Paul gave two aspects of “leavened bread” and two aspects of “unleavened bread,” as follows:

Leavened Bread

1. Old leaven (lust, impure intentions)
2. Malice and wickedness

Unleavened Bread

1. Sincerity (of motives)
2. Truth (in deeds and conduct)

Paul was contrasting “old leaven” (impurity of intention) with “sincerity” (honesty, purity of intention, being without hypocrisy). And he was contrasting the spirit of “malice and wickedness” with “truth” (being without malice). When we see the shortcomings of others, we should make *scriptural* allowances for their weaknesses. Stated another way, the Corinthians were to develop brotherly kindness, gentleness, and the other fruits of the Spirit, but they were not to treat the fornicator with mercy, forgiveness, and tolerance, for the nature of the deed demanded more radical treatment. The Christian is to purge out the spirit of malice and wickedness against another and to have the spirit of hoping for his eternal salvation.

“Therefore let us keep the feast.” In referring back to the Feast of Passover in the type, Paul was telling the Christian to keep the antitypical “feast,” that is, the Gospel Age, in sincerity and truth. Just as the Feast of Passover lasted for seven days in the type, so the antitypical feast has seven stages of development (Rev. 1:20).

In the next letter, Paul said that the disfellowshipped individual had repented and suffered enough, so the Corinthians were to receive him back into their fellowship. If they had retained indefinitely the spirit of separateness (or even malice) under those conditions, the individual would never have been recovered. That man sorrowed over his banishment; in fact, he sorrowed so much that Paul said he was in danger of giving up everything, perhaps even committing suicide (2 Cor. 2:7). After he repented, Paul said in effect, “He has suffered enough. Receive him back into your company.”

Therefore, having not the spirit of malice and wickedness means that we hold in reservation a *hope* of recovery for an individual. That hope should be in our hearts at all times lest we ourselves become tainted with a character flaw. Purity is first, but *scriptural* forgiveness is second. The Corinthians had to purge out the leavened individual from the ecclesia, but they were not to retain a spirit of bitterness toward him. Otherwise, the individual would have no recovery, and the Corinthians themselves would be lacking in true love. If they did not have malice and wickedness in their hearts, they were in a position to later forgive the individual based on scriptural truth. This connected reasoning explains why Paul introduced the statements “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with ... malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The “old leaven” pertained to the individual’s sins of sensuality, which required him to be purged out, but there was hope for recovery. We must guard against becoming so puritanical in our dealings with others that we have no forgiveness. We should have a spirit of readiness to receive back based on repentance.

**Comment:** 1 John 5:16 tells us that after a certain point, we should no longer pray for an individual: “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” Nevertheless, our hearts should always hope for recovery. There is a fine balance in keeping our hearts right.

**Q:** What should be our attitude toward those brethren who tolerate the leaven and do not purge out the individual?

**A:** If the class will not act properly and purge out the leaven, then we, as *individuals*, have to



leave the class. There is an individual responsibility to leave lest we become leavened.

**Q:** What, then, should be our attitude toward brethren who are disobedient to God's Word and remain in the class with the leaven? How should we treat them at a convention, for example?

**A:** If we apply the principle Paul used here—that the individual had to manifest repentance in order to be reclaimed—then the class, those who were less directly involved, would have to do the same thing. A measure of reserve should continue to be exercised indefinitely, until the principle is recognized. Otherwise, the prior reserve would be forgotten, and the brethren would think we had made a mistake in our earlier judgment. To go through such an experience is a very hard trial. In this case, the class at Corinth took the Apostle Paul's advice, but he certainly had to threaten them. If Paul had just tried to reason doctrinally and softly, it is unlikely that the Corinthians would have obeyed. But Paul's using his *authority* to speak sternly and to *command* them in the name of the *Lord Jesus Christ* worked effectively. And of course even sterner attitudes should be directed toward those who actually commit the grievous sin. Incidentally, sometimes God's providence causes certain things to happen in a relatively harsh way in order to preserve the ultimate hope of the individual.

It is a fact that a person cannot properly judge things that are higher than his own level. Therefore, if we do not reason on certain principles and truths, we will not be able to make proper decisions. We must see *God's* reasoning in any matter.

**1 Cor. 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:**

Verse 9 shows that Paul wrote an earlier letter to the church at Corinth. We have no record of that letter except to know that he had given advice on the subject of not "to company" with fornicators. With Corinth being a sin city, such a warning was necessary. Just to live and earn a living in that city meant fraternization to a certain extent with others and consequent contamination unless the brethren were very careful in their conduct. Obviously, however, Paul's advice was not followed, so now he spoke *strongly* and *commanded* obedience in not keeping fornicators in the class. The fact that the first letter was not preserved shows that the Lord put his stamp of approval on this *stronger* advice. Evidently, Paul first treated the subject in a genteel manner, giving the Corinthians the benefit of his knowledge and experience, but that approach did not work. Now he bluntly told them what to do.

Paul wrote the earlier letter because he could see the danger of contamination with so much gross sin in Corinth. Not only did he have a lot of savvy to anticipate this situation, but also he had high spiritual perception. But, alas, how easily Christians can forget scriptural advice they are given! Even though Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the advice did not sink in.

And there is another point. When Paul's earlier letter arrived in Corinth, how was it presented to the class? Probably an elder read it, but suppose he did not have a powerful voice or brethren were not paying close attention. If that letter was like this First Epistle to the Corinthians, which consists of 16 chapters, the comprehension of those listening was affected by the manner of the reading—for example, if it was read without the proper emphasis. And if the letter was passed around, some of the brethren might have held it too long, and the weeks kept elapsing. Thus there may have been some carelessness in the way Paul's instruction was given to the brethren. In any event, all we know is that the Apostle Paul wrote an earlier letter warning the Corinthians not to keep company with fornicators.

Verse 9 applies both inside and outside the ecclesia arrangement. One is not to company with a "brother" who is a fornicator—period. If we were close to a brother or sister, it would be very logical to invite the individual to dinner outside the ecclesia, but that was not to be done in this case. Certainly if we took such a drastic action outside the ecclesia, we could not eat with the

individual at an ecclesia meeting or at a convention, for it would be inconsistent to reverse the rule.

**Comment:** The action is to be taken with the express purpose of helping the sinner to recognize his sin and repent so that he can be received back. If the sinner is constantly included in fellowship and studies, he will not come to the understanding that the sin he has committed will bar him from fellowship with Christ. In fact, he may go into Second Death. To not disfellowship such a one, and thus encourage him in a wrong path, deprives him of an opportunity for a spiritual life.

**Reply:** While the disfellowshipping applies outside the class as well, Paul was showing that the disfellowshipping comes right into the class: “that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor. 5:2). When the sin is this serious, the ecclesia becomes responsible for taking a drastic action.

**1 Cor. 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.**

When Paul advised the church at Corinth not to company with fornicators, etc., he meant those who were Spirit-begotten. Of course we do not seek such company in the world, but sometimes the association is unavoidable. For example, a merchant or a worker in a large company may be forced into such a situation. If we draw the line too finely with regard to the unconsecrated, we might as well live in a monastery or in the desert. It is impossible to go through life without being confronted with this problem.

Paul was contrasting fornication in the ecclesia with that on the outside, among those who were not Christians. In the former case, action had to be taken. It was incumbent upon the class to purge out the leaven. The sinning individual may have had good intentions, but he needed correction—like a parent guiding a child. If a parent does not properly instruct a child, the child may end up as a criminal, and the parent would be responsible because of laxity.

**1 Cor. 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.**

In verse 11, Paul stated the matter of grievous sin from the standpoint of the Church. The brethren are not to keep company with anyone who is “called a brother” if the individual is a fornicator, covetous, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard, or an extortioner.

What about misconduct by one who is “called a brother”? In addition to an actual brother, one who has made a consecration, an individual might attend meetings for a long time—perhaps a couple of years—but never consecrate and thus not really be a brother in Christ. However, the public cannot see the difference between one who is consecrated and one who simply attends with regularity. In the latter case, if a person is flagrantly living in misconduct, the class cannot wink the eye.

**Comment:** Where one is “called a brother,” the *degree* of consecration is not to be debated.

**Reply:** Yes, and generally speaking, the sin is habitual. Practiced sin, habit of action, is being referred to in the various categories. With fornication, however, one act is sufficient to require excommunication.

Let us consider the categories of sin listed in verse 11. Of all these categories listed by Paul as being detrimental to Christian character and as having to be dealt with in a firm manner, the

most prominent category is fornication because it is mentioned several times and is first in the listings (verses 9, 10, and 11; 1 Cor. 6:9). “With such an one no not to eat.” These categories are not just tendencies or inclinations in the mind or disposition but manifestations.

“Fornication” usually means an *unmarried* person having unlawful relations with the opposite or the same sex, but usage of the term in this setting refers to an illicit relationship of either a married or an unmarried person with either the same or the opposite sex. Stated another way, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism are all included.

An example of being “covetous” is one who excessively desires money, goods, property, fame, position, honor, authority, etc., at the expense of others. A blatant example would be a loan shark or a habitual borrower of money from various individuals who does not repay the loans. Another example would be an insurance agent who comes into the class to get leads for selling more insurance policies. In other words, there are ulterior motives. An additional example would be a brother in the banking business who habitually makes money by foreclosing on mortgages, taking advantage of the destitute and widows. Still another type of covetousness would be to desire someone else’s wife. Thus “covetousness” in this context would be outwardly manifested to such a degree that the brethren should not even eat at the same table with the individual. A covetous person has an *inordinate* desire to appropriate to himself something animate or inanimate that another person has. “Fornication” pertains to sex, whereas “covetousness” is not limited to sex but can manifest itself in many ways.

In order for an ecclesia to cut off fellowship under this category, the sin has to be outwardly manifested; that is, it cannot be based on imagination. For instance, the sin of fornication was based on an act that was “reported commonly.” An example would be actually taking to oneself the possessions of another by an act of dishonesty and/or injustice.

**Comment:** We must guard against evil surmising or judging heart intention.

**Reply:** Yes, an outward deed that leaves no doubt as to what has happened would be the basis of disfellowship.

Covetousness is equated with idolatry in Colossians 3:5, although idolatry is along a particular line. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Actually, these are subjects with quite a lot of depth that require more than a dictionary definition. As one grows in his understanding of the Word and in character development, he can perceive these traits more readily. The principle is that one who leaves the milk of the Word and assimilates strong meat can discern between good and evil. “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:13,14).

**Q:** In Paul’s day, there were literal idols and hence literal idolaters. Therefore, can the term, as used in verse 11, pertain to literal idols?

**A:** That is possible. For instance, in the Pergamos and Thyatira stages of the Church, pagan ideas were introduced into Christianity. Jesus said in the message to Pergamos, “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). The doctrines and teachings of pagan philosophy were mixed in with the traditional doctrines of Jesus. Rosary beads, scapulars, and images should have been met with strong opposition. In fact, the introduction of these practices and the worship of saints was so dangerous that one should have left the class, for it was only a

matter of time until they developed into Roman Catholicism. If John's advice had been followed, those who left would not have been contaminated by such practices. When the brethren meeting back there did not see eye to eye on this subject, the obedient ones had to leave in order to not have fellowship or eat at the table with those who were either practicing or sympathizing with grievous sin.

Today idolatry is harder to see, although we can recognize tendencies toward idolatry, such as undue reverence or respect for Pastor Russell, where his teachings are viewed almost on a par with God's Word. We should be alert to *tendencies* toward inordinate respect above and beyond that which belongs to the seventh messenger, relegating him to the role of an apostle, but such tendencies do not require disfellowshipping unless he is actually called an apostle. Nevertheless, we should voice displeasure when we see tendencies toward idolatry. The term could also mean the worshipping of Paul, Apollos, or another personality, even a close family member. Jesus came not to bring peace but a sword, to divide a son from the father, a wife from the husband, etc. (Matt. 10:34-36). Of course Jesus was not deliberately separating family members, but when the truth comes to an individual, he has certain responsibilities in order to be faithful to his consecration.

A "railer" is a slanderer. Railers are likened to briar bushes, brambles, and thorns (Matt. 7:16; Luke 6:44; Heb. 6:8). Such individuals are constantly finding fault and reviling; nothing constructive proceeds from their lips. Habitual conduct of this type is not to be tolerated indefinitely. Railing is having a contentious spirit, an example being where a person's whole ministry is condemning the nominal Church, a particular individual, a group, etc.

**Q:** Would "railing" also include someone who is disenchanted with the truth and begins to attack fundamental doctrines?

**A:** Yes. In addition, if a brother repeatedly and constantly denigrates the character of another person in the class—if that is his habit of thinking—he should be excommunicated, for his words would be detrimental to the class and fellowship. Such an individual should not be allowed to dominate the thinking of the group. If he persists, he should be disfellowshipped. If a brother (not an elder) shows the tendency to rail outside the class but not in the class, the brethren are not responsible for what they do not know. However, an individual who knows of the railing is responsible to disfellowship him, and if the railing on the outside is strong enough that it needs to be brought to the attention of the class, then the class is responsible to act if there are at least two witnesses.

**Q:** What would be the responsibility if the railing individual were an elder?

**A:** If an elder is doing the railing, the first responsibility is to go to that elder. If he does not hearken, then two or three witnesses should be taken. In a case where an individual knows the elder is railing, but the elder denies it to the class and there are no other witnesses, the class is not responsible. The individual should show disapproval by not sitting at the table with the elder, although he would not have to withdraw from the class. The class should then begin to realize there is a wrong and not deny the individual his right. Incidentally, in an actual case a number of years ago, a brother instituted a mail campaign against another brother.

**Q:** Would wife-beating be considered railing? Would the wife be responsible for bringing the matter to the class?

**A:** Yes, it would be a case of railing. If the wife were the only witness, it would be her responsibility to report the matter to the class. If there were other witnesses, any of them could report the matter, for that individual, plus the wife, would constitute two witnesses.

A “drunkard” is one habitually given to excess in imbibing alcoholic beverages. Inebriation is obvious.

**Q:** What should one do if he knows a brother habitually drinks privately at home but does not come to the meeting in that condition?

**A:** If the drinking is done at home and the brother does not come to the meeting with liquor on his breath, we would not have to withdraw from the class, especially if a lecture format is used. But in a study situation where the brother is allowed to participate, the first responsibility is for an individual to tell that brother what he is aware of so that the brother’s conscience will be stirred up. Of course any manifestation of drinking in the class should not be tolerated. Unfortunately, as the nominal Church developed down through history, drinking was not considered to be so terrible.

An elder can drink wine at the Memorial and to a very limited degree at other times. Of course he must not habitually drink wine for pleasure (1 Tim. 3:3). A deacon should not be “given to much [excessive] wine” (1 Tim. 3:8). If one is liberal in partaking of alcoholic beverages, even though he does not become intoxicated, he should not be a deacon in the Church, let alone an elder. The degrees of responsibility in imbibing liquor are elder, deacon, and brotherhood.

There are mitigating circumstances as to the degree of culpability and attitude in treating an individual. There is far more responsibility and unpleasantness when an elder is involved because he is a dominant factor in the thinking of the class.

**Comment:** Some of these situations might be known only among consecrated family members. A mother would have to bring the matter to the class with regard to a son, for example. A wife would have to charge a husband and vice versa.

**Reply:** Especially if the husband were nominated for eldership, the wife would be required to say, “I cannot vote for my husband because of such and such.”

**Comment:** From the standpoint of his whole spiritual life being in danger, the wife would be required to report drunkenness on the part of her husband.

An “extortioner” acquires that which is not properly his, obtaining it through pressure, force, or threat, for example, blackmail. Another example might be foreclosing on a mortgage to acquire property. Also, it is wrong to solicit votes or sympathy from others in order to get their support and backing. For example, extortion might be used in an ecclesia with regard to soliciting votes for election to an office or even with regard to excommunication or improperly barring the demotion of one from eldership. Extortion would be the wresting of another’s property, good name, etc., not on a scriptural basis, through pressure of some kind. An example of extortion is how control of the Watchtower was acquired illegally after the Pastor’s death. The point is that extortion is definite aggression—an incontestable act. If the party does not repent and change his ways, the class must take drastic action.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* and the Revised Standard Version end verse 11 with “not even to eat,” which is more emphatic than the King James.

**Reply:** Paul was referring to *physical* eating at a material table, not to spiritual feeding. With such a one, we should not even so much as eat at the table with him, let alone study or fellowship at a meeting. Paul said, “I wrote unto you ... not to company with fornicators, yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world ... for then must ye needs go out of the world” (verses 10 and 11). In other words, we can sit at a food table with worldly people who may be idolaters, etc., and not incur responsibility. Otherwise, we would have to go out of the world

and enter a monastic form of life. We judge the actions of those “within,” not the actions of those “without.” Since we do not delve into the lifestyles of the unconsecrated, we can eat at such a table without asking undue questions. But if one “called a brother” has committed any of these grievous sins, we should not eat at the table with him.

**1 Cor. 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?**

The Revised Standard is preferable: “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?” It is not our responsibility to judge the world, but there is a degree of responsibility to judge actions in the Church. God will judge the world, but He expects us to judge certain things in the Church. We are not to judge motives and inclinations, for they may be based on suppositions, of which we may or may not be unduly prejudiced or sensitive in our thinking. However, actions, which are like facts and thus are more substantial, are to be judged. Paul felt the weight of the responsibility of ministering to the various ecclesias he was serving.

**1 Cor. 5:13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.**

In this instance, “that wicked person” was the fornicator in the church at Corinth. While this deed required action, Paul was using the occasion as an opportunity to show that other categories of disobedience required similar action (as listed in verse 11).

God judges those outside the ecclesia, the unconsecrated, but the class had the responsibility of “put[ting] away” from among themselves “that wicked person.” Paul’s instruction pertained to blatant, obvious, habitual misconduct that was unbecoming to a professed Christian. He was not talking about a slight or a small matter. For example, a drunkard has *repeated* misconduct, whereas Paul advised a little wine for Timothy’s stomach ailment (1 Tim. 5:23). Also, Jesus drank wine with moderation. Especially in the days of the apostles, who traveled from place to place, wine in moderation was a permissible form of liquid. Today the situation is different with sanitary drinking water or at least bottled water in questionable countries. Even elders can have a little wine, but they should not be “given to wine”; that is, they should not have a second glass (1 Tim. 3:3).

In matters of judgment, it is important to keep our emotions out of the way so that we can follow principles without respect of persons and see things in the proper light (Deut. 1:17). These are hard tests.

Incidentally, if one is excommunicated at a class trial, right away we know there was more than one witness. The Scriptures tell us that we are not so much as to eat with one “called a brother [or a sister]” who is involved in fornication. Of all brethren, certainly an elder, who is a *teacher*, should follow Paul’s advice and not eat and fellowship with the fornicator at a table in his home, even if the brother is his own son or the sister his own daughter. Such an impropriety of disobedience would have a leavening effect upon the elder, his wife, the rest of the family, and the brethren who support him. If we apply these Scriptures to only a *spiritual* table, we become responsible because we are interpreting God’s Word and giving it an application thoroughly out of harmony with the apostle’s reasoning. Some erroneously claim that we can eat at a physical table with a fornicator but not study the Bible with him, whereas actually neither is allowed by the Scriptures. Furthermore, carelessly teaching others the wrong application—and thus undoing what the Apostle Paul took a whole chapter to explain—brings accountability that will have to be acknowledged as a mistake sooner or later. Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall *break* one of these least *commandments*, and shall *teach* men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). And Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 5 is a

*commandment*, as shown by verse 4. To a large extent, a brother's or a sister's place in the Kingdom has to do with teaching. For example, a sister can "teach" in fellowship and promote the wrong thought. We must be careful how we interpret principles and commandments, whereas hard-to-understand prophetic utterances are a completely different category. It is better to say, "I do not know" or "I would like to know," than to give a *wrong* interpretation of a principle.

**Q:** Suppose a brother or a sister has unwittingly supported a wrong principle. What should be the step to undo the error?

**A:** Acknowledgment would be the first step—public acknowledgment if the wrong principle was said publicly, semipublic acknowledgment if the wrong principle was said semipublicly, and private acknowledgment if the wrong principle was said privately.

In this chapter, the Apostle Paul commanded Christians not to fellowship with fornicators, those who are covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, and extortioners who are "called a brother." While not all of these terms apply to modern history, this advice was helpful down through the Gospel Age, especially when the nominal Church began to develop. A Christian was forced to separate if he found that the majority disagreed with Paul's advice. To be faithful, the true Christian disassociated himself from the nominal Church, even though he had no place to go. Particularly with certain developments in history, verses 10 and 11 applied, as well as part of chapter 6.

**1 Cor. 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?**

Paul now began to address the matter of litigation, namely, of a brother taking a brother to court. The word "dare" immediately catches the reader's attention. "*Dare any of you, having a matter against another [Christian], go to law before the unjust [the unconsecrated], and not before the saints [the consecrated]?*" Verse 1 pertains to a situation where the two parties to the grievance are brethren in Christ. It does not apply to a grievance between a consecrated individual and an unconsecrated person, for the unconsecrated one might institute the lawsuit.

Some scholars suggest that Paul was using sarcasm here. Properly used, this technique can be constructive and beneficial. In verse 1, Paul was playing on the common word "unjust." Since the courts were known as being the place of "the just," he was asking, "Do you go before 'the unjust,' who have the title of being 'the just'?" How can a person in the world understand religious matters, especially those dealing with the consecrated? "You ... go ... before the unjust, and not before the saints." In other words, if a dispute of a serious nature arises between two brothers, the ecclesia (or part of the ecclesia) should decide the matter. In fact, sometimes it is better not to include the whole ecclesia because the level of congregational thinking on a serious matter might not be a source of wisdom. Then it would be advisable to limit the "saints" who hear the matter to perhaps three or four.

**1 Cor. 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?**

Verse 2 continues the sarcasm: "*Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?*" The Corinthian brethren knew the promise that those who are faithful unto death will receive the crown of life and judge mankind in the Kingdom. "If the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the *smallest* matters?" Now the sarcasm was even stronger.

Paul's questions suggest that the Corinthians were still babes in Christ in spiritual matters. They were inclined to go to worldly courts because they did not trust the judgment of the

ecclesia. Suppose, for example, the class was divided into three groups, and each group voted differently. Each of the two parties in the grievance, feeling he was right, feared that the judgment would not come out to his favor. This strife was creating such a problem that the parties wanted to go to an unbiased outside element, and that thinking was logical from a *worldly* standpoint.

**Q:** To what extent should we judge those in the world even now?

**A:** When a judge decides an issue in court, he pronounces the sentence. Judging and giving our opinion are one thing, but judging and giving a sentence require more responsibility and have to be done in a scriptural manner.

**Comment:** Our responsibility at present is not to go around to individuals in the world and tell them what they are doing wrong. Rather, through our example, they should be able to see what is right and thus realize their wrongdoing. Our responsibility in the Kingdom will be to judge righteously, but now we cannot read the heart or fully understand the situation.

**Reply:** With ordinary, everyday experiences, that should be our attitude. However, there might be a rare case where we would say to a friend, “That action is not advisable. Be careful because of where the act will lead you.” In other words, there are extenuating circumstances where we would say something, but to be too much of a buttinsky is not our role now.

**1 Cor. 6:3** Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

The holy angels do not need to be judged because they passed a severe test at the time of the Flood. Why, then, did Paul introduce, in this context, the thought that the Church will judge the fallen angels, the demons? What bearing does verse 3 have on the discussion of a brother taking a brother to court?

**Comment:** Since the Little Flock will be judging angels during the Kingdom Age, as well as the world of mankind, Paul was saying that Christians should have enough wisdom to judge matters on the earthly plane now within the ecclesia.

**Reply:** That is one aspect. The Church has a future career of judging beings of a nature that is superior to that down here on earth. Several conclusions can be drawn. (1) The status of angels is superior to that of humans. (2) Christians in the flesh lack knowledge with regard to what is going on in *tartaroo* in earth’s atmosphere. (3) Christians should be more knowledgeable with regard to human affairs.

Since the Little Flock will judge angels, then “how much more [Christians should be able to judge] things that pertain to this [present] life.” If we hope to be judges of the fallen angels and mankind in the future, we cannot go through the present life without thinking about, analyzing, and preparing for this role. We should be keenly observing things in view of the future office. After all, would the Lord put somebody on the throne to judge in matters great and small who does not weigh issues in the present life? To do so would not make much sense. As an illustration, a surgeon is usually called a “practicing physician.”

We start as baby Christians. As we grow, we gain a little understanding through each experience. In other words, we are in a state of *preparation* now. We are *practicing* judges as we make decisions along various lines—doctrinally, character-wise, etc.—hoping to make our calling and election sure and thus to be granted that power.

Paul’s sarcasm to the Corinthians implied, “You hope to be judging angels in the future, but



you cannot judge even the smallest matter down here.” He was shaming them. Many feel that Christians should not judge, and they close their eyes and minds, not wanting to think about issues. They do not want trouble or strife with a difficult-to-understand doctrine, for example, and just want to talk on love and peace, but Paul was saying these matters should be discussed.

**1 Cor. 6:4** If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

**Comment:** Both the *Diaglott* and the Revised Standard put verse 4 in question form. The RSV reads, “If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed [that is, the unconsecrated] by the church?” The *Diaglott* rendering is, “If then, indeed, you should have causes as to the things of this life, do you appoint those, the least esteemed in the congregation?”

**Reply:** There is a difference in scholars as to how this statement should be rendered. The King James, with “set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church,” gives the impression that Paul’s advice was to settle these cases by putting as judges those who were least capable. Without extenuating circumstances, this rendering does not make sense because a person who is least esteemed is least qualified. One who is irrational in everyday living should not be the arbiter of a dispute. However, if Paul was using sarcasm, he was saying in effect, “It would be better to have some of the brethren who are not as capable sit in on the issue than to go to a worldly court.” Another way to render this verse is the RSV reading, which is questionable because it goes contrary to Paul’s reasoning. The brethren were already going to a worldly court, to the unjustified, not to those who were least esteemed in the church.

A third application makes more sense with the apostle’s line of reasoning; namely, “If you have judgments of things pertaining to this life, why do you bring these matters before the unconsecrated, who the church should know are not in a condition to judge between brother and brother?” In other words, the church should know that the unconsecrated are not in a position to judge between brother and brother. A dispute is not necessarily a cold civil or political matter, for some disputes touch on the consecrated life and other issues of which the worldly person is completely oblivious.

**Comment:** A fourth application is that these judgments were brought before those who were least esteemed in the church and the brother got no satisfaction. The dispute ended up in the worldly court because of the foolishness of the judgments and the unwise decisions given in the church. There was a lack of understanding among the brethren on certain matters of judgment because they were not familiar with all of the Scriptures.

**Reply:** In a great many instances, the brethren do lack scriptural understanding and common sense as well. Paul implied in succeeding verses that not one in the Corinthian church had the spirit of a sound mind. He was saying, in effect, that a brother should suffer the wrong or poor judgment against him and not take the matter to a worldly court. He was tongue-lashing the lack of wisdom of those who did judge and the impropriety of those who received the wrong judgment and did not just suffer it.

**Comment:** If verse 4 was sarcasm, it would harmonize with verse 1. Paul told the brethren that it was irresponsible to go to a civil court to judge these matters rather than to judge among themselves. It would be better to set those who were least esteemed in the church to judge the matters than to go to a civil court of law. On trivial matters, even the least esteemed should be qualified to judge.

**Reply:** With sarcasm, Paul was saying that one should suffer the lesser of two evils. Rather than to go to a worldly court, it was better to suffer the wrong judgment of the brethren.

**1 Cor. 6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?**

Here Paul spoke to shame the Corinthian brethren, yet in 1 Corinthians 4:14, he wrote so as not to shame them but to warn them. Why the difference? Why did he admonish in chapter 4 and use shame in chapter 6? In chapter 4, Paul said that he had introduced the Corinthian brethren to the truth, that he had been like an evangelist to them, and many consecrated as a result of his ministry. Moreover, he spoke to them not merely as a teacher but also as an apostle. He called attention to *his* conduct, what *he* did for them, *his* office, and what *he* suffered. If he had shamed them there—when calling attention to his credentials as an apostle and his suffering life—they would be ashamed to differ with him in any future confrontation, and that would be wrong. Although an apostle, he still had to follow the Lord's Word and instruction. He was no different from anyone else with regard to the responsibility of Scripture. He was on a par with them—he was a brother just like anyone else—with responsibility before God. Therefore, he did not want them to be ashamed to question or differ with anything he said, for the shame aspect would shut out reason. Paul admonished them, saying, "Think out this matter. Does not reason tell you the lack of wisdom that would be involved?" He spoke brother to brother, and sternly and seriously, but was suggesting that they reason out the matter. "You feel that you are reigning. You feel full and rich and are not getting persecuted, yet we are called to *suffer*. Anyone who lives righteously will have to *suffer persecution*." Paul wanted the Corinthians to reason *deeply* into the matter.

But here in verse 5 of chapter 6, pertaining to bringing a problem in the church before the unconsecrated, why did Paul employ the tactic of shame? He had an ostensible grievance in saying, "Dare any of you go to a worldly court?" (verse 1). It was like saying, but in a more tactful way, "Are you so stupid that you cannot see the error in going to a worldly court on a matter between two brothers?" In chapter 4, pertaining to instructors, it was not a matter of stupidity, for the Adversary was very clever in trying to lead some away slowly and stealthily with instruction, and one had to reason to see the technique or tactic that was being employed. However, even a babe in Christ should be able to see the impropriety of bringing a dispute among brethren to a worldly court to settle. For Christians who are called to be saints and judges of the world not to settle a matter among themselves was a blatant inconsistency, whereas in the other case, one had to reason on the subtlety of the teachers, Paul's enemies, orators who spoke very fluently yet belittled him, saying his writings were weighty but his presence was weak and contemptible. These orators liked either Apollos or one of themselves. Paul purposely did not mention any individual in the class by name lest the brethren lose sight of the real, naked issue through personality attachments. Instead he used his own name as a front for discussing the issue of carnality and sectarianism.

In summary, Paul employed admonition in chapter 4 because he wanted the brethren to think out and reason on the matter. In contrast, chapter 6 was such a simple matter where the inconsistency should have been obvious that Paul used shame rather than admonition.

Paul said, first, that the dispute on "things pertaining to this life" should have been handled by the "saints" (verses 1, 3, and 4). The church should have tried to select an arbitration committee for this problem, but whom would they select? Usually some in a class, a minority, are esteemed for their dedication, fair-mindedness, and consistency in their consecrated life. Such brethren should be chosen as a committee to try to arbitrate the grievance.

Then Paul said in verse 5, "I speak to your shame. Is there not a wise man among you?" In other words, if the Corinthians chose the leaders who were so strong in their opinions, the class would be right back to the first problem of strife and factions. The principle, then, is that the ones who should be chosen to arbitrate a dispute are not necessarily the elected elders.

**1 Cor. 6:6** But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

**1 Cor. 6:7** Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

Paul's next criticism was that "brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers." Verse 1 began with "Dare any of you?" Verse 7 (paraphrased) reads, "Now therefore you are *utterly at fault*." Here was scathing sarcasm. "And you are to be the saints of this world! You are to judge angels and men, yet you cannot judge even a small matter."

Paul gave different alternatives. A committee does not necessarily solve a particular problem, but if there are multiple problems, some of them will be solved by cool, rational reasoning. In the final analysis, the two with the grievance had to be pacified in one way or another. When Paul asked, "Why do ye not rather take [the] wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" he was, in effect, laying the groundwork in case there was a failure in that direction. In other words, "Submit to the decision." Of course this reasoning contradicts worldly philosophy head-on. Since the grievance here involved tangible values—and was not a grudge or a case of moral principles, for instance—it would be difficult for a brother who felt he was in the right to submit to what he considered a wrong judgment.

Some of us in our Christian life have been wronged, and sometimes we suffer it to be so for various reasons. What would be some of those reasons?

**Comment:** (1) To take the matter to a worldly court would be too expensive. (2) The final reward might not be worth the trouble of pursuing the matter further. (3) If a brother were wronged by one from another ecclesia or another part of the country, it would not be feasible to follow Matthew 18:15-17. (4) Sometimes a matter is so muddled that even those with the best of intentions cannot judge fairly. (5) Taking the matter to a worldly court could bring injury to the cause of Christ in the eyes of other brethren or the unconsecrated.

**Reply:** With regard to the last reason, taking a matter to court might bring evil repute against the Christian mode of life. Even the quarreling, if it gets to be public, unnecessarily puts some shame on the movement. Suffering the wrong is sometimes part of a Christian's persecution. For instance, during the Dark Ages, Christians were persecuted as heretics, unjustly maligned, and even put to death. Therefore, because brother taking brother to court would bring notoriety to the Church, such an action should be distasteful to the consecrated.

**1 Cor. 6:8** Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

In verse 7, Paul said it was wrong to take the matter to a civil court for justice. It was better for the one to be faulted unjustly than to go outside the church to seek righteous judgment from the unrighteous. In verse 8, Paul was warning that it was defrauding the brotherhood by not letting them decide the matter and going instead to the law. Settling the issue in worldly courts not only deprived the ecclesia of its responsibility but also encouraged lawlessness.

**1 Cor. 6:9** Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

**1 Cor. 6:10** Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Whoever was responsible in committing the deed had to answer to the Lord, and whoever pressed the matter to the worldly court also had to answer to the Lord. Both were “unrighteous” and would not inherit the Little Flock. This dispute did not pertain to conscience or a moral issue, for such matters could not be taken to a worldly court. Therefore, the dispute had to do with a physical, or material, problem—perhaps a tract of land or a slave, for example. Paul was indicating that a material dispute is small, or trivial, compared to a Christian’s spiritual hopes. What is the material when contrasted with inheriting spiritual blessings?

With the categories listed in verses 9 and 10, was Paul speaking about just getting spirit life in the future or about obtaining rulership?

**Comment:** Even for the world of mankind, those who are “fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8; see also Rev. 22:14,15). If these categories of the world will not get life, how much more that would be true for the consecrated of the present age—unless, of course, they repent.

**Reply:** Yes, the principle is the same for the consecrated now and the world in the Kingdom. There is no question that anyone who practices these sins will not get life, spiritual or earthly, even though Paul was speaking to the Corinthian brethren about the heavenly Kingdom and their spiritual hopes here in verses 9 and 10.

Incidentally, the Apostle Paul, in connection with the truth, appealed his case of being unjustly persecuted. He called attention to the fact that as a Roman citizen, he had the right to a trial, and he received his freedom. In another case, when the Jews would have killed him in Israel, a centurion rescued him, and he then appealed to the emperor in Rome. Thus Paul made use of legal resources on occasion, if doing so would further the truth. In other words, he did not appeal for personal reasons.

In verses 9 and 10, Paul broadened the categories of 1 Corinthians 5. “Adulterers” were married; “fornicators” were unmarried. In regard to the category “nor [men being] effeminate [nor, by extension, women being masculine],” one can usually discern changes in mannerisms, dress, and voice in those who are given to that style of life. “Nor abusers of themselves with mankind” refers to sexual perversion, particularly of man with man (homosexuality) or woman with woman (lesbianism). A later verse in the chapter helps to clarify the meaning, for there are different degrees of sodomy.

Corinth was the “sin city” of its day. Rome had excesses, but Corinth had more because it was a city of commerce, a meeting place between two cultures; that is, the sins of both East and West were brought into the city through commerce. Later on in history, Ephesus had excesses very much like Corinth, both being traffic centers. In fact, the normal short trade route from Rome to Turkey went to Corinth and Ephesus.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” There are degrees of unrighteousness in not inheriting the “kingdom of God,” a term that can be considered from the standpoint of either the Little Flock or the Great Company. Jesus said of John the Baptist, “Among them that are born of women [of this generation] there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven [the Little Flock] is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11). With the exception of Jesus himself, the least in the Little Flock will be superior in office (but not necessarily in character) to John the Baptist. Therefore, some who have committed a serious fault and been forgiven after taking the proper steps would forfeit membership in the Little Flock, but possibly they will get life in the Great Company. An

example is the individual who was excommunicated for fornication in chapter 5 and later reinstated after proper repentance (2 Cor. 2:7). However, such repentance from grievous sin committed after consecration is rare.

**Comment:** Jude 23, which reads, “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,” shows a possibility of retrieval to the Great Company.

The ten categories—fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners—are to be considered *literally*, not spiritually. Paul was speaking bluntly, right to the point, about gross fleshly failings. For a Christian to do any of these things would be like the sow going back to the mud and the dog to the vomit (2 Pet. 2:22). “Idolaters,” for example, refers to literal idolatry. In Paul’s day, idols were prayed to and worshipped. A milder form seen today is the use of the Rosary, crosses, and little icons and statues. Judas was an example of a literal thief (John 12:6). Not only did he take money for betraying Jesus, but also he took from the bag containing money for the brethren. The “love of money” can lead to gross sin (1 Tim. 6:10). An example of being “covetous” would be advising brethren to leave their money to a certain ecclesia or religious organization. Such individuals think they are helping the Lord’s work, but the principle is that one should not covet another’s wife or goods. Covetousness, which cannot be judged unless it is manifested and becomes obvious, starts in the mind, where it must be fought vigorously. With the natural heart being desperately wicked, part of the Christian warfare is a mental battle (Jer. 17:9). Simon coveted the power to give gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18-20). With regard to “drunkards,” Jesus was falsely called a “winebibber” by his enemies. Hence an evil mind can misconstrue into a gross sin something that is scripturally done with moderation. Going to the other extreme, some accused John the Baptist, who ate locusts and honey and wore plain clothing, of having “a devil.” Jesus likened that generation to little children without character sitting on a fence judging others and calling out derogatorily (Matt. 11:16-19). “Extortioners” use leverage such as blackmail.

**1 Cor. 6:11** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Before being called, some of the Corinthians (and some of us) were covetous, drunkards, etc. Why is the sequence (1) “washed,” (2) “sanctified,” and (3) “justified”? The proverbial question is, Which comes first: justification or sanctification? Why would sanctification precede justification here, especially when in many other Scriptures, the order is reversed? When justification precedes consecration, it is merely tentative. In other words, there is a measure of justification (sometimes called partial or “tentative justification”) before consecration, for the Lord deals with individuals prior to consecration if they are approaching Him. However, vital (or full) justification does not happen until a person consecrates.

There are *two* justifications and *two* sanctifications. The Tabernacle picture is helpful with regard to the first sanctification. Consecration takes place at the First Veil when the goat is brought into the Court and tied to the door of the Holy. The second sanctification occurs when God accepts the individual. In other words, (1) the individual voluntarily sets himself apart. He allows himself to be led by God’s Spirit and then decides to give his heart to the Lord with a vow. (2) God accepts that consecration; He consecrates (sanctifies) the individual. With regard to justification, (1) faith (tentative, partial, progressive) justification precedes consecration. Once one has consecrated and God accepts that consecration, the individual is (2) vitally justified.

“Ye are washed.” Before consecration, one washes with water at the Laver in the Court. Then comes consecration, stated here as “ye are sanctified.” The terms “sanctified,” “consecrated,” and “set apart” are used interchangeably in the Scriptures. Individuals consecrate (they set apart, or sanctify, themselves), and God consecrates (sanctifies, sets apart) the priesthood.

When sanctification precedes justification, as in verse 11, the thought is that an individual's consecration precedes his vitalized justification. One is washed, he consecrates, and then, almost instantaneously, God both sanctifies and justifies the individual. Technically speaking, the goat is tethered to the door of the Tabernacle, and the priest comes out and puts his hand on the goat, showing, antitypically, that the individual is accepted in the Beloved by God. That acceptance is God's consecration of the Christian, who almost immediately is vitally justified. These two processes, which are technically different, are only a split second apart in fulfillment.

When the high priest, picturing Jesus, entered the Holy from the Court, he came with his two hands full of incense, which he burned at the Incense Altar before entering the Most Holy. The two hands full of incense represent consecration. In any event, the justification of verse 11 is *vitalized* justification. The sanctification could be either the individual's consecration or God's acceptance of the individual, both of which precede vitalized justification.

The progressive principle of the drawing process is shown by James 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." The Lord says in effect, "Come unto me, and I will come unto you." "My son, give me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26) is another text. The principle is that as a person moves in the direction of God, God moves in that individual's direction. The drawing process is a mutual attraction—God begins to draw one, the person responds, and all the steps taken that lead to vitalized justification are the individual's drawing nearer and nearer to God, until he is fully in the family.

We are washed, sanctified, and justified (1) in the name of the Lord Jesus and (2) by the Holy Spirit of God. No man can come to Jesus unless the Father *first* draws him (John 6:44). The Holy Spirit operates in different degrees; that is, the calling, or drawing, goes out, and the Holy Spirit operates in us in the same proportion that we respond to the drawing. There was a time during the Gospel Age when the door was open for everyone. This "general call" existed until 1881. Until that date, anyone who consecrated to the Lord could be considered as legally running in the race. After the general call ceased, God has been more selective as to who is drawn because the number of vacancies in the 144,000 is dwindling. It is taking 2,000 years to get that number, and as we get closer to the end of the age, God will not instill the hope of the high calling in someone's breast if the opportunity does not exist. To do so would be to encourage a false hope. Therefore, the call has become more limited since 1881.

The Holy Spirit operated when God prepared the earth for man. The Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters and eventually said, "Let there be light: and there was light," etc. (Gen. 1:2,3). In other words, God's Spirit worked on inanimate materials. That same Spirit broods over the earth, going throughout the earth searching for those whose hearts are right toward Him (2 Chron. 16:9). Those who are moved by that Spirit come under the arrangement of God. The Spirit has an early beginning of operation until it gets in the individual himself. First, it is more of an outside force, and then, as the individual responds, it becomes an inner force. In other words, justification, sanctification, and the Holy Spirit are all *progressive*, leading to a legal act, or stage, from which one cannot turn back. They become the point of no return, which can be for good or for evil depending upon the individual.

**Q:** Is the tying of the goat to the door of the Tabernacle like the piercing of a servant's ear with an awl?

**A:** Yes. When a servant of the master's household wanted to make the arrangement permanent, he put his earlobe against the wood of a door, and an awl pierced the ear (Exod. 21:5,6). The person was then yoked (consecrated) for life to his master's household. This type shows that there is a period of recognition before the act, when the person is on a tentative basis as a servant, and then submitting to having his ear pierced with the awl makes the basis permanent and more serious.

**1 Cor. 6:12** All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

What did Paul mean when twice he said, “All things are lawful unto [or for] me, but all things are not expedient [helpful or needful]: ... I will not be brought under the power of any”? What are the “all things”? Paul particularly had in mind the statement in verse 13 “meats for the belly, and the belly for meats.” Many Jews who became Christians felt that the Law of Moses, as well as the “law” of Jesus, had to be obeyed even after consecration. These Christian Jews felt that even Gentiles should be under the bondage of the Law. However, a Jew coming into Christ was relieved of certain obligations of the Law because he was now under a new Master. Stated another way, the Jew who consecrated died to the Law, whereas the Gentile, never having been under the Law, did not die to the Law but died, nevertheless, and walked in newness of life under a different arrangement. Both Jew and Gentile had a new standing and thus became one in Christ. Paul, a Jew, was no longer yoked to the technicalities that Jews had to observe under the Law. However, in some cases, he *voluntarily* submitted to the Law where he saw that doing so would create less of a reproach; that is, at times, he sacrificed certain liberties in the interest of furthering the gospel, but he was not under obligation to do so. In other areas, to submit would have yoked him again under the bondage of the Law, which was the very thing he reproved the Galatians for: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you [to come under the Law], that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (Gal. 3:1).

**Comment:** 1 Corinthians 10:23 uses almost the same wording in the context of eating meat sacrificed to idols: “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” As Christians, we are under the law of liberty in Christ. All things are lawful, but from the Scriptures, we decide for ourselves what is expedient and profitable for the new creature.

**Reply:** The Lord gives us the privilege of more meritorious service by *voluntarily* denying ourselves certain liberties, and He accordingly honors an individual based on his zeal, devotion, and concern for the gospel itself. Yes, there was a danger with regard to eating meat offered to idols. Of course a dumb idol cannot contaminate meat, but the conscience of others who might witness the Christian’s conduct in eating such meat could be defiled.

**1 Cor. 6:13** Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

Paul was saying that food is superficial and relatively immaterial. To judge a person and his relationship to God on the basis of whether he washes his hands before he eats a meal or whether he eats clean or unclean meats is foolish, for these things are temporal—the meat and the stomach will perish. Verse 13 is not talking about excesses, which are treated elsewhere, but about being brought under bondage to the technicalities of the Law and being forced by others to do or not to do certain things. For example, when Jews from Jerusalem came in and saw Peter eating at a table with Gentiles, he got up (dissembled) in embarrassment. It was wrong to allow himself to be brought under the power of others, who looked unfavorably on what he had every right to do. He should have remained eating with Gentiles. In getting up, he not only created an improper atmosphere but also came under the power of what other people thought. Every situation has to be weighed as to how it is involved with Scripture.

“Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” Verses 9-20 revert back to the subject matter of chapter 5 with regard to purging out leaven. Here Paul was generalizing on fornication, thieves, revilers, etc. Thus the “all things” not being expedient had to do with the individual’s interest in connection with furthering and honoring the gospel.

The thought is, “The body is ... for the Lord; and the Lord [is] for the body.” The reference is to the Christian’s personal, mortal body, as well as to the spiritual body of the Church. The “body” involves both aspects. While the body of the Lord’s goat represents the depraved humanity of the individual, that body is justified. The “body” is not merely a legal or technical matter, for serving the Lord comes right down to the nitty-gritty of one’s personal being and the flesh. From that standpoint, verse 13 is very comprehensive, for Paul was not necessarily emphasizing spiritual fornication.

The Church of Christ can be considered the *body* of Christ on earth. For example, when Paul persecuted the Church before becoming a Christian, Jesus asked him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me* [that is, my followers, human beings, who have the hope of the high calling]?” (Acts 9:4). That which is left behind of the “afflictions of Christ” is not only a mystical body but also a figurative body involving both the spiritual and the natural aspect (Col. 1:24).

**Comment:** Many might say, “It is not what you see on the outside but what is in the heart.” However, the vessel must be cleansed both within and without.

**Reply:** In other words, if a person has perfect heart intentions, the flesh will not be perfect, but there will be some outward manifestation (words and actions), as well as an inner manifestation. It is true that God judges the inner manifestation, but to say there is no manifestation on the outside is like saying, “Faith without works is dead and in vain.” God does not judge imperfect works but the faith which produces works that are pleasing to the Lord to the extent of one’s ability. Thus there must be both works and outward cleansing.

“Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats.” From one standpoint, this saying naturally followed Paul’s statement “I will not be brought under the power of any [excessive appetites].” From another standpoint, Paul was discussing that God created in man the desire, appetite, and hunger for food and that He has provided a great variety of meat with different flavors. However, one should not live for the pleasure of eating, for such things are trivial. The Christian should live a normal life, for “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6).

From talking specifically about food, Paul went a step higher, extending the subject to “meat,” or flesh, of another kind: “Now the body is not for fornication [fleshly desires], but for the Lord; and the Lord [is] for the body.”

**1 Cor. 6:14** And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

The raising up of verse 14 has both a future and a present application. Jesus said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50). Jesus’ baptism eventually involved his death on the Cross, but it also involved the process leading up to the Cross. In other words, Jesus’ baptism was progressive, yet it was spoken of in a future tense. The emphasis was on the present, culminating in the future. With regard to verse 14, which says, “God hath ... raised up the Lord,” God raised up Jesus out of Jordan and also raised him up from Calvary 3 1/2 years later. With regard to the Church, the clause “will also raise up us by his own power” definitely has a future import, but it is also *progressive*, referring to the present leading up to the future.

**Comment:** We hope to grow (increase) in grace and in knowledge as we obey what we learn.

**Reply:** Yes, the raising is a *process*. The principle is similar with the resurrection (Greek *anastasis*) of the world of mankind. Mankind will awaken from the tomb in the Kingdom and walk up the highway of holiness, being gradually raised to an upright condition at the end of



the Millennial Age, when they will get their final, formal test. In other words, the *anastasis* will be accomplished at the end of the Millennium, when all who get life will be raised up to the position Adam had before he sinned.

Paul was saying that for those who faithfully practice the Christian life unto death, the reward is to be joint heirs with Christ. Just as he was raised from death because of obedience to his Father's will in all matters, so this will be the experience of the faithful Christian.

**1 Cor. 6:15** Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

**1 Cor. 6:16** What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

**1 Cor. 6:17** But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Verses 15-17 apply to the Church in the flesh. Paul was pointing out the incongruity of trying to be “members of Christ” and “members of an harlot [committing fornication]” at the same time. Those who would be the Lord's and of his spirit must flee gross sins, as well as weaknesses of the flesh. This admonition was especially needed by Christians in the sinful city of Corinth. The ecclesia comprised both Jews and Gentiles, but mostly Gentiles.

Paul was returning to his previous thought of fornication but in the sense of joining the body to another in an illicit relationship. “He which is joined to an harlot is one body” with that harlot. Marriage was ordained with regard to Adam and Eve. They twain became one, and that oneness produced children—but oneness with a harlot was fornication.

**1 Cor. 6:18** Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

The Greek interlinear rendering in the *Diaglott* is, “Flee you the fornication. All sins which if may do a man, outside of the body is; he but committing fornication against the own body sins.” Obviously, Paul was talking about the sins of the *flesh*, as opposed to sinning in deeds such as theft, murder, and evil speaking. Although the sin of immorality has to do with one's personal body, the expression “the body ... for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” includes the spiritual body of Christ as well (1 Cor. 6:13). However, Paul was emphasizing the *fleshly* aspect to the church in Corinth.

To remain in the body of Christ, one must “flee fornication.” If one commits fornication (or any kind of sin), the sin is disassociation with the body of Christ; that is, it is without, or outside, the body of Christ. The Christian's not wanting to be outside the body is what drives him to the throne of grace for forgiveness. When sin is committed, one must ask for forgiveness so that his robe will be washed and the wrinkles removed, spiritually speaking.

**1 Cor. 6:19** What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

**1 Cor. 6:20** For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Verses 19 and 20 are powerful for showing the responsibility of a Christian to the Lord. The Holy Spirit is God's presence in an individual's life. Since Christians have been bought with a price (Jesus' blood), they are slaves of Christ, and submission to the will of God and of Christ is required of blood-bought slaves. As slaves of the Master, Christians must be very careful not

to misrepresent him.

“Know ye not that your body is the temple” of God? Therefore, if the Christian defiles his own body by fornication, he is defiling the “temple” of God.

Verse 20 is a summary. Although Paul was saying that a Christian should glorify God in his spirit, the emphasis was on glorifying God in his body.

**Comment:** Since we were bought like slaves with the price of Jesus’ blood, only the Master should have control of our bodies, and we should glorify God with them. We do not have the liberty to sell our bodies to someone else.

Chapters 5 and 6 should be combined, for they both pertain to fornication. Chapter 7 starts a new subject. This epistle to the Corinthians is just *packed* with astonishing information on the nitty-gritty issues of life.

**1 Cor. 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.**

In chapters 1-6, Paul spoke on certain conditions in the class, but he was not necessarily responding to formal questions that had been addressed to him. For example, 1 Corinthians 5:1 reads, “It is *reported commonly* that there is fornication among you.” Evidently, the class did not ask Paul about this situation; rather, he heard about it from others. And 1 Corinthians 1:11 states, “It hath been *declared* unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” Paul heard about the divisions; the Corinthian brethren did not ask his advice on the matter. Then, feeling the problem was important, he wrote several chapters to straighten it out. In other words, of his own volition, he introduced and answered the subjects that he felt were important. Chapter 7, however, is different in that it was a response to a letter the Corinthian brethren had written to him: “Now concerning the things [plural] whereof ye wrote unto me.” Apparently, the class had written about problems that were disturbing them, and Paul now began to address these problems.

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” What question would have prompted this statement? Paul was asked about familiarity between the sexes, about the association of a man with a woman, before marriage. The question was something like, “In the single state, where should the line be drawn in Christian behavior?” The word “touch” needs to be defined as used in the New Testament and in this context.

**Comment:** According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, it is the Greek word *haptomai*, meaning to “touch, hold on, or embrace.”

**Comment:** Greeting one another with a holy kiss might have led to a little too much intimacy with the opposite sex, resulting in an embrace.

**Reply:** Yes, and this practice of greeting one another with a holy kiss would have been misunderstood. Paul intended the “holy kiss” to be man with man and woman with woman. Especially in the same age group, a kiss from the opposite sex is not advisable.

**Comment:** Even a prolonged handshake could lead to unholy thoughts.

**Reply:** Undue intimacy is to be avoided.

As in Corinth in Paul’s time, the married state does not mean too much today. Not only are there common law marriages, but living together is considered acceptable in the world. The

general attitude is, Who can tell us what to do? Since the Bible is not regarded as the standard, loose living is common today, just as it was back in Corinth.

The brethren were asking Paul's opinion. His reply was that it is not good for an unmarried Christian man to touch a woman. Various parameters should govern the behavior of one who has committed himself to the Lord. Although the practice of "touching" a woman is not good for the development of the Christlike life, verse 1 was only the beginning of Paul's advice. To stop with this statement would lead to all kinds of radical conclusions, for example, that one should not get married or that there should be no intimacies in marriage.

**1 Cor. 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.**

The words "nevertheless, to avoid fornication" show what "touching" could lead to. Notice that Paul stated marriage both ways, for it applies equally to male and female: "Let every *man* have his own wife, and let every *woman* have her own husband." In other words, Paul advised marriage under certain circumstances—to avoid fornication and lest a person "burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). Marriage was permissible to one wife. A natural desire for intimacy is implanted in the very organism of man and woman, and to suppress that desire becomes a problem. Therefore, the Corinthian brethren were asking, from several standpoints, how to handle the desire.

In Paul's day, some of the brothers had extra wives who were obtained prior to consecration, but a requirement of eldership is for a brother to have only one wife (1 Tim. 3:2). As time passed, that problem ceased to exist.

**1 Cor. 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.**

**1 Cor. 7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.**

Verses 3 and 4 are also worded both ways, so that there is no misunderstanding. The husband is to render due benevolence to the wife and vice versa, with neither having "power" over his (or her) own body. In other words, the conjugal rights of each should be respected, and the other should submit with due consideration. One should not get married and then refrain and try to live a celibate life. However, it is permissible for husband and wife to decide to mutually refrain for a time.

With regard to "due benevolence," why do people marry in the first place? Tender affections are the responsibilities of the man toward the woman and the woman toward the man. Elsewhere Paul recommended having children.

**Comment:** Under the Law, if a man took another wife, he still had an obligation to the first wife for her food, clothing, and due benevolence.

**Reply:** Yes, this was a principle and fair play. With no Social Security in those days, providing necessities became a family responsibility: the husband to the wife and/or children, a son to the elderly mother, etc. In other words, marriage entails certain responsibilities.

**1 Cor. 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.**

If one wishes to refrain from intimacy for a while for prayer and fasting because of some

problem or because, spiritually speaking, the prayer and fasting would have a purifying effect, the time limit for abstinence should not be too long. Moreover, the refraining should be with the agreement of the other party. Both should manifest, one way or another, their feelings on the matter.

“And come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” If the scriptural advice is not followed, Satan can enter the situation and cause a breach, a problem, where bitterness develops. The thought of “incontinency” is that one party is defrauded, or deprived, and then looks elsewhere for physical satisfaction.

Notice that the Apostle Paul, who never married, was giving this advice. Normally, one in the single state would not be able to give such balanced advice. The Pastor gave valuable advice with regard to marital rights, but it is not as perfect as that of the apostle. He admitted he made a mistake in that both parties vowed to remain chaste throughout their married life. Without meaning to, such a vow destroys the basis, or reason, for getting married in the first place.

By not marrying, Paul expended his energy 100 percent in service for the Lord except for such activities as making tents, eating, and providing for other brethren through his tent making. His sole purpose was to glorify Christ, and he would like all brethren to do the same where possible. Nevertheless, Paul also said, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed [is] undefiled,” so he was not trying to degrade the marital relationship (Heb. 13:4). However, if one could contain himself and refrain from marriage like him, the single state was better. Paul recognized that the desire for intimacy exists, and he gave advice accordingly.

**Comment:** “Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent” is wise counsel, especially for those who are unequally yoked. The unconsecrated partner might not understand the reason for prayer and fasting, and refraining from intimacy could unnecessarily cause a problem in a marriage. The consecrated individual might better fast in other areas.

**Comment:** Bringing forth children is a natural expectation.

**Reply:** Yes. Problems do exist in marriage, and intimacy is one of the most delicate subjects.

**1 Cor. 7:6** But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

The Revised Standard reads, “I say this by way of concession, not of command.” The theoretical ideal of the Lord is to remain in the single state, as Paul did in regard to his whole attitude, but not all can do so. It is desirable for the Christian not to marry, but the Lord has made a concession in realizing the problems and inabilities of certain people. Therefore, the advice on marrying is like a concession.

In chapter 7, Paul condensed a huge amount of information on married life. He used concise, terse statements to show what the Lord’s mind is on the subject. The Christian has to make a practical evaluation of the advice to know how to follow it. Jesus’ advice on marriage, plus this chapter and a comment Paul made in another epistle, provides a rounded-out understanding of the subject, generally speaking. In some cases, Paul said his advice was from the Lord, and at other times, the advice was his own personal recommendation.

**Comment:** Paul kept the marriage standard so high that if his advice were followed, many problems would be eliminated.

**Reply:** Yes, what “God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6).

**1 Cor. 7:7** For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift

of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

Paul preferred that all men be single like him, but “every man hath his proper gift of God.” In other words, some are born without feeling the need for intimate physical relationships, and Paul considered being one of these a “gift,” for having this “gift” eliminated a problem in his life. For such individuals, marriage does not make sense. However, for those who need intimacy, and thus would be in distress if they remained in the single state, it is better “to marry than to burn” (verse 9). Incidentally, in some well-intentioned marriages, both the man and the woman take a vow to remain virgins, but the vow does not make sense. It would have been better for them not to get married.

Jesus spoke about those who are born “eunuchs”—that is, lacking desire—because of some malfunction. Man was created to have this desire, so in perfection, Adam felt the need for Eve. The desire was implanted in the human nature so that there would be procreation. However, some do not have to fight that issue because they are born without it.

**Comment:** As brethren, we should not busybody or try matchmaking when we do not know what an individual’s situation is, what stand he might be trying to take, or even what his desires are.

**Reply:** That would depend on the degree of association. Some brethren express their feelings and are even looking for a mate. However, trying to help should be done prayerfully.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Matt. 19:12).

**Reply:** Yes, Paul came under the third category. He made himself a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven and the gospel so that he would not be hindered in service. In that day, slaves were sometimes castrated by their masters, hence were “made eunuchs of [by] men.” And some are born eunuchs.

Verse 7 is presented from the man’s standpoint because a woman would have more difficulty following the course of the Apostle Paul in doing missionary service, going from house to house throughout the country and facing the perils of land and sea. The woman has her place and other multiple opportunities of service.

The statement “every man hath his proper gift of God” applies here particularly to being able to contain oneself, but it also applies to other matters. Paul’s ability to keep his mind on the Lord was a “gift,” for some just cannot contain themselves.

**Comment:** In addition to being able to contain himself, Paul was better able to pursue his great desire and hunger to please God.

**Reply:** Yes, and the fact that his mind was constantly on the Lord helped him to contain himself. However, if the natural desire is too strong, one cannot blot it out, and it is advisable to find a wife or a husband.

**Comment:** The combined thoughts of chapters 6 and 7 indicate that anyone who is effeminate or homosexual must become a eunuch for Christ’s sake.

**Reply:** Yes, that could be read into the account. One who is born with that weakness has a great fight to become a eunuch as part of his Christian warfare. Others can become effeminate

by social fraternization (environment). Either way, one must commit to this fight for the Lord lest an abomination occur of man with man, woman with woman, or man (or woman) with beast.

Paul was saying, in effect, that marriage is honorable, but those who can contain themselves and remain single do better. In any case, one should stay occupied in the Lord's service because an idle mind can be filled with thoughts that displease the Lord.

**1 Cor. 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.**

**1 Cor. 7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.**

The "unmarried" (widowers or widows) could still have the problem of burning. If they "cannot contain," it is better for them to marry than to burn. However, it is preferable for them to remain unmarried.

Verse 1 applied to those in the single state, so Paul already covered the subject of the "unmarried" from the single standpoint. Therefore, the "unmarried" in verse 8 pertains to being unmarried through death—and hence widowers and widows, who are bereft of their spouse. In other words, Paul covered in order (1) the single state, (2) the married state, and (3) the unmarried state.

**1 Cor. 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:**

**1 Cor. 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.**

"Let not the wife depart from her husband" is a new subject. From the standpoint of the Holy Spirit, the Lord, generally speaking, frowns on separation and divorce, but exceptions and unbearable circumstances need to be considered. Verse 10 reads as follows in the Revised Standard: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband." Of course divorce is usually a more permanent rupture. If a marital situation is unbearable, separation is permissible. However, when two decide to separate because their spirituality is being jeopardized by staying together, it must be understood that they cannot be intimate with others to satisfy their desires. Therefore, intensity of desire should be considered before two decide to separate. "If she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." There are cases where a husband and wife have separated, and some years later they come back together again.

In other words, "But and if she [the wife] depart" shows there are exceptions where separation occurs. If the husband and the wife find that separation is necessary, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled. We should keep in mind that Paul was giving *general* advice here, for remarriage is permissible under certain circumstances.

"Let not the husband put away his wife." The term "put away" usually means divorce, but it can include physical separation. Especially in the days of the early Church, to abandon a wife was cruel because society did not recognize the woman for getting employment and supporting herself. Thus marriage was a form of security for women. This advice was directed to the husband because as the head of the household, he is more in the decision-making capacity that affects their mutual welfare. He cannot just break the marriage relationship by a whim and divorce his wife.

**Comment:** A husband can live under the same roof with his wife and yet effectively put her away in the sense of having no intimacy with her. There should be a mutual understanding. And one who habitually travels for long periods of time, such as on business trips, without the consent of the wife is also effectively separating from his wife.

Paul carefully phrased his words so that 95 percent of the advice applied down through the age, and the general tenor in which the advice was given is that the husband should have only one wife. However, in Paul's day, when Christianity was being introduced, some men who already had several wives subsequently consecrated and became Christians. In that circumstance, where multiple wives were dependent upon the man for temporal reasons, he was not to put away any previous wife. However, from henceforth (that is, after consecration) no more than one wife was to be obtained by any man who was single. Elsewhere Paul said that an elder should be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2), so any brothers who had more than one wife—even if the wives were obtained prior to consecration—were barred from eldership.

**Q:** With regard to conditions today, if a man were divorced prior to consecration and then remarried after consecration, would that bar him from eldership?

**A:** No. However, with regard to eldership, the Scriptures tell us to examine a man's family. For example, if his house is unruly and his children misbehave, that situation might bar him from eldership. Also, if a person manifested certain glaring weaknesses prior to consecration, then after consecration, if those prior proclivities are still evident, we might ask, Is it necessary for him to be an elder?

**Q:** An elder may have family difficulties through no fault of his own. Should such a brother decline eldership, at least temporarily, lest a stigma attach to the truth?

**A:** Yes, it would be advisable to decline, at least until the situation is clarified as to who is responsible. It is harder to judge situations dispassionately when one is in the middle of them.

**1 Cor. 7:12** But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

**1 Cor. 7:13** And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

Verse 12 and following verses apply "to the rest," that is, to those who are unequally yoked in marriage. A believing husband was not to put away an unbelieving wife. Paul was asked, If one consecrates after marriage, what should be the attitude toward the unconsecrated spouse? Wouldn't one's spiritual development be inhibited? Paul replied that if the unconsecrated party is agreeable and wants to retain the married relationship, let it be so, but if the unconsecrated spouse departs, the consecrated party should not fight, or obstruct, the departure.

Verses 10 and 11 are what *God* commanded "unto the married [in the Lord]," that is, where both husband and wife are consecrated. In verses 12-16, *Paul* began to speak to the unequally yoked, the advice being for the consecrated brother or sister who is married to an unconsecrated individual. The Apostle Paul was giving his personal advice, and when doing so, that advice was really from the Lord but on a less affirmative basis.

Verse 13 is similar to verse 12, except that it states the matter from the perspective of the consecrated wife in a mixed marriage.

**1 Cor. 7:14** For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife

**is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.**

In what way is the unbelieving spouse or are the children “sanctified”? Of course the unbelieving husband or wife has to remain with the consecrated one in order to be sanctified, and even then, he or she is sanctified *only if minor children* are involved. In a mixed marriage, the children are favored in certain respects because of the consecrated parent, or else they would be unholy, in which case the Lord would view them just like any other children in the world—no better, no worse. But considering the product of that marriage “holy” means the children are partially and tentatively justified, and the unbelieving spouse is partially sanctified by the consecrated spouse.

The ideal situation is where the conduct of the consecrated spouse persuades the unconsecrated partner to consecrate. However, there may be degrees in which a person tries to please the Lord without actually taking the full step of consecration. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” is the principle (James 4:8). For each step one takes toward the Lord, the Lord takes a step toward that individual. Thus there are degrees of recognition, and justification and sanctification can be both partial and tentative.

The Tabernacle provides an illustration of the degrees of holiness, justification, righteousness, and sanctification. The Court, the Holy, and the Most Holy are all called holy but in progressive degrees. One who walked or stood in the Court could not touch the Brazen Altar because it was holy. Accordingly, the “sanctified” husband and child(ren) are not on the same level as the consecrated wife.

**Comment:** The unconsecrated spouse and/or children may not be in a holy attitude at all.

**Reply:** Then they would be pictured by the rest of the Jewish nation, who were outside in the Camp, beyond the Court of the Tabernacle, yet they were justified. Their justification is shown in the New Testament where Jesus gave the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). Both went into the Temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men ... or even as this publican.” And the publican stood afar off, beating his breast and saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” In explaining the parable, Jesus said that the repentant, humble publican, who was sorry and felt he was far from the Lord, was more justified than the Pharisee, but both were justified. Thus those of the Jewish nation were recognized, even though they were reprobates. A certain degree of favor was extended to them so that when Jesus came at his First Advent, there was a mixture. Some were walking in an opposite direction, but being Jews, they were favored with his presence.

As stated in the Old Testament, God “married” the Jewish nation, and even though the nation sinned, they were still favored (Jer. 31:32). In the Tabernacle arrangement, all conditions of holiness were pictured. The Most Holy represented a condition of perfection of body as well as of character. The Holy represented a consecrated condition of development in character and the covering of Christ’s righteousness. The Court represented tentative justification through a measure of faith. The Camp represented those who were born as Jews, some of whom might not even be believers, yet they were favored. The point is that if there are various degrees of justification, why shouldn’t there be various degrees of sanctification? For instance, some feel one cannot even pray unless he is fully consecrated and justified. It is true that such individuals do not have the right to expect an answer to prayers, but nevertheless, God does hear the prayers of the unconsecrated. He *may* answer those prayers, but He is not obligated to do so.

Sanctification of the unbelieving spouse and the children is shown in the type in that anything the priesthood touched was considered holy—even a vessel or an animal, for example. And in the past, God demonstrated the principle of providing a measure of justification even where there was not a hearing ear. When prophets were sent to the Jewish nation over a period of



almost 2,000 years, all of the people were favored with the message, even though the vast majority rejected it. And so, when one in a family is consecrated, a providential favor is extended over the home. The promises are first made “unto you, and to your children” (Acts 2:39). In other words, some partiality is shown to a child of a consecrated parent in that when he comes of age, he is given an opportunity to respond if there is a vacancy. Of course a minor’s sanctification lapses when the Lord feels he has reached the age of discretion and responsibility. When a child reaches that state—the state of a more mature mind—he has to exercise his own judgment of whether or not to follow the Lord.

Unbelieving Jews are under the Law Covenant, yet other pictures show they are of their father the devil (John 8:44). Stated another way, the unbelieving element who are being favored are really of the devil because of a wrong heart condition, but if they do an about-face, God will grant them forgiveness.

The point is that there are *degrees* of justification and sanctification. Abraham was justified by faith, which is a different justification than that of the Church. Abraham’s faith justification to friendship with God occurred before the age of Spirit begetting, or the high calling. Justification to sonship during the Gospel Age is the same principle but on a higher plane—just as both a son and a servant are favored, but the former is more highly favored. Justification and sanctification are a *process*. There is usually a definite beginning; a period of activity, favorable or unfavorable; and a termination. Thus another way of saying “degrees of justification” is “progressive justification.”

To be honored *at all* with knowing *some* of the truth is a favor from God. In this case here in chapter 7, truth comes because God is dealing with the believing spouse. As a person responds and obeys, he comes into more and more fullness of favor.

There are two dangers in seeing full justification only. (1) The view that only the consecrated have a right to pray is *too narrow*. God may or may not answer prayers of the unconsecrated, but they have a right to pray. Incidentally, it is entirely in order for anyone to ask a blessing on a meal, but it would be wrong to ask someone unconsecrated to pray at a meeting. (2) Calling everyone “brother” and “sister” in the Lord—and thus not observing the difference between the consecrated and the unconsecrated—is *too broad*. There must be some discrimination with regard to how justification is viewed in the various stages of development.

**1 Cor. 7:15** But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

The Apostle Paul was giving his personal advice that in certain circumstances, a split would be advisable. Normally, it is better to try to keep the marriage together, as long as the unconsecrated party is agreeable, but the consecrated one would not be sinning if the unbelieving spouse departed.

**Comment:** If the unbelieving one wants to depart from an unequally yoked marriage, the consecrated individual should do some soul-searching to make sure he or she has tried to fulfill the scriptural marital obligations in every way and is not just grasping a way out.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true, especially since the Lord gave such strong advice in verse 11 to those who are equally yoked, saying they should do everything possible to remain together. With regard to a mixed marital relationship, Paul was saying the Lord’s desire is that they also remain together, although an exception is where the differences are serious. In other words, verse 15 should not be used as a loophole or an excuse for leaving an unhappy situation.

“God hath called us to peace.” Sometimes the consecrated try to make the unconsecrated do

things that the consecrated should do. However, the unconsecrated spouse should be just and fair-minded and allow the consecrated one to attend meetings up to a certain point. There should be a give-and-take—and thus peace as far as possible in the marriage relationship. Paul's advice in verse 15 is very helpful, for an unreasonable consecrated spouse can cause unnecessary trouble in the home by imposing his (or her) tender conscience on the unconsecrated partner. Of course with some matters, a definite stand has to be taken. Each consecrated person has to decide where to draw the line and where to compromise. If the unbelieving partner sees and appreciates fair-mindedness, he may consecrate himself.

“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart.” If the unbelieving spouse seeks (initiates) a divorce, so be it. However, the believing spouse cannot remarry unless (or until) the unbelieving one remarries or commits fornication. In other words, if a husband and wife are divorced and one of them remarries, the remarriage allows the other spouse to remarry, for the original marriage vow was to be faithful unto death. Stated another way, if one party breaks the original vow and either remarries or lives with someone else, the innocent party is free to remarry. Of course what happens before consecration is different from what happens after consecration. When one consecrates, he or she starts a new life.

**Comment:** The consecrated individual is not under bondage to keep the unbelieving spouse in the house if the unbelieving one wants to depart.

**1 Cor. 7:16** For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

The hope is that the conduct of the consecrated spouse will persuade the unconsecrated partner to consecrate.

**1 Cor. 7:17** But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Verse 17 is like a fundamental law, or general principle, with regard to one's situation in life; namely, one should walk in the same circumstances in which he was called. However, definite steps have to be taken in certain cases. For instance, if a bartender is called, he must change his profession, but if one is married when called, he should stay married, all things being equal.

**1 Cor. 7:18** Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

**1 Cor. 7:19** Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

**1 Cor. 7:20** Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Verses 18-21 are very practical advice, for many were troubled after consecration in knowing what the Lord wanted them to do. A general principle is that everyone is to remain in the state in which he was called.

**Comment:** For verse 18, the Amplified reads, “Was anyone at the time of his summons [from God] already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the evidence of circumcision.”

**Reply:** In olden times, there was a procedure to stretch the skin so that the incision was not seen.

**Comment:** Paul was saying, “If you are a Jewish Christian, do not try to cover up the evidence,

and if you are a Gentile Christian, it is not necessary to follow the Jewish Law.”

A Jewish Christian might wonder about circumcision, which is required by birth under the Mosaic Law. The advice was that he should not become uncircumcised in the sense of throwing all restraint to the wind and living and talking indiscriminately like a Gentile, for in so doing, he would be creating an unnecessary offense on Christianity. Other Jews would think he was unruly, irresponsible, and irreverent. In other words, a Jewish Christian residing in a Jewish home should not try to live like a Gentile by, for example, downgrading Jewish customs and holy days. Friction should not be raised unnecessarily. Another example is not working on a certain day. The Jewish Christian should be respectful of that custom, for it certainly is not sinful. The point is not to unduly create problems on issues that are not really that important, but if other Jews try to *compel* a Jewish (or Gentile) Christian to observe these customs, he should refuse. *Voluntary* observance of certain customs is much different from *compulsory* obedience to the Law.

If an uncircumcised Gentile Christian was called, he did not have to be circumcised, for he was not under the Law—not yoked to it—regardless of what Jewish Christians might urge. The ritual was not necessary or obligatory from a *religious* standpoint. When Jews wanted Titus, a Greek, to be circumcised, Paul took a vehement stand against the ritual lest circumcision seem obligatory for all Christians (Gal. 2:3-5). A principle was involved.

Timothy was another situation, for he was the product of a mixed marriage, his mother being Jewish. For appearance' sake and as an expediency, Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1-3). However, the circumcision was done voluntarily and privately and not under compulsion or commandment. Then, when Timothy preached the gospel message to the Jews, who knew that one parent was Jewish, a barrier was eliminated. Technically, Timothy did not have to be circumcised, but voluntary circumcision was a sacrifice for the truth's sake. Wisdom and prudence were used here.

Paul advised Titus one way because of principle and Timothy the other way because of discretion and the fact that his ministry would be less hampered. Thus there are exceptions to the general rule of verse 20.

**1 Cor. 7:21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.**

Verse 21 pertains to a servant. The issue of slave and slave master was very touchy. For example, a master and a servant might be in the same class. The temptation would be for the servant to reason, “We are all equal brothers in the Lord, so it would be unjust not to free me.” The Christian master was thus put in an embarrassing situation. Of course Paul said elsewhere that with Christians, there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, etc., but that statement applied *in the meeting* and was not to be carried outside the ecclesia (Gal. 3:28). In other words, outside the ecclesia, the servant-master relationship was to be maintained unless the master *voluntarily* freed the servant. The servant was not to seek or pressure the master for freedom lest the ministry, the truth, be blamed, but if the master, of his own volition, granted freedom, the servant should take it. Those who became Christians were to magnify the spirit of the Law. Otherwise, the danger was that one's motivation in becoming a Christian might be freedom from servitude. True Christians are not political; they should not promote social issues, for example, but should abide by the general tenor of the situation, circumstances, and age in which they are living. Any issues that are raised should be religious. The Christian takes a stand for God or His Word but is not a rebel in other areas of thinking. Unfortunately, many have been diverted from the gospel into other ostensibly good works, but they are not Christian works. These other areas may have a degree of soundness, but they are deceptions and sidetracks for the Christian.

**1 Cor. 7:22** For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

**1 Cor. 7:23** Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

**1 Cor. 7:24** Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

The point is that in the ecclesia, all are brethren and equal, but they are not equal outside the ecclesia. In Paul's day, having servants was a common practice, so if freeing Christian servants became a public issue that disrupted the societal arrangement, the Christian religion would be distorted. Therefore, one was to abide in the situation in which he was called lest he brought a bad name on the movement. Under the Jewish Law, there were also servants.

Paul was saying, "Consider yourselves. Aren't you bond servants of Jesus Christ? Therefore, even if you are not a servant in society, you are a servant under Christ. If you are satisfied and happy to be a servant of Christ, then follow my advice to remain in the circumstance in which you are called." In recent centuries, conditions have changed, and slavery is being abolished worldwide, generally speaking.

**Comment:** The Christian had to so abide only for a while, for if faithful, he would become a son.

**Reply:** The master may be demoted in the final analysis and the servant promoted.

1 Timothy 5:9-14 reads, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." The early Church had a form of relief. Since there was no Social Security (or equivalent), widows who were over 60 years of age and consecrated were supported by the brethren so that they would have the necessities of life. However, the brethren had to guard against freeloaders who might attend meetings to take advantage of this new, unheard-of type of relief from the brotherhood. Therefore, certain stipulations, or conditions, had to be met for widows to receive support, as follows: (1) They had to be age 60 or older. (2) The sincerity of their consecration had to be evidenced by *actively* being engaged in the truth in one way or another.

Paul advised the younger widows to remarry—those who were under 60, especially those who were middle aged—because in their idleness, they would be tempted to create mischief through being busybodies. This advice was particularly applicable to widows who were left with an income. Since inquisitiveness would lead to involvement in matters that were not their concern, remarriage and, depending on age, even having children were advisable, for the responsibility would help to keep them from being busybodies. Older widows were advised not to marry, but marriage would keep the younger widows from burning.

**Q:** Part of Paul's advice to Timothy was that "when they [the younger widows] have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry," yet he told them that they should marry. What is the thought?

**A:** If the younger widows felt they were not permitted to remarry and then remarried

anyway, they would be violating conscience. However, younger widows did not have to feel conscience-stricken about remarriage, for they were permitted to remarry. Earlier Paul had given the general advice not to remarry—"I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I"—but if the widows were young, full-blooded, and desirous of intimacy, it was better for them to remarry and even have children (1 Cor. 7:8). However, where there was no trouble of that nature, the widows should remain single. In other words, there were exceptions to the general rule, but one should try to remain single if possible. And widows 60 or older who met the criteria should be provided for.

Paul gave additional advice about older widows to the effect that, where possible, the family should assume the financial responsibility. "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:16). If the family was unable to provide support, the Church was obligated to help as long as the stipulations were met.

1 Timothy 5:15 states, "For some [widows] are already turned aside after Satan." This condition would occur if widows remarried in violation of conscience and/or were busybodies. By so doing, they would receive condemnation "because they have cast off their first faith." In other words, the chances of being members of the Little Flock would be very slight unless they repented and were unusually zealous for the remainder of their Christian walk. Life is one thing; the high calling is another.

### Other Scriptures About Marriage

**Matthew 19:6** - "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

**Malachi 2:16** - "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." The power of this verse is lost in the King James translation. The Revised Standard states, "For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless." By combining the first two Scriptures, we see the divine intent with regard to marriage: "God hath joined together"; "I hate divorce." Therefore, before one meditates the possibility of divorce, he should have in mind this general attitude of God on marriage.

**Mark 10:11,12** - "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away [divorce] his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away [divorce] her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." Verse 11 states the position from the woman's standpoint; verse 12, from the man's standpoint. Thus there is a reciprocal responsibility. The one who puts away his or her partner and marries another commits adultery.

**Matthew 5:32** - "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away [divorce] his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Here Jesus gave the one exception for divorce—fornication. Whoever divorces his wife *except for fornication* causes her to commit adultery. In other words, by depriving a wife of her marital rights through divorce, the husband is more or less causing her to look elsewhere. Stated another way, it is wrong for the husband to divorce his wife for any reason other than fornication.

This situation is also reciprocal, although it is not stated from the woman's standpoint because at the time the gospel was introduced, women did not have the rights that they have today. Not only did the man have more liberty in divorce, but he could marry more than one wife.

Had this verse been worded the other way, the gospel would have become a political issue. The issue of slavery was similar. The Bible does not command a Christian master to liberate his Christian slave. Instead the master is told to be just to his servant, and the servant is not to pressure his master for freedom. However, the Bible is hinting that, where possible, a servant should be given his freedom, and a good Christian master would probably liberate a Christian servant. The advice was wisely stated lest the issues of divorce and slavery be seized upon and associated with the gospel and thus prejudice the public mind against hearing even the kernel of the gospel, which is the confession of sin and the acceptance of Jesus as Savior.

**Comment:** The spiritual reason for stating divorce from the man's standpoint is that it would always be proper for the Lord to set aside the Church if she is not faithful, whereas she must be subservient to her Master.

**Reply:** That is true. And Mark 10:12 can be treated spiritually too: "If a woman [the Church] shall put away [divorce] her husband [Christ], and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

**Luke 16:18** - "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." Now a third party is involved. (The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have to be read to get the whole truth.) Whoever divorces his wife for a reason other than fornication and remarries commits adultery. And the outsider who marries a woman not scripturally divorced commits adultery. However, if a fornicating partner divorces an innocent partner, the innocent one can remarry. In other words, Luke 16:18 states a general principle, but the exception of fornication, stated elsewhere, must be included in the reasoning.

**Comment:** If husband and wife are both consecrated and they get a divorce, the class should be informed of the grounds for the divorce so that it would be known if either party had the right to remarry. Otherwise, years later a remarriage might occur, and the brethren would not know whether it was recognized in the eyes of the Lord.

**Reply:** Yes, it is the duty of a divorced consecrated person who remarries to reveal to the brethren the circumstances under which he (or she) felt the liberty to remarry. Of course if the reason is already public, it would not have to be disclosed again. For instance, suppose a husband divorces his consecrated wife and marries another. There may be no ostensible reason why he divorced his wife. However, the marriage to another party would be a public proof of his having committed adultery, and the woman, therefore, would not have to prove her case to the brethren—if she is innocent. In other words, if he did not get the divorce on the grounds of her having committed adultery, the presumption would be that she is innocent and that he broke the marriage contract. If the husband divorces his wife because she committed adultery, he would be free to marry another.

These questions should be studied and discussed in the ecclesias so that when a situation occurs, it will be analyzed *according to the Word*. The Bible is not studied sufficiently, just the *Volumes*. Divorce seldom occurred in the Pastor's day; in fact, divorce was scandalous. Now the ratio of divorce is one out of every two marriages, so the picture is completely different. If these issues were thrashed out, the answers to many questions would be self-evident.

In matters of divorce, the brethren should know the grounds. It is the responsibility of each ecclesia where a problem exists to ascertain the situation and then to inform the other brethren accordingly. Otherwise, the brotherhood at large can become contaminated. The ecclesia that does not bring up the problem and settle it is responsible for having failed to make the situation clear to the brotherhood. If each ecclesia did its own part, the Church as a whole would be cleansed, and brethren would know where they stand. The attitude "ignorance is

bliss” will not get one into the Little Flock.

**Comment:** If one refuses to fulfill marital obligations, the only alternative the other party might have is separation.

**Reply:** Yes, that problem was covered by 1 Corinthians 7:11, “But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband” and vice versa.

If a Christian husband or wife dies, the surviving party has the liberty of remarriage, for the marriage contract lasts only “until death do us part.” Paul said that if a person can contain himself or herself without a problem, it is advisable to remain single, although he advised young women to remarry. Either way, however, one has the liberty of remarriage.

A qualification of an elder that is sometimes misunderstood is that he “must be ... the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2). In at least one case, a brother was not re-elected elder because he had remarried after his wife died. But Paul was not referring to such a case in giving the qualifications of an elder. He simply meant that an elder should be the husband of one wife at a time. If the partner dies, the survivor can remarry and still be elder. However, if a brother divorces his wife and remarries, the divorce must be on scriptural (fornication) grounds for him to be elected as an elder.

If a consecrated one is divorced (whether equally or unequally yoked), the ecclesia should ask bluntly, “What were the grounds? Was fornication involved?” To not know would defile the conscience of those in the ecclesia in voting, as well as in fellowship and fraternization at conventions, for example.

**Comment:** Anyone considered for eldership should be more than willing to furnish those details. In fact, without being asked, a brother should know it is improper to expect fellowship without clarifying his position. Any deception with regard to eldership would be wrong.

**Reply:** Many brethren feel these items are too sensitive to discuss, but they are treated in Scripture. The grounds of a divorce need to be told but not the details.

**Q:** If a brother divorced his wife on grounds other than fornication and then remarried years later, he would be committing adultery in the eyes of the Lord. Should that issue be brought up before the ecclesia as a “1 Corinthians 5” situation? Or should a class trial be reserved for a current situation?

**A:** With regard to eldership, we should keep in mind, *even years later*, if a brother divorced his wife for reasons other than fornication and then remarried. He should not be elected elder. A newcomer to an ecclesia might not know for some time about a past situation, but concerning an elder, he should get the facts of the matter. Sometimes the ones originally involved with the matter have deceased or left the ecclesia, so that the great majority are unaware of the situation. In such a case, we can go directly to the party involved and ask him bluntly as an individual. That way we will know where we stand with him. Such questioning does not make us popular, but it is necessary.

**1 Cor. 7:25** Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

**1 Cor. 7:26** I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

Verses 25 and 26 review the earlier statements of verses 6 and 7. Paul said, “I have no

commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment.” “I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.” In other words, Paul was giving his advice. A virgin can be either male or female, meaning single and unsullied. If it is possible for an individual to contain himself, he should commit his life to the Lord and serve like the Apostle Paul. But Paul had already explained earlier that it is better to marry than to burn. He himself gave up having a wife; that is, he sacrificed certain comforts and joys for the Lord. Although some distress was involved, he was able to contain himself and, evidently, remained celibate for the rest of his life.

With regard to Arius, the messenger to the church of Pergamos, many sisters became so dedicated to Christ that they remained virgins and cooperated with Arius in his ministry, helping him in every way possible. What is striking is that no one found fault with Arius or questioned him, whereas today people would consider the situation to be a cult and would imagine all kinds of evil. Also, in addition to the apostles, many women accompanied Jesus at his First Advent. Jesus walked in front with the apostles, but certain accounts show that women followed behind.

**1 Cor. 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.**

**1 Cor. 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.**

General rule: If married, the husband (or wife) should not seek to be loosed. And if loosed, it is better to remain single if possible (whether male or female). Of course the circumstances that would result in being loosed from a wife are death and fornication.

If one who is single can contain himself, he should remain single. If one previously married finds himself (or herself) single through death or fornication, the individual should also remain single. However, if such a one marries, he (or she) has not sinned. And a virgin who marries has not sinned. The general rule is to abide by the circumstances one is in—if possible. Paul was giving advice here, not a commandment.

**Comment:** “Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.” Any who marry will have “trouble,” whereas for those in the single state, the desire is to please the Lord only. When married, even if both are consecrated, there is still a divided desire.

**Reply:** Yes, marriage is a sharing of opinions, and with the give-and-take, there is sometimes a little discomfiture because of the difference of opinions, even in a consecrated union. Hence some problems occur even in a happy married life. Also, marriage entails certain responsibilities. Occasionally, opportunity for service increases through marriage, but that would be the exception.

**1 Cor. 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;**

**1 Cor. 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;**

It is true that “time is short,” but from a practical standpoint, even the present life itself is short. The vanity and brevity of life are usually seen in later years, for those who are young find it hard to think of life that way.

Individuals who are married should be as though they were not, and those who weep, rejoice, and buy should be as though they did not. In other words, life is short, so whatever



experiences one has in the present life—whether weeping, rejoicing, or obtaining possessions—he will be awakened from the tomb in a completely new circumstance. Especially with the next life being eternal, having no end, as that life expands and goes on and on, the past life will seem like only a moment. A life of 70 or 80 years, when contrasted with 80 million years, is a mere point in time. And so the perspective will change. The experiences of the present life have their effect for good or ill, but in the time reference of the new life, the present life is short and as nothing compared with the *eternal* weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). Paul was a giant in character to be able to take this standpoint. He was taken in vision way into the future and allowed to see things that were unlawful for him to utter. The Lord evidently saw that the experience was needed for two reasons: (1) In wording prophecies and giving explanations, Paul was able to use the right adjectives, power, and reasoning. (2) His personal faith was helped. The reality of the future kept Paul from becoming discouraged as he was buffeted, persecuted, and forsaken.

**Comment:** Earlier Paul said that for the consecrated, all things are theirs. They can have things without possessing them (1 Cor. 3:21).

“Both they that have wives be as though they had none.” One who is consecrated can love his wife, but a million years from now, the situation will be very different, even in the earthly Kingdom. Jesus said that those of mankind who live on into the ages of ages will be as the angels and no longer marry (Luke 20:34-36). With regard to the Little Flock, we do not really know what the new association will be. Of course Jesus will have a personal relationship with each of the Little Flock, but each one may deal with a particular universe, for example, and a current spouse may be appointed to something else. Marriage has its blessing for good or bad in the present life, but when measured against eternity, the relationship may be completely different. With no need for sexual relations, each spouse may have honors in different directions according to what the Lord may have in mind.

**1 Cor. 7:31** And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

The Revised Standard reads, “And those who deal with the world [should be] as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away.” Verse 31 harmonizes with verses 29 and 30.

**Comment:** Another way of expressing verse 31 is to use the words of a hymn, “Touch lightly the things of this earth,” for we are to love the Lord more than mother, father, son, home, etc. Of course we must take care of our mortgages and obligations, but while doing so, we must keep them in perspective.

**Reply:** Paul was saying, “Do not become too attached to this world and its goods and properties, for you cannot take them with you. When you entered the world, you did not have goods and properties, so if you have them temporarily now, be thankful and be satisfied, for godliness with contentment is great gain.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* translation reads, “For the scene of this world is passing away.” Then a footnote states, “Probably a reference to the shifting scenes in the theatre.”

**1 Cor. 7:32** But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

The Revised Standard reads, “I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord.” Paul was saying, “Do not be full of cares”; that is, one should be without cares or special anxieties.

**1 Cor. 7:33** But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

His affections being divided, the one who is married is in continual danger.

**1 Cor. 7:34** There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

Those who sacrifice by staying single will be rewarded with proportionately more if they are faithful.

**1 Cor. 7:35** And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

“And this I speak for your own profit [not to bring you under bondage]; not that I may cast a snare upon you [not to restrain you from exercising your liberties], but for that which is comely [most favorable to you as new creatures], and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” Paul did not want to snare the brethren by urging them to make vows to remain celibate. A *voluntary* vow made after considerable thought is a different matter.

**1 Cor. 7:36** But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

“If any man think [by remaining unmarried] that he behaveth himself uncomely [improperly] toward his virgin [his female friend whom he has courted], if she pass the flower of her age [so as to have lost other matrimonial opportunities], and need so require [that she have a supporter or protector], let him do what he will [marry or not], he sinneth not: let them marry [if necessity dictates].” What is the thought behind a man behaving himself “uncomely toward his virgin”? In this situation, two unmarried close companions are keeping company, and no illicit sex is involved. Then the man gets the truth and consecrates. The woman may or may not be consecrated, but because he has been keeping company with her for several years, she is past the “flower of her age.” In other words, because of her age now, it is not so easy for her to marry another. Therefore, if the man wants to have her as his wife, it would not be improper to marry her. Because of their long-time companionship, the woman is probably expecting the relationship to be consummated in marriage. Being past “the flower of her age” can signify being not only beyond youth but also beyond childbearing age. For one who is consecrated to marry under that circumstance is an exception to the earlier general advice to remain in the state in which one was called. To marry her is not a violation of conscience.

In other words, if a man is already keeping company with a woman and then consecrates, he may feel that she is past the age of matrimony and that if he stays single to serve the Lord, who will marry her? Without this advice from Paul, a man who consecrates might feel it would be disobedient to marry the unconsecrated woman he has been keeping company with, but in this unusual circumstance, marriage would be permissible.

**Comment:** This advice is good for the man, but if the woman is the one who consecrates, she should not feel obligated to marry the unconsecrated man. To withdraw from the relationship and not marry would perhaps be better for her spiritually.

**Reply:** The decision would be hers, and in the final analysis, even the man who consecrates has a choice. The consecrated woman could just refrain from marriage, for the unconsecrated man could more easily marry someone else. Also, in those days, an unconsecrated woman was

more apt to need protection and financial support—hence the apostle’s advice.

As we consider the depth and the extensiveness of Paul’s advice to the Corinthians, we are reminded of his statement that daily “the care of all the churches” was upon him (2 Cor. 11:28). That statement was not just words, for he felt a very heavy burden and concern. Marriage is a touchy subject with a lot of variables, and Paul was trying his best to explain in simple language, with repetition at times, the general principles that should guide a Christian.

**1 Cor. 7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.**

The word “virgin” in verse 37 means “virginity.” The man who can contain himself and thus purposes to keep his virginity by remaining single and not marrying so that he can serve the Lord does well. However, to hastily make vows to remain celibate without studying the matter would be foolish.

Paul repeated the same advice several times, changing the phraseology slightly. Here he said, “Having no necessity.” He felt that such repetition was not vain, for Christians needed assurance and reassurance in understanding what he was trying to say.

**1 Cor. 7:38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.**

The Revised Standard reads, “So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.” Stated simply, the man who marries does well, but the man who does not marry does better.

**1 Cor. 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.**

Paul recommended the single state. If the husband dies, the general advice for the widow is not to remarry, but there are exceptions. Although refraining from remarriage is not mandatory, the requirement is to marry “in the Lord.” Now one is in a different situation in which no strings are attached, as they were in the previous case with two who were keeping company. Therefore, remarriage should be to a consecrated individual.

**Comment:** Once a woman has found the truth and loves it and has consecrated her life to the Lord, if she marries, she should marry one who is consecrated.

**Comment:** The scriptural advice is, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14).

A woman is bound to her husband (whether or not he is consecrated) as long as he lives, unless he has committed fornication. Here Paul advised widows to remain single, but elsewhere he advised young widows to remarry so that they would not become busybodies and a charge to the Church. Today young widows are often able to support themselves, so they should consider remaining single—unless they burn. The point is that *all* scriptural advice on marriage should be studied in order to have an answer for any problem that arises. Unfortunately, many violations of Scripture occur today with regard to marriage because of a lack of knowledge on the subject. Situations in families and ecclesias become needlessly entwined and confused because the Scriptures are not known and followed.

For example, when all of the Gospel citations on marriage are combined, we learn certain things. They all say, “Whosoever shall put away his wife,” but each citation gives another clue, something to consider further. Only Matthew states (and twice for the second witness), “except it be for fornication,” the thought being that whoever puts away his wife except for fornication and marries another commits adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). In other words, a person who gets a divorce without scriptural grounds and remarries commits adultery. Why did Matthew use that wording? Suppose a person got a divorce on an improper basis and did not remarry but had an illicit relationship. This hypothetical case is obvious fornication, but it has to be *proven* as such, whereas remarriage would be *evidence* of fornication. Therefore, when a consecrated party is divorced, the grounds for the divorce have to be declared publicly. Otherwise, remarriage is ostensible adultery. Stated another way, if the circumstances of a divorce are not made known, then when the consecrated individual remarries, we should assume he (or she) is committing adultery.

Another lesson is provided here. The husband who divorces his wife for reasons other than fornication causes her to commit adultery if she remarries. The wife is thus put in a precarious position. Those in the ecclesia must know the grounds for the divorce so that they will know how to vote at election time and also whom they can fraternize with.

Mark is the only Gospel to make the situation reciprocal with a woman. “And if a *woman* shall put away her husband [not for adultery], and be married to another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:12). Thus, unless the case and grounds are known, remarriage by either the consecrated husband or the consecrated wife is considered *prima facie* evidence of adultery, and the ecclesia should conduct itself accordingly. When the grounds are hidden and not made public, the consciences of brethren throughout the whole country are affected. Brethren are not in a position to play detective around the country, yet they are meeting divorced parties at conventions and do not know how to greet them. Should brethren shake their hands and greet them as “brother” and “sister”? Was adultery committed, and if so, by whom? If the local ecclesia does not make the circumstances known, the brotherhood at large does not know how to treat the divorced parties. To repeat, the grounds of a divorce *should be made manifest*, for otherwise, the leaven spreads throughout the entire nation. Brethren who are not aware of the advice in 1 Corinthians 7 will re-elect divorced parties to class office without knowing the grounds. They reason, “It is okay, for so-and-so got a divorce,” when the divorce may be a *proof* of fornication.

**Comment:** We are not to fraternize with consecrated adulterers.

**Reply:** The perplexity of a situation that has not been handled properly by an ecclesia erodes our own character because we cannot act in an affirmative manner except in our immediate neighborhood. Brethren must study the Bible to know how to handle these issues. The Apostle Paul provided a tremendous amount of information in this one chapter. Adding what Jesus said in the Gospels gives a rounded-out picture of how the Bible views marriage and divorce. And we read in Malachi 2:16 that God *hates* divorce.

**Comment:** Many brethren think it is evil speaking to expose these matters. Instead, by their secrecy, they are being more loving than God.

**Reply:** Yes, many erroneously think that love overlooks grievous sin. The whole Jewish nation was under covenant relationship with God. Under the Law, if a crime was committed and those who saw it did not report the crime, those witnesses were just as guilty as the perpetrator. The same principle applies to Christians, that is, in the Church. Grievous sin is supposed to be known. Following Paul’s advice strengthens the brethren—ourselves as well as others—and disobedience erodes. A little leaven leavens the whole lump is the principle (1 Cor. 5:6).

**Comment:** Children tend to view such sins with a gentle eye, for they do not understand the depths of the sin. They may even admire those who have been unfaithful to the Lord and regard those who have been obedient as faultfinders.

**Reply:** Yes, the wrong concept of love becomes a philosophy. Love cannot be more generous than the Lord. Those who stand up for principle are often viewed as hypercritical and unloving.

**Comment:** Being misunderstood is part of our sufferings for the Lord.

**Reply:** If brethren do not study and discuss these subjects in depth, how will they make proper decisions? They certainly will not make their calling and election sure, for one must *know and grow* to become a member of the Little Flock. Ignorance is not bliss! In fact, those who keep quiet and do not discuss these subjects in depth jeopardize not only themselves but also those who are associated with them.

**Comment:** The one who committed the grievous sin might be retrieved through proper repentance *if the matter is handled correctly*. The individual would be more likely to recognize the sin in time and repent and become part of the Great Company. The opportunity for repentance is practically cut off when an individual is accepted in his (or her) sin.

**Reply:** On the one hand, if brethren live in a Great Company atmosphere of thinking and then slide, they fall into Second Death. On the other hand, if those slide who have the objectives and goals of the Little Flock and are striving for the high calling, truly endeavoring to know their responsibilities, they are more apt to fall back into the Great Company.

In almost any area—doctrine, morals, or behavior—many brethren would rather not have controversy, and thus they do not investigate the subject. They feel one is more Christlike in character if he does not delve into a matter too deeply, for doing so will lead to turmoil. Therefore, they would rather evade the issue in discourses and studies.

Romans 7:1-4, which pertains to covenants, reads as follows: “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” The marriage Paul was speaking of here in Romans is a marriage to Jesus Christ. When Jews, who previously were under the Law, consecrated and followed Jesus, they no longer had to keep the Law and all of its requirements. Some Jews erroneously accused Jewish Christians of breaking the Law of Moses and committing spiritual adultery by following Christ. Certain Jews used this argument to disparage the ministry of the apostles, who were espousing the cause of Christ. However, Paul used this same argument for the truth. Those who come to Christ and become his disciples have, in a sense, remarried, but they have not committed adultery because a woman can remarry if her husband dies. Paul was saying that the “husband” (the Law) had died. From another standpoint, Christ is the “husband,” for he fulfilled the Law and died as a man on the Cross, nailing the Law to the Cross for the believer. Christians, those in the body of Christ, are represented in Jesus in the death of his flesh on the Cross. Those who consecrate become dead to sin, their flesh being crucified, and now they are alive as new creatures. “Yea, though we have known Christ after [according to] the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him [as such] no more” (2 Cor. 5:16). In this new relationship, it is as if the flesh did die. “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:19,20). In other words, in reckoning

our identity with Jesus' death on the Cross, we, too, have died. Therefore, whether we think of Christ dying or the Law dying, the result is the same.

The following Scriptures are also helpful. "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18). "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; ... that he might reconcile both [Jew and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:15,16). We are crucified with Christ; we are in his body (Gal. 2:20). "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

The last text, 1 Peter 2:24, is deep reasoning. On the Cross, Jesus bore our sins in his own body so that we, being dead to sins, can live unto righteousness. By being members of Christ, spiritually speaking, we become dead to sins and now walk in newness of life. We are walking after the spirit, for the flesh has been crucified. With regard to the death of Christ and the Law, by changing from Moses over to Christ, Jews can marry Christ in this new relationship without being disobedient to God or committing adultery. Paul used the argument of death one way, whereas the enemies of truth used it the other way, failing to see the deep reasoning.

**Comment:** We follow a *living* Savior.

**Reply:** Yes, henceforth we know Christ no more after the flesh. Of course we follow his example in the flesh to know how to walk in the present life, but he is alive. We are married to the *living* Savior.

**1 Cor. 7:40** **But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.**

"But she [the wife whose husband dies] is happier if she so abide [and does not remarry], after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God [the mind of the Lord on this subject]." The phrase "after my judgment" means that Paul gave *advice*, not a commandment. However, he thinks he has the mind of the Lord on these matters pertaining to marriage. Therefore, we should carefully consider his suggestions before marrying or remarrying.

**1 Cor. 8:1** **Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.**

A letter had previously been sent to Paul, asking for his advice on several matters (1 Cor. 7:1). Paul was now considering the question of eating meat offered to idols.

What did Paul mean when he said, "We know that we all have knowledge"? After reading the chapter, we find that the knowledge everyone possessed was the knowledge there was but one true living God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [love] edifieth." Unfortunately, this portion of verse 1 is sometimes used out of context to minimize the importance of having an accurate knowledge of the truth. It is said that knowledge is not important but that grace and character are all important. To make such a statement is not in harmony with Scripture.

Those who decry too much study of the Bible and doctrine say it is not edifying; they claim that the main thing is love for God and Christ. Only in this First Epistle to the Corinthians did Paul give knowledge a negative value. Several times Paul spoke about how knowledge puffs up and

promotes conceit, pride, and vainglory, but this epistle is the only place where he does this. In all of his other epistles, Paul spoke of knowledge favorably, saying it is desirable and essential for growing in grace. Even in the next epistle, his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul spoke very favorably about knowledge. The problem being addressed in this first epistle is that the Corinthians' use of knowledge had a deleterious and damaging effect.

Knowledge by itself can be injurious, whereas “charity edifieth”; that is, love builds up and is constructive. The words “puffeth up” indicate that knowledge can be harmful. Knowledge is damaging to those who give it too high an emphasis and then belittle love. The proper use of knowledge is that it expands and love fills in the expanded area. Each step of knowledge is to be followed by a step of grace.

Incidentally, Paul purposely did not refer to Acts 15:19,20, “Wherefore my sentence is ... that we write unto them [Gentile Christians], that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.” It is startling that he did not say, “At their first council, the apostles commanded to refrain from eating meat offered to idols and to abstain from fornication,” yet he addressed both topics in this first epistle. Paul had a reason for not mentioning the council. The apostles James and Peter simply issued a decree that the Jews were not to lay any burden on Gentile Christians except this added commandment of abstaining from fornication and not eating blood, things strangled, and meat offered to idols. In contrast, Paul spoke to the Corinthians as an apostle—this was *his* responsibility, for *he* had started the class at Corinth. He gave the *reasons* for abstaining, whereas the others just gave the commandment. He gave the *philosophy* behind the dangers of the supposed Christian liberty. The point is that if we love Christ and God, we must *discipline and modify* that liberty under certain circumstances.

In introducing the subject of their eating meat offered to idols, Paul first said, “We all agree that there is only one God.” Then he added (verse 4), “[Therefore,] an idol is nothing.” He was showing cause and effect.

**Comment:** The contrast is given between knowledge and love, but here knowledge is limited to the issue of eating meat offered to idols. The point was that the Corinthians' knowledge was not properly applied or mingled with love.

**Comment:** “Love” not properly understood and based on knowledge does not edify, and it can actually tear down.

**Reply:** Yes, love has to be based on knowledge. The statement is sometimes made that love is based on justice—that we must be just before we can be generous (loving)—but knowledge is necessary to know whether the feelings we are exercising are really love in the first place. As Jesus said, “If we love those who love us, what reward do we have?” (Matt. 5:46 paraphrase). There are all kinds of love and feelings of affection to one degree or another—family love, friendship love, conjugal love, etc.—but *God's* love is according to *knowledge*.

**Comment:** In *Reprint No. 3144*, “Knowledge Puffeth Up; But Love Buildeth Up,” the statement was made that the Apostle “points out the advantage of measuring oneself by growth in love, rather than by growth *merely* in knowledge—though, of course, *to be great in both knowledge and love would be the ideal condition.*”

**Comment:** Love is not understood by many because of their lack of knowledge of God's Word. As with the child who needs to be corrected, love can be severe and harsh for his own good. And love has its ultimate reward.

**Reply:** Jesus was rewarded because he *loved* righteousness and *hated* iniquity (Psa. 45:7; Heb.

1:9). His intensity of feeling and purpose were properly focused according to knowledge. While we are to govern our actions by conscience, the conscience needs to be instructed and regulated by Scripture. In other words, conscience is not just a matter of emotion and feeling. Paul said strong meat belongs to those who have "their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). Those who do not exercise their senses will not be able to discriminate between good and evil.

A lot of our thinking is askew because it is based on emotion and feeling. Each one of us personally has to adjust, for our definition of "love" must square with God's definition. Surely we would not do a lot of things that God has done if it were a matter of our feelings. God had Jesus crucified—a sobering question is, Would we have done so? God saw that in the long run, the Crucifixion was both for the everlasting welfare of Jesus himself—for the honor to which he would be exalted—and for the redemption of mankind.

Where principle and judgment are involved, decisions have to be made according to knowledge, not feelings, because all of us are abnormal and fallen in judgment to start with. Everything about us is warped. Along another line, we must know how to pray; that is, knowing how to pray requires *knowledge*. We try, to the best of our ability and by God's grace, to have the spirit of a sound mind as we grow older in the truth (2 Tim. 1:7). As stated in the *Reprint* article, love and knowledge go together, hand in hand. Or we could say that love and justice are related; justice comes first, and love operates based on justice. To love properly requires instruction and knowledge from God's Word. We will *progress* into perfect love, and thus eventually *reach the mark* of perfect love, *if* we are rightly exercised. Thus growing in love is one thing, and the attainment of perfect love is another.

**1 Cor. 8:2** And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Paul was speaking not against spiritual knowledge or maturity of thought but against knowledge as an accumulation of facts. To be a walking dictionary does not mean one is that spiritual, unless of course the knowledge has been laboriously acquired over many years of study. Certainly that kind of knowledge would be to the credit of the individual. It is the *use* of knowledge and understanding that is important. Discretion, discernment, and judgment are using knowledge in a *constructive* sense so that one is not just parroting a lot of facts.

"If any man [in Corinth] think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing." Paul was addressing the Corinthian brethren. Generally speaking, he did not talk this way in the other epistles. Many of the brethren in Corinth had a Grecian background, and knowledge was the weakness of the Greeks. The problem of the Jewish Christians in Corinth was the Law of Moses. Evidently, some in the class were brilliant speakers and thinkers but not when it came to Christian principles and precepts.

**Comment:** If any man has confidence in his *own* human wisdom, he really knows nothing.

**1 Cor. 8:3** But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

What bearing does verse 3 have on verse 2?

**Comment:** Those who really love God keep His commandments. As the Apostle John said, "Hereby we do know that we know him [God], if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3).

Another point on Paul's mind, which will come out later, is that a person can love God, but how do we, as spectators, know that the individual loves God? We may underestimate the merit and worth of another Christian because we are looking at the exterior. Paul was leading



up to the fact that Christ died for all of the brethren in the class. Where each one stood with the Lord—and even ourselves—is a question mark, for one must be faithful *unto death*. Verse 3 can be paraphrased, “If any man loves God, God knows the individual and is dealing with him.”

**1 Cor. 8:4** As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

Verse 4 states the real issue that Paul was addressing in chapter 8: the eating of things that are sacrificed unto idols. The Corinthian brethren wanted to know, Should we buy and/or eat meat offered to idols?

Verse 4 is tied in with verse 1. The Corinthian brethren all had knowledge (*gnosis*) that there is only one God and that an idol is nothing, but what should they do with that knowledge? The problems with an idol were as follows: The idol, or statue, was supposed to represent the unseen presence of a spirit being. The spirit being and the idol were a fake, but what was behind the idol and the god it supposedly represented was very real—demons and demon worship.

Gentile Christians in Corinth had been so imbued with the various practices and associations of idol worship that they were having a difficult time extricating themselves, especially because they had a false idea of another subject, namely, Christian liberty. One end of the spectrum is liberty, and the other extreme is license. We should fight for spiritual liberty to maintain our integrity, but liberty can be used in an abusive sense as license. License is liberty without any accompanying knowledge and understanding. The problem in society today is that there is no dividing line between right and wrong. The Bible gives us that dividing line, so if people do not believe the Bible is strictly the Word of God, there is an immense gray area, which is really a “fog” that prevents discernment of right and wrong. Because the Gentile Christians in Corinth had a past culture in their blood, they were continuing to do things from which they should have refrained. Initially, when they first got the truth, their conduct and thinking were purer in the simplicity of the gospel. If we examine our own lives when we first came into the truth and how we responded, we are amazed at how the Lord helped us to overcome certain past practices. We sang songs with fervor and rejoiced in the truth, and it is this love that can get tarnished over a period of time. To keep the fervency of spirit and love is a battle. We must discipline ourselves and not just go with the current. If we relax, we will go downstream.

**1 Cor. 8:5** For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

**1 Cor. 8:6** But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Corinth was in Greece, and false gods were worshipped in Greek mythology—gods in heaven and gods on earth. In fact, fallen angels, who came down here to earth and had children, are given different names in mythology (Gen. 6:1-4). In addition, the pope and other religious leaders are revered and recognized abnormally.

In other words, those who “are called gods [Greek *theos*] ... in heaven” are mighty (though fallen) spirit beings, and those who “are called gods ... in earth” are judges, etc. Paul was pointing out the *singleness* of worship that belongs to God. As the commandment states, “Thou shalt have no other gods *before me* [Jehovah]” (Exod. 20:3). The Gentile world had many “gods,” even Caesar, for example. In addition, Gentiles were immersed in worshipping idols—different personalities, both male (gods) and female (goddesses). To the Jews, idol worship was repugnant because of their background in the Law. The Corinthian ecclesia, being a mixture of

Gentiles and Jews, had a problem because of the culture of the Gentiles in idol worship.

**Comment:** Verse 5 in the Amplified reads, “For although there may be so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many of them, both of gods and of lords and masters.”

Two prepositions in verse 6 need correcting, as follows: “There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in [for] him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by [on account of or for] whom are all things, and we by him.”

First, we will consider the change of “by” to “on account of.” God is the Creator of all beings, worlds, etc. However, because the Bible translators were Trinitarian, their rendering of the prepositions reflects this influence. Moreover, Vine’s, word studies, and concordances are all colored with the Trinitarian viewpoint. According to their reasoning, if the prepositions, as used here, accompany a pronoun that is in the genitive or accusative case, that determines the significance. To a certain extent, that is true, but there are exceptions. Similarly, the English language has many exceptions in preposition usage.

The expression “we by him [that is, Jesus]” is limited to the Gospel Age as far as the Church is concerned. In this context, “all things” pertain to the Christian, for surely Paul was not referring to all nature, planets, other beings, etc. In the Gospel Age, no man can approach God except through Jesus, who is High Priest, Master, Lord, King, and Advocate. The term “all things” is modified many places in Scripture to mean “all things *in the context being discussed.*”

**1 Cor. 8:7** Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

**1 Cor. 8:8** But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

In verse 8, Paul was saying, “This issue is not about the meat itself, for meat offered to idols is not poisoned. It will taste just as good, has the same nutritional value, and is not polluted in a biological sense.” He was trying to eliminate this type of thinking, which was used by libertarians, because the real problem was along another line, as stated in verse 7. “There is not in every man [Christian] the knowledge that libertarians are taking.” In other words, the libertarians were correct in their reasoning about the meat, but having truth per se was not the answer to the problem with the Corinthian brethren. And what was that problem? It was the *weak conscience* of others. However, if the meat was dedicated to some god *in the presence* of a Christian, to then eat the meat would be a stench to God. The Christian should realize that in such an obvious case, to eat the meat would be wrong.

The peripheral practice of the meat being sold in the market needed to be addressed. Not all Christians had *discretionary* knowledge, including those who pridefully thought they had knowledge. “For some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.” One Christian might say, “There is nothing wrong in eating meat offered to idols. The meat is available nearby, and it is reasonably priced.” However, another brother who did not have as wide a range of understanding and knowledge might also eat, but in doing so, his conscience was being affected. As Paul showed, the erosion of conscience is dangerous, for it is difficult to recover from any damage that is done. “Their conscience being weak is defiled.”

**1 Cor. 8:9** But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

Paul continued to talk about those whose conscience was weak. To put a stumbling block before another person is a serious matter, for we influence others by our behavior, or conduct, as well as by our lifestyle and talking. Paul suggested that the liberty is real but that the Christian has to curb his liberty and not use it carelessly.

**Comment:** With the issue of a weak conscience, we should be particularly aware of the newly consecrated. In time, the conscience becomes more educated through the Word of God, but we could easily stumble a babe in Christ through carelessness.

**Comment:** In the past, when Catholics were forbidden to eat meat on Fridays, we would be sinning if we invited some of that faith to our home for dinner and then deliberately served meat on that day of the week.

**Reply:** Yes, we would be showing a lack of charity toward others. However, if a Catholic came in unannounced, or uninvited, while we eating meat on a Friday, we could continue to eat and try to explain why.

**1 Cor. 8:10** For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

Verse 10 is saying, "If someone sees a consecrated brother eating meat in an idol's temple, won't that act weaken the conscience of the other individual?" What would be a comparable situation today? How would one "eat meat" in an "idol's temple"? Obviously, one who is consecrated would not kneel at an altar in a nominal Church and take communion. Therefore, "eating meat" in an "idol's temple" would be slightly different today. In Paul's time, a temple was a large structure that was more like a complex, having other facilities both in the building and in the court. Today some churches have a parish house that is adjacent to, but separate from, the church proper. People who are not identified with the communion of that belief might feel freer to eat a supper at the parish house than in the church where the service is going on. And under certain circumstances, a brother could feel that it would be quite all right to eat there, since the parish house is not the church proper.

Notice that the Apostle Paul did not just say, "To eat meat in an idol's temple is absolutely wrong." He did not reject the matter outright because to do so would not have been the right answer. Paul felt that while under certain circumstances, eating meat in an idol's temple might be permissible, it was not advisable. However, although eating meat in an idol's temple could be done without violating one's own conscience or even a principle, how the eating might affect the conscience of others was the issue. In other words, one should not use his liberty as a stumbling block to others.

To get meat in the old days was a problem. In the marketplace, one could sit in the temple complex. The tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians supplies more information.

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

"Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

"For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

“If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

“But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof:

“Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience?” (1 Cor. 10:23-29)

While we might have liberty to do certain things by the way we reason on a subject—while the action might be permissible—we should consider whether doing so would injure others. The tense in the King James in chapters 8 and 10 should be changed, the thought being “meat which *previously had been* offered to an idol.”

If we understand history correctly, people brought food offerings to these heathen temples, just as the Jews did to the Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple. Agricultural products, as well as meat, were brought to offer to the god that was being worshipped. The priesthood collected all of the food offerings, and when they received an overabundance, they sold it in the public market (the open marketplace, the “shambles”) and brought back the revenue. This solution was practical, for it eliminated storage and spoilage problems. All kinds of meat were being sold in the public market, so Paul advised Christians not to ask the source of the meat. For example, the brethren did not have to ask, “Did this meat come from the temple or from a private farmer?” The same is true today. If we go to a supermarket, we do not ask where the meat came from. However, if we saw the meat or other food actually being offered at an altar, then to eat it would be too flagrant, even if the individual knew the god was false.

By not asking questions about the source of the meat, one’s own conscience was not violated. The advice was to buy without asking. Today the goods could even be stolen, but again, one should not ask. To get into that kind of scrutiny on every item, questioning the background and character, would prevent one from earning a livelihood. Paul was saying, “Do not question or ask the source of (1) the meat sold in the open marketplace or (2) the meat served in someone’s home.” The same principle applies to paying taxes. The Christian is not morally responsible if the government uses a portion of the tax money to make war munitions. However, if a person comes around asking the Christian to buy a war bond or to pay a particular tax or to make an investment that is directly related to war or something immoral, the answer would be no. Also, in general living and in places of employment, we should not be policemen and ask a lot of questions, for we would find a lot of things amiss, and we have enough problems in our Christian walk.

Chapters 8 and 10 discuss the same issue: eating meat offered to idols. In between, in chapter 9, with Paul’s tremendous breadth of knowledge, he talked about all kinds of subjects that were related, even though “idols” were not specifically mentioned. However, Paul never lost his trend of thought, so in chapter 10, he again picked up the same theme. Altogether, the Christian is given the perspective to properly judge certain matters. On some things, we should be very strict, and on other things, we should wink the eye and not investigate too closely—*according to what the Bible says on any subject*. Otherwise, we would just be following a general rule that is to our liking and applying it to everything. We would be letting the flesh do the choosing, being strict where we should be liberal, and liberal where we should be strict.

**Q:** If a Christian did defile his conscience, what would be the punishment?

**A:** The punishment becomes automatic in that the repeated violation of conscience becomes a habit, which in turn leads to a destination. A violation of conscience is more damaging to our

character than making a mistake. As an illustration, there are various kinds of wounds. We get scratches and bruises, but the more serious injuries that are deeper and internal are harder to cure and require a physician. Spiritually speaking, we are sorry for certain things that are superficial injuries. We tell the Lord that we are sorry we made a mistake and that we will try to do better the next time. However, for a more serious matter, definite steps have to be taken.

**Q:** Would our relationship to the nominal Church be a parallel tie-in today? Are there certain circumstances where we might enter a nominal Church and other times when we should not?

**Comment:** The Pastor stated that if we have no one to fellowship with, we could go to the nominal Church under certain conditions. To do so would be better than having no spiritual fellowship at all.

**Q:** But what are those conditions? Would the circumstance have to be where we are free to express our own opinion? One who is sitting in a pew listening to a minister give a sermon in a tight format does not have that liberty.

**A:** If we are ever in a circumstance where we would go into a nominal Church, we should attend a Bible study or a testimony meeting where there is opportunity to question or speak.

**Q:** But that would be on a regular basis. What about occasional attendance if someone in our own family were a member of the nominal Church? Where would we draw the line according to Scripture? The Pastor wrote that we should not be afraid to enter a nominal Church, but how could regular attendance ever be satisfactory under any condition?

**A:** One would choose a Bible study where there is communication. One should be able to question the leader of the study, point out inconsistencies in question form, etc. "If you say so-and-so, wouldn't that mean such and such?" Only a minority of the church membership would attend a Bible study. Similarly in our midst, the more serious-minded brethren attend regular weekly meetings, not the gatherings with more social benefits. The earnest ones are more interested in knowing about the Bible.

Attending a Bible study would be an opportunity to give a witness. Then, when the witness is not received, it would be time to withdraw. The Apostle Paul went to the synagogue to witness, even after the nominal Jewish house was left desolate, being cast off. If the message was received, he stayed there for perhaps a few weeks. When persecution arose, he left the Jewish sector and went to the Gentiles. After a while, the persecution got so great, he could no longer go to the synagogue.

When people brought individual offerings to God in the Jewish dispensation, they could sometimes eat the remaining part of the animal after giving the priest the right shoulder and the breast. And facilities were even provided for the meat to be eaten in the Temple court. The distinction is that the meat was offered to God, not to idols. A special part of the animal was put on the altar for God, and the fire that consumed the sacrifice represented His acceptance, His eating of that which was offered. That was the proper thinking, for the ordinance was written by Jehovah, the one true God. Satan copies God and Jesus in many, many ways, and so heathen religions did the same things but made the offerings to idols, to demons. They had vulgar bacchanalian services right in the heathen temples and prostitution by the vestal virgins. God had the services in their purity, with the animals depicting holy things, but the degrading services in the heathen temples were like going to a party. Of course the false priesthood got the revenues and took advantage of the people financially. Therefore, for a Christian to sit and eat meat in the idol's temple was entirely wrong, for it made him a participant. He was right in the devil's house, eating the food.

On the one hand, if a Christian received meat indirectly—from friend or relative, for example—Paul’s advice was to eat the meat and not ask any questions. That way the conscience of neither the donor nor the Christian would be affected. Once the Christian asked where the meat came from, if the source was the temple or its precincts, then the meat could not be eaten. On the other hand, if a Christian is invited to someone’s home and a toast is given contrary to conscience, the Christian should not participate in the toast.

**1 Cor. 8:11** And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

**1 Cor. 8:12** But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

**1 Cor. 8:13** Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

“Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish.” Verse 11 is strong and shows the seriousness of violating conscience. It is not just merely that we could weaken the conscience of our brother by eating meat offered to idols, but causing him to go against his conscience could make him “perish,” that is, go into Second Death. Sinning against conscience, which means one is starting to go downhill, is different—and more serious—than a fault that one might commit through other circumstances. One could recover more easily from a fault depending on the nature of the transgression, but a transgression of conscience, which seems on the surface to be relatively minor, is difficult to reverse. Consider verse 10 again: “For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols?” Notice that here the emphasis of perishing is put not on the one doing the eating but on the danger to the *weak* brother who sees the stronger brother eating meat in the idol’s temple. Paul condemned the stronger brother not from the standpoint of saying how utterly wrong he was in his action but from the following standpoint. While the stronger brother might, with impunity, eat meat offered to idols and not violate his own conscience, doing so could hurt the weaker one by emboldening him to also eat. In other words, the weaker brother would eat because of the example of the stronger brother, but the weaker brother would not be eating based on scriptural knowledge, whereas the stronger brother knows the idol is nothing and does not affect the meat one iota. The properties and nutritional value remain the same whether or not the meat is blessed in the name of the idol. However, the weaker brother is defiling his conscience by following the example of the stronger brother. Paul’s advice shows the great responsibility of conduct.

**Q:** What would be a present-day application for the principle of not eating meat offered to idols lest another brother’s conscience be defiled?

**A:** In Paul’s day, the setting was the temple complex; a current application might be drinking wine in a restaurant. Some whose conscience would bother them might follow the example of a brother who knew from the Scriptures that he could drink wine. None of the disciples had a troubled conscience when Jesus drank wine because water was scarce and wine was a common beverage. In addition, Timothy was told to take a little wine for his stomach ailment (1 Tim. 5:23). Today some feel, from the standpoint of conscience, that drinking wine is improper, but if they see other brethren drinking wine, they may be emboldened to violate their own conscience. It is wrong to hurt others by using liberty, for violation of conscience is dangerous.

**Q:** Does the term “weak brother” apply to one who is consecrated?

**A:** Yes, although to a certain extent, it can have other applications, especially with regard to the public. If we were discovered drinking wine and then backed down, the dissimulation would

be considered a tacit admission that we were wrong. But if we were among a worldly or even a nominal Christian element that looked down on drinking wine, it would be wrong for us to drink wine, for we would be lowering the gospel in the eyes of the world. Using our liberty in a way that might adversely affect others is a wrong principle. And of course there are certain circumstances where drinking wine would not bother others, for they do not see it as an issue.

Verse 12 shows the seriousness of defiling another's conscience: "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." Not only is one wounding the weak conscience of another individual, but that wounding may result in the individual's perishing in Second Death. Moreover, carelessness in the use of liberty makes one impervious to drawing lines between right and wrong—a condition of great danger.

**Comment:** The same *Reprint* article, No. 3144, provides other helpful comments. "Love, after securing knowledge and liberty, will look about to see what effect the use of liberty might have upon others.... Love, therefore, would forbid the use of knowledge and liberty if it is perceived that their exercise might work injury to another.... We need to be on guard lest we use our liberty in such a manner as would stumble others weaker than ourselves." It is a serious crime to stumble a brother or others and hence prevent the latter from becoming brothers or of the household of faith. "Whoever has the spirit of Christ ... has already covenanted ... to use his liberty, not in the promotion of his fleshly desires, ambitions and appetites; but in self-sacrifice...." The Apostle does not mean, however, "that the Lord's people are to favor the mental crotchets of each other in such a manner as would be [to] the general injury of the church [for example, eating no meat at any time or objecting to the singing of hymns]." With regard to the latter point, sometimes the consciences of brethren are so improperly educated that to bow to their wishes would actually hurt the spiritual atmosphere of the ecclesia.

**Reply:** Yes, this can happen with brethren who are vegetarian. The *principle* of not eating meat offered to idols can be carried too far, so that we are burdened with the thoughts of others, which may not be proper and would give a wrong meaning to the gospel. They might have us observing the Law, for example.

**Q:** The *Diaglott* reads, "And will not the weak brother, on account of whom Christ died, perish by this thy knowledge?" Shouldn't the weak brother refrain because of his knowledge?

**A:** Yes, he should refrain, and if he does, at least he is preserving his conscience. For that reason, the Pastor said to never go against conscience, but the conscience needs regulation. Nevertheless, if knowledge is not sufficient, one should at least obey his conscience.

**Comment:** The conscience is a control, a standard, a principle, that is set up in the mind of what the Lord's will is, but sometimes what we think is not the Lord's will.

**Reply:** Nevertheless, we should obey for the present, even if later on, we are instructed otherwise and find that our conscience was not properly educated.

Incidentally, where instruction is given on a subject, we would not be limited to the whims and fancies of different brethren, for they would be present to hear scriptural explanations as to why we do or do not do certain things. That situation is a lot different than just acting without the opportunity of knowledge.

We must be especially careful not to violate the conscience of new converts. They should be carefully observed because of their different background and probable lack of scriptural regulation.

In the case of principle, we should have the opportunity to express our reasons. For example, if

a brother had to go into a saloon for an entirely innocent reason, such as auditing the books, he should make known the purpose and state that he did not go in for a drink. If we can explain ourselves, we are not fettered. And if we can explain our principles—if there is opportunity for discussion—then we do not violate the conscience of others.

**Comment:** Since the principle stated earlier is so important, it bears repeating. If we are doing something we know is permissible—such as drinking a little wine—and we receive a *surprise* visitor who disapproves, we should not dissemble, for doing so would be an admission we are wrong and are guilty. However, with regard to everyday living, if we associated with an element who disapproved of drinking (nominal Christians or otherwise), we should refrain from drinking wine. Not doing so would lower the gospel standard in the eyes of the world.

Back to verse 13: “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” Does verse 13 necessarily mean that Paul was a vegetarian? No! Jesus, our special example, ate and drank, so Christians have that liberty (Matt. 11:19). Paul meant that *under this circumstance*, he would not eat meat—he would totally abstain—if eating would make a weak brother violate his conscience. Incidentally, we do not believe Paul was a vegetarian, although we cannot prove the statement.

**Comment:** 1 Timothy 4:4 reads, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.”

**Reply:** That text states a principle but does not tell about Paul’s personal habits.

**Q:** Is the thought in verse 13, “Wherefore, if meat *offered to idols* make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh *under this circumstance* while the world standeth”?

**A:** Yes. Paul was saying, “In my ministry, I am very careful in this matter to make sure that I do not offend any weak brother.” The Corinthians were not to flaunt their knowledge lest they ruin the character of another brother who knew and loved God.

**Q:** Would a practical example of this principle today be the following? If we were traveling in Israel and entered Dome of the Rock, we should observe the Muslim customs by removing our shoes and the women covering their heads. In other words, we should not desecrate their place of worship in violation of their conscience. For the same reason, a woman’s head and arms should be covered and a skirt worn when going to the Wailing Wall. By permission, we are on the property of others and should respect their customs, generally speaking.

**A:** That would be the principle for the sake of the conscience of others. We should follow the principle of Paul’s advice where we deem it expedient.

Some brethren who think they are right may try to persuade us to do something that is not scriptural. An example is coercing one to be a vegetarian. However, the tail should not wag the dog. Individuals with a dominant or leading spirit who have warped thinking on some subjects should not be allowed to control the class lest the thinking become “foolish” in the sense that Paul criticized the Galatians. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?... Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:1,3). If Paul and Peter were here today and their identities were not known, we can be sure there would be a lot of strong talk, and they would not be invited to speak again in many places. They would be invited only to the home of a small number of individuals who felt the thinking was correct. Would the teaching of the apostles be popular if they were in our midst today and spoke the truth? Would they be frequently on the platform? We do not believe so.



**Comment:** Today the apostles' message would not be received well from the platform, for even back there, the brethren in Asia forsook the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 1:15).

The *power* of Jesus was an essential part of his gospel, for otherwise, the gospel, the candle, would have fizzled and gone out. Jesus had to speak with strength and without fear of the consequences. He even ridiculed the scribes and Pharisees to their faces.

If a person is weak in conscience but bold in speaking, so that the tail wags the dog, he is putting the class in bondage. The class should not tolerate the situation for fear of hurting his or her feelings, for the individual's feelings in such a case would be entirely wrong. Brethren tend to conform because they are so concerned for the individual. As a result, the class may follow for years the policy of someone who is weak in understanding.

Certainly brethren should not allow others to Judaize Christianity. Instead of the Christian's helping the Jew, the Jew Judaizes the Christian. Consequently, some Christians do everything for Israel—it becomes the gospel of Israel—whereas the gospel is for the Christian, Jew or Gentile. Along another line, many sincere Christians have the distorted gospel of good works—feeding and clothing the poor. If spirituality is lacking for these or other reasons and there is very little understanding of the Bible, we should disassociate ourselves from that group and meet elsewhere to worship more in harmony with the Word.

Incidentally, in the second epistle, Paul changed some of his advice to the Corinthians because by that time, they had developed, even the ones who thought they had knowledge. Formerly they lacked spiritual understanding, but they grew in the interim.

**1 Cor. 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?**

Verse 1 is not an abrupt change of subject but a continuation of the same subject, as shown by 1 Corinthians 10:23-26, which talks about conscience and the eating of meat offered to idols from another standpoint. Therefore, chapter 9 is a parenthetical thought of the *principle* of not using our liberties indiscriminately. Paul was momentarily digressing on the importance of considering the conscience of others. Our liberties must be curbed at times if we would become members of the Little Flock.

Why did Paul ask, “Am I not an apostle? am I not [a] free [man]?” An apostle is “one sent forth,” that is, a special teacher. God gave Paul a commission, which he voluntarily accepted, to go all over the world preaching the gospel. In one sense, he went as a free man with certain liberties, but in another sense, he became a bondservant of Jesus Christ, forsaking his liberty to serve as an apostle. He voluntarily accepted this restriction. Verse 1 serves as a preface to Paul's coming remarks on the principle of self-denial, which he practiced in various directions.

“Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” Paul asked these questions because some of the brethren were questioning his apostleship. Therefore, he had to remind them of his close affiliation with Jesus. In other words, “Doesn't common sense tell you that I am an apostle? Don't you observe that I am going out of my way to travel to different places, risking my reputation and being rebuffed?” In weighing Paul's ministry, they should have observed his deeds. He was a worker, and he had seen Jesus. Earlier he said, “Though you have many teachers in this ecclesia, yet you have only one father” (1 Cor. 4:15 paraphrase). Since many of the Corinthians were putting themselves on a par with him, or even above him, he had to remind them in different ways that they were not on his level.

**Q:** Were some of the Corinthians questioning Paul's apostleship because he had not seen Jesus during his earthly ministry? Although Paul was not one of the original 12 apostles, he was

specially chosen later, and he saw the risen and glorified Lord Jesus.

**A:** Yes. He also defended himself by saying, “I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5). Those who criticized Paul felt that a prerequisite for being an apostle was seeing and communicating with Jesus. However, Paul not only saw Jesus but saw him in a way no one else did—as one born before the due time (1 Cor. 15:8). Paul was on his way to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him. Although Paul was blinded by the experience, Jesus said Paul would be his representative to both Jews and Gentiles.

“Are not ye my work[manship] in the Lord?” (see the RSV). Since Paul had established the class in Corinth, the ecclesia was his “workmanship in the Lord.” Many well-known individuals in positions of authority had sacrificed their reputations to listen to Paul, consecrate, and accompany him on his journey, thus helping him in his ministry. Now Paul was reminding the brethren that he had been a “father” to them, a life-giver, as it were—that he was “one sent forth” to represent the Father and Jesus and to bring the gospel to them.

**1 Cor. 9:2** If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

The Corinthians were the “seal” of Paul’s apostleship, the *evidence* that the Lord was dealing with him. Paul was responsible for the miraculous accomplishment of starting the first class of Christian believers in Corinth. Clearly, the Lord had used Paul as his minister to plant the seed there, and the seed produced results when they responded wholeheartedly.

**1 Cor. 9:3** Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

“This is my defense to those who would examine me” (RSV). The Corinthians were *examining* the *Apostle* Paul. By questioning whether he really was an apostle, having apostolic authority, they were trying to lower Paul to their level and elevate themselves. How clever! (We are reminded of how Miriam and Aaron questioned Moses’ authority, trying to bring him down.) Paul would now elaborate and use logic.

**1 Cor. 9:4** Have we not power to eat and to drink?

Why did Paul ask this question? His personal sacrifice and behavior were another evidence of his faithfulness and apostleship. He curbed his personal liberties, even though he had “power to eat and to drink.” His behavior was obviously different from that of the others in that he greatly restricted himself. With regard to meat and drink, he was very careful not to offend anyone. If any of the Corinthians were awake, they should have noticed that Paul was sacrificing a lot in order to enhance his message. Even if they differed with him in doctrine, they should have respected his desire to serve and please God. As Jesus said, “If you cannot accept my teachings, at least appreciate the works that I am doing” (John 10:25,38; 14:11 paraphrase). If the Jews accepted Jesus’ works, then maybe later on, they would also accept his teachings. He was trying to reach through the barrier of Jewish prejudice and training. The Apostle Paul was speaking similarly here, and the Corinthians should have observed his deeds.

**Q:** Were some of the Corinthian brethren holding on to pagan philosophies?

**A:** The weak brethren still had pagan ideas, even though they had consecrated. Therefore, Paul said to them, “Some eat as a thing offered unto idols to this very day” (1 Cor. 8:7 paraphrase). Because of this problem, Paul purposely restrained himself and did not eat in the temple.

Those who examined Paul, questioning him repeatedly, were high-minded, considering themselves superior to him (1 Cor. 4:8). They were wise, but they wrongly reasoned from a

philosophical standpoint.

**Comment:** Previously those individuals had pride in their positions, professions, and learning. When they consecrated, they just transferred that pride and ego into religion.

**1 Cor. 9:5** **Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?**

“Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas [Peter]?” (RSV). Paul could have had a wife had he so chosen, but his refraining from the privilege of marriage for the Kingdom of heaven’s sake was another evidence of his sincerity and his being used of the Lord. He was committed to full-time service for the Lord. Jesus said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” and this was also true with regard to the Apostle Paul in that he had no continuing residence (Matt. 8:20). Had Paul married, he no doubt would have had a home.

In observing a person, we should look for certain evidences of whether he really is being used of the Lord. Factors like popularity with the world, academic degrees, appearance and/or physique, and oratory are meaningless. The high-minded element in Corinth examined Paul hypocritically and did not observe his sacrifices for the Lord and the truth.

**Comment:** Jesus’ natural brothers married and had wives, as did Peter and other apostles.

**Reply:** Yes, the “brethren of the Lord” were children Mary had later, subsequent to the birth of Jesus through miraculous conception (Matt. 13:55). James and Judas (Jude) became apostles.

Some actually followed Peter. If a brother wanted to be outstanding in the class, he might use Peter for his own purposes, just as some today might excessively honor Pastor Russell when, in reality, they are promoting themselves. They raise up the Pastor and pat him on the back but with ulterior motives of self-advancement. In Paul’s day, the teaching element who said, “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” etc., pretended to honor the individual, whereas they were really advancing themselves.

**Comment:** Verse 5 is very revealing, for Peter, supposedly the first pope, had a wife.

**1 Cor. 9:6** **Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?**

“Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?” (RSV). At this time, Barnabas was not with Paul. He had accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey, but later they had a dispute about John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. Paul then had Silas accompany him, and Timothy joined them at a later date. Therefore, the first missionary tour is the only one in which Barnabas accompanied the Apostle Paul. From then on, others went with Paul. In view of this background, Paul’s bringing Barnabas into this First Epistle to the Corinthians is interesting. In spite of their earlier dissension, Paul appreciated the fact that Barnabas also, for the furtherance of the gospel, had denied himself certain privileges and liberties. Thus verse 6 is more or less a commendation of Barnabas, who was still active and faithful in the service.

Later in life, Paul also commended John Mark. Paul and John Mark had gone on a missionary journey into Asia, but at a certain place, John Mark left Paul and returned to Jerusalem. Paul was disturbed by his departure, so when John Mark wanted to go on the next missionary journey, Paul refused to have him. As a result, there was a split, with Barnabas and John Mark going together, and Silas accompanying Paul.

Paul's speaking favorably of Apollos and Barnabas in this epistle shows his nobility and grandeur of character. Apollos did not have the same level of knowledge, yet Paul highly regarded him.

**Comment:** The problem was that Paul and Barnabas were working for the Lord, but the Corinthians who were receiving financial support from the brethren were not doing gospel work. Paul was saying sarcastically, "Are we the only ones who have to work?"

**Reply:** Yes, and the sarcasm will be even more pronounced as the account proceeds. In asking these questions, Paul was building up to a particular point that should have brought his "examiners" to their senses to see how very faithful and real he was as an apostle.

**1 Cor. 9:7** Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

These rhetorical questions were illustrations of warfare, a vineyard, and a shepherd. Paul asked questions that had built-in answers. Who goes to war as a soldier at his own expense? A soldier who is fighting is entitled to receive clothing, food, wages, and some measure of shelter. In other words, for a soldier to be expected to give up everything for the government he is fighting for would be unreasonable. A worker who plants a vineyard for someone else is expected to help himself to some of the grapes as he labors. And a shepherd who tends a flock, being out day and night for weeks, is allowed to partake of the milk. Paul used common-sense examples where the laborer was provided for.

These three types of work can be given a spiritual application. Thus the same principle applies to those who are engaged in Christian warfare, Christian vineyard planting, and Christian shepherding; that is, they have a right to partake of temporal benefits.

However, Paul was leading up to another point. At times, he partook of temporal benefaction, and at other times, he did not. The Corinthian brethren who criticized him for occasionally receiving temporal benefits failed to observe that most of the time, he worked with his own hands as a tent maker to support himself *and faithfully preached the gospel*. Meanwhile, the same individuals were living off other brethren as *full-time spongers without preaching the gospel*. How hypocritical! Paul did not say it was wrong to benefit temporally, for he had that right and so did the others, but what were the others doing with their time?

**Comment:** That is why Paul asked sarcastically, "Are Barnabas and I the only ones who have to keep working?"

**Reply:** The others felt they were above doing menial work. In fact, their attitude of expecting to be fully supported was the beginning of the clerical element.

**1 Cor. 9:8** Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

Paul was answering the charges of this group and reminding them of his apostleship. Then he said, "Do I say these things as a man [only]? Doesn't *common sense*, even from a worldly standpoint, teach you that it is proper for a shepherd to partake of the milk?" Paul used human logic but then added that the reasoning was also scriptural. "Doesn't the Law teach this also?"

**1 Cor. 9:9** For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

In principle, the Law teaches that the animal used for plowing (water buffalo, horse, cow, or whatever) is entitled to food—whether it gets food by turning its head and nibbling here and there or whether food is provided. Both humans and animals have the right to eat.

“Doth God take care for oxen?” The word “only” is implied, for Paul would draw a spiritual comparison. “Doth God take care for oxen [only]?”

**1 Cor. 9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.**

Verse 10 shows how deep the Apostle Paul was in his reasoning. He was head and shoulders over the others, and here he opened up a tremendous area of thought without elaborating; namely, when the Law of Moses tells about not muzzling the ox, the real emphasis is *spiritual*. All the way through, the Law has both a natural and a spiritual application, but God instituted the Law for the *spiritual* application. In other words, the Law prefigures higher and nobler things pertaining to the Gospel and the Millennial ages. When people in future ages look back at the Law, they will see it as all spiritual, for the natural will be greatly inferior by comparison.

“Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written.” The commandment about not muzzling the ox was written for the Christian in the Gospel Age. God is considerate of the ox, saying that animal should have its meal, but the real lesson is for the Gospel Age. All Christians are being fed with the food of the gospel. Of course there are different gradations of development, capacity, and capability, but the gospel has everything for everyone. It is as if the table is groaning with the produce of the Lord’s Word. The Christian should “plow” and “thresh” in the hope of a share in the crop.

**1 Cor. 9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?**

**1 Cor. 9:12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.**

“Carnal things” would be material, temporal benefits. Paul was using sarcasm here in yet two more rhetorical questions. Starting with verse 9, he was saying that with regard to animals, the Law of Moses teaches common-sense principles that are practiced even by worldly people. Certainly, therefore, shouldn’t those same principles be extended to hired laborers and servants? To provide board, food, a bed, wages, and other provisions according to the circumstance is fair and just. In other words, “If others, including animals, have the right to receive temporal benefits, don’t we have that right too?” yet Paul and those with him were curbing themselves.

Verses 11 and 12 read as follows in the RSV: “If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.” Paul forwent the liberty he had a right to use, but the others in Corinth used it. From the standpoint of principle, it is permissible to accept material benefits as “payment” for spiritual services rendered, but a Christian should be esteemed more highly if he sacrifices that which he is entitled to. Paul was setting a good example, for it was better not to take advantage of the material benefits. In defending himself, he had to instruct the Corinthians—to lead them by the hand—to make them see his office of apostleship and his greatness in the Lord’s service.

“If others be partakers of this power [of receiving financial support] over *you* [Corinthians], are not we rather [also entitled to support, since we are laboring in the Lord]?” Paul worked preaching the gospel yet did not benefit financially from the Corinthians. Meanwhile, others who did not so work were receiving funds. Paul’s critique reflected on the Corinthians’ attitude toward him in how they were not thinking properly. Some were examining him as to whether or not he was an apostle, yet he had initially brought the gospel to them. The same examiners were supporting, without thinking twice, some who were not laboring in the Lord. The implication is that Paul’s critics were not ordinary brothers and sisters in the class but some of the leadership who were reaping benefits. They should have hung their heads in shame for being critical of Paul when they themselves had shortcomings in not recognizing sacrifice for the Lord as a privilege.

“Nevertheless we have not used this power [the right to receive financial support].” A paid ministry is legitimate for those who are employed full-time in gospel work. However, Paul negated this right and did not take advantage of the power and authority he could have requested. Instead he chose to “suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.”

**Comment:** The following three paragraphs, partially paraphrased, are from *Reprint No. 2118*, “Christian Liberty and Self-restraint.”

“While we are granted liberties in Christ, nevertheless the essence of Christian teaching is to deny ourselves the use of those very liberties. As slaves of sin, we were set free in order that we might become the *voluntary* bond-servants of righteousness—serving with self-sacrifice ‘even unto death.’ The Jews ... were bound as servants by rigorous laws, the meaning and object of which were not explained to them. But the house of sons, of which Christ is the Head, is left free from any law, except the one—to love God with every power of our being and our neighbor as ourself. But this very liberty ... leaves with each of us the responsibility of proving our love to God and to his cause and to his people, and our sympathy for the world, by the extent to which we are willing to abandon our liberties for them.

“The Apostle illustrates this by the Olympic games of his day.... Just as foot racers were set free to run, so we are set free from the Law to run our race and win the great prize of the divine nature and joint-heirship with Jesus. We start on our race course not aimlessly, not hopelessly, not simply for the sake of denying ourselves or doing penance for sins ... but our grand incentive for self-denial is the ‘crown of life’—immortality. Therefore, we do not run uncertainly.

“If we hope to be overcomers and approved of the Lord, we must be moderate, temperate, self-denying in all things. The flesh must be continually subject to the new mind.... If we permit the will of the flesh to gain control again, the race is terminated and we become ‘castaways,’ because the mind of the flesh leads to death.”

**1 Cor. 9:13** Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

**1 Cor. 9:14** Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Verse 13 is related to the previous lesson where Paul used common-sense reasoning, the reasoning of man. In review, he said, “Doth not Scripture say also that thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn?” Since Paul did not use with the Corinthian brethren the prerogative of living off the gospel based on his activity in its service, why did he bring up this Scripture? Not only were others receiving funds and being supported by the brethren, but also Paul was continuing to give his answer to those who were examining him

and thus trying to put themselves on an equal, or even a superior, basis with him (verse 3). Then Paul mentioned liberties that he had given up in the interest of the gospel (verses 4-6). His denial of these liberties enabled him to concentrate more fully on service of the truth.

Paul reasoned, “The ox has the right to eat when treading in the corn field, and the man who plants a vineyard can eat of the fruit of that vineyard.” Then he added, “Those who plow in hope in connection with the gospel service have this prerogative.” Pictures dealing with the Tabernacle and the Temple in the Old Testament show that the priesthood, who had no inheritance in the land, lived off the tithes of the people and also the various specific offerings that were brought. And with regard to the altar, those who dealt immediately with a particular offerer got an additional blessing of substance from him. Paul said that this practice was proper, that it was common sense as well as scriptural sense.

First, Paul started with the rights of animals. Next he showed that humans should expect some kind of wages or reward for their labor. After pointing out that the Law teaches this principle, he took the picture a step higher to Temple service. Of the sacrifices that were brought to the Tabernacle or the Temple, the high priest got a part of the animal. One part was consumed on the altar as a gift to God, and another part was given to the priesthood. However, the bulk of the animal was given to the offerer to eat during the feast, which was sometimes a week long. Thus Paul was showing, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (verse 14).

**1 Cor. 9:15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.**

“I [Paul] have used none of these things [the privileges that should have been mine].” Through self-denial, Paul did not take advantage of these privileges so that his ministry would have an even more profound effect. “Neither have I written these things [which he could have done in his earlier epistle to the Corinthians],” for “it were [would be] better for me to die,” than that any man should take away this privilege of self-denial. Paul would rather be hungry and die than to require support from those to whom he was ministering.

Paul was a most unusual personality, but of course Christ himself is our perfect example, for he who was rich became poor for our sakes. Jesus’ richness cannot be compared with the wealth of Paul or others. Moses gave up the throne of Egypt, for example, but Jesus left heaven and came down here to die on a cross, which is the most profound type of sacrifice that can be imagined. A whole philosophy behind this principle is embedded in the divine plan of the ages, and it takes time to grasp the full import, power, and significance.

It is hard to be fair. Paul could have been sarcastic toward those who opposed him and asked, “Do you notice how I sacrifice in the interest of the truth?” Instead he went to a higher level and said that the prerogative is correct, but nevertheless, he denied himself. Evidently, therefore, the others were taking advantage of the prerogative by loafing or sponging and not being employed in gospel service. God humbles Himself to come down and try to think along our plane of being. He, whose thoughts are higher than the heavens, brings Himself, His thinking, His actions, and His talking through His Word down to our level in order to acquaint us with certain truths. Jesus does the same thing, and so does the Apostle Paul at a lower level. It was embarrassing but necessary for Paul to speak along these lines, attracting attention to himself, in the hope of saving the Corinthian brethren. Whether they would make their calling and election sure or whether they would be failures in other respects, Paul humbled himself in the interest of their spiritual welfare. The approach he used would normally be repugnant and even manifest spiritual pride (“I do this,” “I do that,” “I sacrifice this way,” etc.) but not in this case. His calling attention to what he was doing was in their best interest, but it could have

been misconstrued. And so sometimes the Lord's people, in trying to wake up individuals to think, bring themselves down to an embarrassing level. Others who hear those words could misconstrue the motive and say, "He thinks a lot of himself." Many would not realize when a person was trying to help them in their feeble reasoning to observe certain things.

In denying himself liberties, Paul not only concentrated his time more fully on preaching the gospel but was careful with regard to the conscience of the Corinthians. Those who compared themselves in any way to Paul or questioned his apostleship should have been ashamed to not realize these things. He had to call attention to himself in order to wake them up.

Verse 15 ends with, "For it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void." Paul considered denying himself certain liberties to be joy, happiness, and a privilege. He gloried in the denials—and also in persecutions—for he saw that they would benefit the brethren.

Earlier Paul reasoned, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free?... If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (verses 1 and 2). He was saying that the "seal," the *proof*, of his apostleship was that the Corinthians were in the Lord, but some might reason, "If we convert people to Christ and do great works, is that a proof we are apostles?" How would we refute that line of reasoning? From a scriptural standpoint, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch, and Jerusalem were all important cities. The word "apostle" means "sent out one [in a specialized sense]." The seal of Paul's apostleship was his *introductory* work for the *initial* conversion to truth in "virgin" territory; that is, the Lord used Paul in the beginning of the Gospel Age to establish the first Christian class in Corinth, one of the largest cities in the then-known world. He was a founding father to the Corinthians in bringing about this radical change. The apostles are the foundation of the temple of God, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Paul did not call attention to himself to boast how great he was but to make the Corinthian brethren see that the Lord was really using him—that he was a true messenger, not a false one.

Incidentally, people with spiritual pride tend to read wrong things into other people's words and actions. Some incorrectly reason that there should be no emotional expression when problems occur. Here is an example showing that it is important to *weigh* a circumstance before applying Scripture. There are times to be angry, and there are times not to be angry. To please the Lord, we do not want to be angry at the wrong time, and we do not want to be placid and silent when we should manifest disapproval. The transcendent Word of God determines whether activity or inactivity is proper based on the circumstance.

Therefore, Paul's boasting was evidence not of spiritual pride but of concern lest the brethren in Corinth be misled by the others. He would rather die than be deprived of privileges of self-denial. The Pastor made a distinction between self-denial and cross bearing, a higher form of service. Self-denial is a duty, whereas cross bearing is, in addition, an activity willingly performed.

**1 Cor. 9:16** For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

Why did Paul use the word "necessity"? The thought is like the attitude of Jeremiah, who said, "God's word was like a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary with forbearing and could not stay" (Jer. 20:9 paraphrase). Paul's inner compulsion to preach the gospel was his "necessity." He wanted to preach not from a duty standpoint but from a *desire* standpoint, which made his service more commendable in God's sight. He would rather die than be denied that privilege.



If a work is to be done, it may be all right under certain circumstances to request donations for the Lord's service, but not if some who respond are embarrassed into doing so. To the contrary, doing something voluntarily, that is, of one's own free will, is a completely different slant. "God loveth a cheerful giver," and the sacrifice is lost when something is done out of duty or obligation (2 Cor. 9:7).

Paul was practicing self-denial of his *own volition*. He wanted, and felt it a *privilege*, to deny himself. He was truly giving a voluntary, freewill offering to the Lord. Such an offering is not done grudgingly or from a sense of duty. As a Christian develops, especially one who would be of the Little Flock, he should go beyond duty love to cross bearing.

**1 Cor. 9:17** For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

**1 Cor. 9:18** What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Paul said, "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward." Then he asked, "What is my reward then?" Of course ultimately he would receive the divine nature and be a partaker with Jesus of glory, but there was also a reward in the present life, as shown by the second half of verse 17, which is stated a little too strongly in the King James: "If against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." The Amplified reads, "For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have my pay—my reward; but if it is not of my own will, but is done reluctantly and under compulsion, I am [still] entrusted with a [sacred] trusteeship and commission." Paul was saying, "If I do not serve with joy and enthusiasm as a freewill offering, I will at least have to serve as a duty." Thus doing something willingly is contrasted with doing something reluctantly, or even from a duty standpoint. It is one thing for a messenger to simply discharge a duty, but if he is happy and rejoicing and considers bringing a message to be a privilege, the service is meritorious and pleasing to God. The joy of the spirit shows that the activity is wholly voluntary and not just a commission. The apostles were commissioned to go out and preach the gospel—that was their duty—but if they went voluntarily and cheerfully as well, they had a "reward." Paul did not want anything to bar him from the privilege and joy of preaching the gospel.

**Comment:** Paul was saying, "If I do not serve willingly and with voluntary self-denials, I am still required to serve, but the reward will be lower." The point is that we have to pay our vows. Will we do so joyfully or grudgingly?

Paul added, "When I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." In order to be more successful in preaching the gospel, he denied himself certain things, and he esteemed the denials a privilege. And the denials were his reward, even in the present life. As Peter said, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory [God's approval] at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). The Greek word rendered *trial* means "proof"; that is, the successful passing of a test is worth more than any silver or gold that one might acquire. Bro. Krebs said that even the trial, or *privilege of the test*, is more precious than silver and gold, let alone our attitude with regard to it. In other words, the *opportunity* to suffer for Christ is more precious than silver and gold. Both are true: the *trial* itself and the *successful passing* of the test are worth more than silver and gold.

Paul gave a present-tense application in verse 18. He wanted the privilege of being able to present the truth without obligation or charge. He *enjoyed* preaching the gospel. The same principle is given in Peter's instruction to elders: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready

mind” (1 Pet. 5:2). God desires elders to have a readiness of mind and a willingness of spirit, and not to feel constrained to accept eldership from a duty standpoint. Paul and Peter both had that driving spirit. “But if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.” This portion of verse 17 describes a service that is merely the discharging of a duty instead of the feeling that it is a privilege to serve.

Paul’s “reward” was his ultimate reward in heaven, as well as the privilege of making more converts through self-sacrifice and not following the practices of the ordinary, regular ministry. His self-denials broadened his influence in bringing others to the Lord.

**1 Cor. 9:19** For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

**1 Cor. 9:20** And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

**1 Cor. 9:21** To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

**1 Cor. 9:22** To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

**1 Cor. 9:23** And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Verse 19 reminds us of Jesus. At the Last Supper, just prior to the Memorial, he washed the disciples’ feet and then drew a lesson about his being the servant of all. Another lesson was not to walk into a feast as a guest and take the best seat. One should sit at the far end of the table and wait for the host to issue an invitation to move to a more favorable seat.

**Comment:** Galatians 5:13 is a good cross-reference: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

In witnessing, Paul tried to reason with people from all different backgrounds, being careful not to antagonize them. To the Jew, he was a Jew. To the Gentile (“to them that are without law”), he was a Gentile. In other words, he used tact in trying to curb himself and not put unnecessary stumbling blocks before others until they got a hearing ear and/or grew strong enough for stronger medicine. This method was particularly true with regard to introducing a new subject. With all of his denials—being single, restricting food and drink, forgoing financial support from the brethren—his attitude was one of pleasure rather than just mere duty. And he was patient in dealing with the Jew as a Jew, and the Gentile as a Gentile. He enumerated his self-denials in order to bring the Corinthians to their senses to see that he was superior to those who were examining him (verse 3). Verses 4-23 were his answers to the charges that were brought against him by some of the other brethren in Corinth.

It is interesting that Paul was weak to the weak, and he was strong to the strong. This principle should be observed in life. He was “weak” in the sense of curtailing his intake of food lest he stumble others. His desire was that, by this tactic, he might gain more Christians. The primary lesson is that he appreciated those who were doing certain things for conscience’ sake, and until their consciences were enlightened, he was careful not to stumble them. In addition, his tone of voice and manner of approach were also important.

If a person was self-deprecating and felt forsaken by God, Paul could say, “I am a sinner too. I have faults in the sense that I need the robe of Christ’s righteousness as much as you do.” But with the strong, he had to be strong in order to awaken them to see their wrongdoing. To give

in to the strong would be justifying them, and they might be strong in error and improper understanding. If they were strong in the right, Paul was strong in the sense of rejoicing in their experiences. In other words, to the strong, we should be strong *regardless*. The unruly, for example, have to be warned. We should not try to reason with the unruly but should use a raised voice. Being meek and placid would not be effective in instructing and warning them. In fact, if we combat the unruly with weakness, they will walk all over us like a doormat.

As an example, the Apostle Peter was eating at the table with Gentiles, but he dissembled when some Jewish brethren came in (Gal. 2:11-14). He got up as if he were not eating with the Gentiles. Right then and there, before the others, Paul rebuked Peter. Normally, we would rebuke someone privately or in the manner of a son speaking to a father, but Paul had to speak strongly to staunch outspoken Peter. He said in effect, “Do you want the Gentiles to get under the yoke of the Law, which you yourself were freed from?” Peter got the point and said, in humility, that Paul was wiser than he.

Paul also spoke strongly to Barnabas with regard to John Mark (Acts 15:36-40). As a result, John Mark changed, and Paul commended him subsequently.

**Comment:** Those who are unruly along moral lines need to be talked to strongly.

In this context, the weak, in the unfavorable sense, were those who could not eat meat offered to idols because their consciences were not properly regulated. For their sake, Paul sacrificed eating meat. The weak, in the favorable sense, were those who were prone to discouragement. Paul encouraged them by saying we all have such experiences. Even Paul had a period of discouragement, and the brethren who came to visit him lifted his spirits (2 Cor. 1:8). A Christian law of action is that when brethren are low, we should deal with them accordingly.

One type of weakness is a weak faith. To be strong with individuals who are weak in faith might destroy them. For example, we would not scold a blind person and thus push him off the cliff, figuratively speaking. No, we would try to bring him closer so that he would not be in danger or peril. Faith comes by hearing, so Scripture has much to do with the development of faith. There is a difference between natural faith, which we are born with, and spiritual faith, which is developed. God calls those who are poor, uneducated, and sheeplike but who have natural *faith*. That type of faith, which is trust in God and in His providence based on His Word, will be especially operative in the Kingdom.

With regard to the weak, we cannot hurry a person who is feeble physically, for he will fall and break a leg or a hip. Therefore, we must slow down our own pace and gently lead the weak.

Paul did not want to bring the Gentiles under the bondage of the Law, so he spoke to them of their liberty. They were not required to observe holy days, customs, the washing of hands before meals, and other *ceremonial* aspects of the Law, but the commandments such as “Thou shalt not murder” and “Thou shalt not steal” are still operative. Therefore, Paul was “not without law to God”; that is, he was outside the Mosaic Law, but he was under the law to Christ. Hence Christians are no longer Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free, but are *one* in Christ (verse 21).

Paul was a tent maker by trade. Back in those days, all free men born of a noble family realized that not only does nature have seeming foibles and irregularities, but governments topple and fall. As a result, there are periods of famine, war, and deprivation, so the usual practice of nobility, even though they had a lot of money and their children were provided for in every way, was to learn a trade. Therefore, Paul learned to be a tent maker. This type of employment was useful and necessary because outside the cities, the lifestyle was agrarian. Paul supported himself in this manner and neither asked nor hinted for financial help from the brethren. The

Philippian brethren did contribute to Paul's needs, and their assistance was helpful because the type of persecution he received caused him, at times, to flee in haste from one place to another. The Philippians sent money ahead until he got stabilized and could return to tent making. And Paul praised them because they contributed *voluntarily*.

But now Paul was talking to the Corinthians, explaining his self-denials. He contrasted his labors in the Lord with those brethren who were great talkers and not laboring in the Lord but were being supported financially.

**1 Cor. 9:24** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

**1 Cor. 9:25** And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

In Corinth were games and contests similar to those in the Olympics, so Paul now used familiar illustrations: a runner in a race and boxing (physical combat). Paul did not approach the race from the standpoint that all who run diligently will receive a crown. Instead he said to run as if only *one* will get the prize. Of course all of the Little Flock will receive crowns, but in order to get a crown, one must run the race as if there will be only one winner. Paul was saying, "Do not merely run or merely be active, but run as if there is just one prize." If we do not so run, we might obtain a consolation prize in the Great Company but not the prize of the high calling. To gain the supremacy, to be a victor and more-than-overcomer, we must run as though everything is at stake.

Paul brought in an interesting factor. To achieve mastery in athletic contests, one must train diligently. Much discipline and regimentation are required with long hours of exercise, proper diet, sufficient sleep, etc. All that is done must be weighed in the light of achieving the victory.

To reason that all with present truth who are faithful will get crowns is Great Company thinking. The standard for the high calling is very high, and we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). A great deal of concentration and effort are required to become a member of the Little Flock—an all-out effort.

Of the 2 million Israelites in the wilderness, only two of that generation, Joshua and Caleb, entered the Promised Land. The expression "one in a million" expresses the probable ratio of the professed people of God who will make the Little Flock and thus enter the divine plane of glory. Of the Christian world down through history, the percentage of more than overcomers seems likely to be that small.

If one who diligently runs the race for the top crown falls short, he is more likely to receive a consolation prize in the Great Company than one who starts the race thinking he will be satisfied with the consolation prize.

**Q:** With regard to the word "temperate" in verse 25, is the thought correct in the RSV that "every athlete exercises self-control in all things"?

**A:** Yes. A trainer tells one how to win an event, but the nitty-gritty of the matter is that the one who is training has to *diligently apply* himself. The Christian's "trainer," the Lord Jesus Christ, gives us the necessary help and instruction.

In Paul's day, those who won the athletic games got a corruptible laurel wreath. Not only did the garland decay, but when one received the wreath and walked around with it, he felt satisfied for all the effort he had expended. Honor and appreciation for the achievement

brought satisfaction—but how puny was the reward compared to the *divine glory*, which is eternal, does not fade away, and is on the highest possible plane. It is interesting that even though the wreath decayed, it was a symbol of the crown that does not decay.

While Paul was suggesting that the Corinthian brethren follow his example, he was hinting particularly to the leadership—to those who were causing the problem. Of course it was humiliating for Paul to have to call attention to himself, but he reasoned that doing so would bring those brethren to their senses and help them see the principle. The Lord's people are like sheep. Not many wise, noble, or rich are called but, rather, the poor of this world. In the Kingdom, the worldly wise will be ashamed for not having accepted the gospel and for being satisfied with their own wisdom. Being full and in need of nothing, they did not search for God.

Paul would have preferred to practice his self-denials silently, keeping them between God (or Jesus) and himself, but for the sake of awakening others, and saving some of them, he humbled himself and revealed his self-denials. Even the questions of the Corinthians along this line were foolish. They needed development, so he talked common sense and Scripture sense to them, trying to prove that his consecration to God and to Jesus was *very real* with all the things he suffered. The others did not even begin to compare with Paul, yet they questioned his integrity and whether he was a Christian—which hurt. To know how to judge properly, they needed to exercise their mind on scriptural principles, which develop maturity not only of character but also of discernment between good and evil.

**1 Cor. 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:**

“Beating the air” refers to shadow boxing, where the punches do not connect. A fighter may show his dexterity by beating the air with fast motions, but if he is in the ring and the other fellow lands one punch in the right place, the fight is over. What is the lesson? More substantial training is needed for the Christian. Dancing around and rapidly hitting a bag suspended from a ring may look impressive, but the victory will not be won that way because the blows have no substance. Serious boxers punch a heavy bag with all their might, one blow after another, until they perspire and are drained of energy. Making the heavy bag move even six inches builds tremendous strength. Therefore, one good blow is worth a thousand light punches.

The word “uncertainly” is translated “aimlessly” in the Revised Standard. Paul was saying that the Christian should run and fight with concentration and great determination. He himself ran with *earnestness* and *definiteness* of achievement; that is, his running was not aimless. “This one thing I do” was his attitude (Phil. 3:13).

Some include the thought of “judging” in verse 26—that the one who is giving the reward is watching. Who the victor is depends not only on the achievement of the individual but also on the discretion of the judge, who determines if the race was run properly. The Christian should run and fight with concentration and definiteness of purpose, realizing a judge is observing.

**1 Cor. 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.**

Verse 27 is much more powerful in the literal Greek. The Revised Standard reads, “But I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” The heavy bag that the Christian punches with all his might is his own body, the old man. A person drives blows into the dummy bag with all his strength so that in an actual fight, the real opponent will know he has been hit. The Christian pummels his own natural desires in the training period of the present life. Keeping the body “under” is like putting a foot on it (self-denial), whereas the pummeling suggests more aggressive determination.

In spite of all that the Apostle Paul had done, he was not resting on his laurels. He was continuing to run so that he might gain the crown. Reviewing all of his self-denials and past achievements should have awakened the Corinthians to see his zeal and love for the Lord, and thus should have influenced their attitude toward him. And they should have seen his concern for them. However, past achievements notwithstanding, Paul had to keep running as if there were only one winner. He applied to himself the same rules that he was expounding to others lest he “be a castaway.” What a tremendous person the Apostle Paul was! Human beings like Moses and Paul, who had extraordinary determination, are examples for us to emulate. Later on, Paul said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ [in my attitude of desiring to serve the Lord with determination, purpose, and zeal]” (1 Cor. 11:1). Those who got the gist of what he was saying would not have been offended in the least, for he wanted the brethren to serve the Lord with the same wholeheartedness.

**Comment:** For Paul to make the statement of verse 27, where does it put us?

**Reply:** Yes, although he had done some marvelous things in the past, he was not resting on past accomplishments.

**Comment:** The Amplified reads, “But [like a boxer] I buffet my body—handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships—and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit—not stand the test and be unapproved—and rejected [as a counterfeit].” Focus of attention and stamina are necessary.

**1 Cor. 10:1** Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

**1 Cor. 10:2** And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

**1 Cor. 10:3** And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

**1 Cor. 10:4** And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

**1 Cor. 10:5** But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Chapter 10 really began with the first verse of chapter 8: “Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” Therefore, chapters 8, 9, and part of 10 all deal with the question of idol worship and eating meat offered to idols.

Notice the start of chapter 10: “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be *ignorant*.” Paul used a similar expression on various other occasions (Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13).

What is startling about verses 1-4 is that all four verses contain the word “all”: “*all* our fathers were under the cloud,” “*all* passed through the sea,” “*all* [were] baptized unto [into] Moses,” “*all* [did] eat the same spiritual meat,” and “*all* [did] drink the same spiritual drink.” The account of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt tells how the waters of the Red Sea parted and a cloud covered the entire nation like a blanket for 40 years. A pillar from the cloud led the Israelites, starting at Succoth, and the main cloud followed them, until they crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. Being dark by day and light by night, the cloud was a covering that protected the Israelites from the blinding glare and extreme heat of the sun during the day and from the evaporation of heat from the sand at night. Thus the cloud ameliorated the cold

of the desert nights by retaining the warmth of the daytime sun. And the heavenly manna, which commenced in the first year of the Exodus—that is, after the Israelites arrived in the desert of Sinai—stayed with them for 40 years. While these facts are very interesting, and while discourses could be given on each topic, here the Apostle Paul was not trying to go into an in-depth study on each one. He was just alluding to the fact that all went through the Red Sea, all were under the cloud, all were baptized, all ate the manna, and all drank of the water that Moses miraculously furnished at different periods of time. Notice Paul’s emphasis on the word “spiritual”—he was saying that these things were a *spiritual* lesson.

Just as the Israelites back there were under God’s protection, so when we consecrate, we are under the shadow of the Almighty. We go under the cherubim curtain and enter the Holy of the Tabernacle under His protection. This is the common experience of all true Christians who dedicate themselves to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, the rock Moses smote, out of which came water, represented Christ, and that Rock was a *moving* Rock. The Israelites “drank of that spiritual Rock that *followed* them,” keeping them under God’s care. In other words, what happened literally to the children of Israel back in Moses’ day has a *spiritual counterpart* with God’s people during the Gospel Age.

Paul was saying, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant [of this word ‘all’], ... But with [a great] many of them [the Israelites in the wilderness] God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” The proof is that “all” did this and “all” did that, *but God was not pleased with all of them.*

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* interlinear uses the expression “the greater number,” i.e., the majority.

During the 40 years in the wilderness, all of the older generation died except for Joshua and Caleb. Stated another way, 1,999,998 Israelites died, and only two lived. At least 2 million left Egypt, for there were 603,550 men 20 years of age and upward (of warfare age), plus babies, older people, and young women in the age bracket of the fighters (Num. 1:3,45-47). At the end of the 40 years, the number of Israelites who entered the Promised Land was also 2 million, but these were the *younger* generation, the *children* of those of accountable age at the time of the Exodus. To repeat, in the final analysis, in spite of all the deaths, 2 million Israelites left Egypt, and 2 million entered the Promised Land. Thus the great majority of those who left Egypt died in the wilderness.

Joshua and Caleb, who entered the Promised Land, picture the Little Flock. As already stated, the ratio is that only one in a million of God’s professed people, those who are nominally called Christians, make the high calling.

**Comment:** Just as back there all of the Israelites were baptized, so all professing Christians seem to be equal, but then dangers enter, resulting in differences in faith, in responses to experiences, in succumbing to forms of idolatry, in the study of God’s Word, etc.

**Reply:** Of course the major theme of verses 1-4 is the word “all.” When the Exodus occurred, every Israelite passed through the Red Sea to safety—there is no record of any deaths. Paul was emphasizing that *without exception, every Jew* of the nation of Israel was delivered *initially*. The cloud began at Succoth a couple of days before the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. When they came to the sea, the water opened up, and they went through a “tunnel,” with the main cloud overhead and walls of water congealed into ice on either side. With such phenomena of nature occurring, the Israelites walked across the sea dry-shod. Meanwhile, the pillar of the cloud had changed from a position in front of the nation to a position behind them and was acting like a reflector, providing light ahead for the Israelites and darkness and confusion behind upon the pursuing Egyptians. Thus the *whole* nation was baptized into Moses. What a wonderful beginning! To use the word “baptized” with regard to an Old Testament event was

very unusual. Inferentially, then, Moses represented Christ, and “baptized” Israelites followed his leadership, just as consecrated Christians follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Subsequently, when the Israelites got to the other side of the Red Sea, food became a problem, for the bread that the women carried in their aprons was sufficient for only seven days (the Feast of Unleavened Bread).

Another problem was water. The Exodus and Numbers accounts mention only two places where the Israelites got water, yet they were in the desert wilderness for 40 years at 42 different locations. The water supply for 2 million people is not mentioned in Scripture. However, they were all miraculously fed in the beginning, starting with their exodus from Egypt. On the other side of the Red Sea, the Israelites started to murmur with regard to the bitter waters of Marah, but the account does not say that any of them died—at first. As they went from place to place and the spirit of murmuring was voiced louder and louder, penalties came to the fore. For instance, so many quail were sent that there was a stench, and some of the people died from eating the quail.

All of the Israelites ate the same spiritual “meat” (meal, food, that is, manna in the type and truth in the antitype), and they all drank the same spiritual Rock (Christ). In other words, God supplied them to the full, and they all started out well. Paul was comparing the experiences of the Israelites to those of Christians, for to become a Christian in his day meant persecution right away. Therefore, only sincere, truly consecrated individuals professed Christianity. Individuals in the Corinthian ecclesia were not mere nominal Christians but had counted and accepted the cost and taken a stand. Even though there were problems and bickerings, the class started as a good nucleus with God’s watch-care and under the supervision of the Master.

With regard to the “spiritual Rock,” there were two separate occasions when Moses smote the rock. Paul was referring to the first smiting, which occurred toward the beginning of the wilderness journey. At that time, enough water gushed out from a great depth to satisfy the thirst of the 2 million Israelites and their animals. The water pictures the “living water” of truth that Jesus promised the Samaritan woman (John 4:10). In writing this epistle to the Corinthians, Paul was talking to Christians who were under the Lord’s “cloud” and whose consecrations were bona fide. Manna and living water provided for their daily needs.

Just as the Israelites all partook of the same water and the same manna, and all passed under the same cloud, so God’s people do likewise, spiritually speaking, in the Gospel Age. All Christians have the same Bible, the same leader (Jesus Christ), and the same watch-care. Not only is the Bible the daily heavenly manna, but it satisfies the Christian’s needs as meat and drink, both of which are essential for life. Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these [necessary] things shall be added [supplied] unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

**Q:** How did the Rock “follow” the Israelites?

**A:** The King James margin has the correct thought: “went *with* them.” The Israelites were protected and fed by Christ, the living bread sent down from heaven, the manna, the water—all different perspectives of the same watch-care. From another standpoint, the pillar of the cloud accompanied them as a guide. Sometimes that pillar was called the “angel” of Jehovah, and Jesus, too, was the “angel” of Jehovah (Exod. 14:19; 23:20,23; 32:34; Acts 7:30). An intelligence seemed to be embodied in the cloud, for the pillar knew just where to lead the Israelites for a place of temporary rest in their 40-year journey.

Paul was saying to the Corinthians, “The experience of the Israelites back there represents *us* in our present situation. We left the world, were baptized into Christ, were covered with his robe of righteousness, etc. What they ate and drank pictures our spiritual truth.” Incidentally, the literal manna, miraculously provided, was called “angels’ food” (Psa. 78:25).



Verse 5 is the crux of the matter: “But with many of them [fleshly Israel] God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” And how many were the “many”? In round numbers, approximately half of the Israelites died in the wilderness, for all of the older generation perished. Except for Joshua and Caleb and the two priests Eleazar and Ithamar, the only survivors were the younger Israelites, those under 20 years of age, and those who were born during the 40 years.

**Q:** When verses 1-4 are compared to the Christian, is the implication that very few will make the Little Flock?

**A:** Yes, and the picture is even stronger. Being “overthrown in the wilderness” means the Israelites died, and those deaths represent Christians who go into Second Death. The ratio is sobering, for it indicates that of all those who consecrate, half will not get life, especially in our day, when there has been no physical persecution to date. Persecution makes the difference between black and white, and between right and wrong. Obviously, there is no gray area. We are living in a time of compromise. There is a large gray area between what is right and what is wrong, and the only way to begin to draw a line is through familiarity with Scripture. Our continuing question should be, What does God’s Word teach? Our conscience is to be regulated by “thus saith the LORD.”

Not all consecrated Christians see the necessity of baptism in literal water, but as indicated in the type, that is the appropriate thing to do to make manifest to others the step that was previously taken, sometimes days, weeks, months, or even years before. Being lowered into the water symbolizes baptism into the death of Christ.

**1 Cor. 10:6** Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Verse 6, which is like a summation, tells why the Apostle Paul introduced the illustrations of the Israelites in the wilderness. “These things were our examples [lessons, admonitions]” for us not to “lust after evil things” as the Israelites did back there. They were *not satisfied* with the diet that the Lord provided in the wilderness. God was displeased with their *attitude* in eating the manna and drinking from the wellspring of truth. If they had thought daily about the miraculous nature of the cloud that shielded them and the pillar that led them, they would not have desired the things of the world. But the cloud overhead was like the sun that comes up every day. Because of the monotony of the continued daily activity, the Israelites began to lose sight of the miracle. Instead they should have implicitly followed the leadings of the pillar and seen the cloud as the indicator of God’s providence. The Israelites had the manna, the water, the cloud, the pillar of the cloud, and Moses (representing Christ) in the role of spokesperson for God. The “Rock” shows Christ as the foundation—the Christian was bought with a price. Incidentally, some of the Israelites’ experiences in the wilderness have an application to the Church in the Gospel Age, and some apply to the world in the Kingdom.

Numbers 11:4-9 reads:

“And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a-lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”

“We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:

“But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

“And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

“And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

“And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.”

The Israelites lusted after the things they had had while resident in Egypt. There was a marked contrast between the variety of spicy food they ate in Egypt and the bland manna they ate in the wilderness. While no doubt almost the entire host noticed the difference and there might have been a craving for the former food, what made the Israelites guilty before God was the murmuring, the complaining, rather than being satisfied that He had provided just the necessary food as deemed best at the time. Thus what constituted the sin was the *attitude* of the Israelites. And with the manna, they drank water, which was also bland. Spiritually speaking, there is a difference in the kind of “food” the *mind* feeds on.

Numbers 11:10-15 continues:

“Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

“And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

“Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

“Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

“I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

“And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.”

The people’s uncontrollable weeping, mingled with longing for Egypt and mourning over their present state, created a trauma in Moses. Then God responded.

Numbers 11:18-23 reads:

“[And the LORD said unto Moses] And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

“Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

“But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?”

“And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

“Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?”

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD’S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”

Ostensibly the Israelites were complaining to Moses, but the murmuring was actually a reflection upon God. Of course Moses realized that to feed 600,000 men under the circumstances was impossible, but in response, God created a miracle that lasted for a whole month. The Israelites got flesh until it came out of their nostrils. This miracle with the quail has been filmed for future viewing to shut men’s mouths forever.

The extensiveness of the miracle is described in Numbers 11:31-34.

“And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day’s journey on this side, and as it were a day’s journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.

“And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

“And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

“And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.”

The plague of quail occurred because the Israelites lusted for things formerly enjoyed in Egypt. In antitype, this is the attitude of those who consecrated their life to the Lord and later regret having made such a commitment because they find it is more than they bargained for. For this reason, Jesus advised those who were thinking of becoming his disciples to sit down first and count the cost (Luke 14:28). Jesus said that one cannot fulfill a consecration vow in his own strength but that he can do it with the Lord’s strength. The necessary strength will be given, but the individual must know that the commitment cannot be taken lightly. A vow to the Lord of this nature must be kept until one’s earthly pilgrimage is finished. One should understand *in advance* the conditions of consecration and not say later, “Because I did not understand, God will forgive me if I give up my consecration and go back into the world.” To turn back on the commitment is very, very dangerous.

The Numbers 11 account tells the extent of the quail plague that came over the camp of the Israelites. God caused a great wind to pressure the quail, who were flying on a migration across the Red Sea, down to the height at which the men of Israel could knock them to the ground with sticks. The cloud of quail was so large—the quail were so numerous—that it extended a day’s journey from the midst of the camp to the right and a day’s journey to the

left. The quantity of quail is indicated by the statement that the least person in the Israelite host gathered ten homers—the equivalent of 90 bushels of quail per person! That quantity of meat would last a whole month. What an outstanding miracle! In the antitype, the ones who lust and complain are the ones who die because of their inordinate appetite for the mental “food” of this world. Jesus said, “Except ye [mentally] eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53).

The common denominator of the failure of the children of Israel was their *lack of faith*. They “forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shown them” (Psa. 78:11). They saw the depths of the Red Sea open, they went many miles dry-shod through the sea, and they saw Pharaoh and host perish in the sea—but they forgot the miracles. Spiritually speaking, God’s people witness miracles that can be seen and felt with the mind, but they, too, can forget. That is what Paul meant by the expression “lust[ing] after [the former] evil things” of the world.

**1 Cor. 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.**

Notice that verses 1-4 each use the word “all,” and verses 7-10 each use the word “neither.” Prompted by God to utilize his natural talents, Paul was a logician in this portion of his First Epistle to the Corinthians.

“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them.” The “some” are equated to the “many” of verse 5. There was an irony, a bit of sarcasm, in Paul’s use of the words “many” and “some,” for about 98 percent of the older generation died—almost all of them.

A specific case of idolatry was the golden calf incident, in which “the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play” after the calf was made. In the Tabernacle sacrifices, a bull in its maturity represented Jesus, that is, the full and perfect sacrifice of his all. Over and over again, when Satan has perceived God’s method, he has made a counterfeit, and in his twisted thinking, in his perversion of truth, he pictured the bull as an animal of fertility and virility. The false religions satisfy the depraved appetite of fallen humanity. In fact, Satan attracts multitudes to follow him because he gives them what they want. And that is what happened in the golden calf incident. Following the worship of the calf and after the eating and drinking came sexual satisfaction. Some of the people “rose up to play” in lust and fornication. The counterpart is the Catholic religion, which allows its communicants to do whatever they want as long as they go to the priest for Confession and then put money in the collection plate, buy a candle, etc.

In addition, idolatry can be the worship or craving of such things as money, power, influence, sports, houses, and even an animate being such as a charismatic leader. As human beings, Christians can succumb to, and be distracted by, such temptations. Therefore, Paul was pointing out the danger of idolatry, which can lead one off the narrow path. As the Christian matures, idolatry becomes less and less of a problem.

**1 Cor. 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.**

Verse 8 refers to the time near the end of the 40 years when Israelite men married Moabite women through the false advice of the prophet Balaam. When the Israelites passed through the land of Moab, King Balak called Balaam to come and curse Israel. However, the cursing was turned into a blessing, and Balaam left the scene—but not before advising King Balak how to overcome the Israelites through intermarriage. As a result, 23,000 Israelites died, as well as Balaam himself.

Numbers 25:1-5 reads:

“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

“And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

“And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

“And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.”

In the final analysis, while Balaam did not curse Israel earlier on behalf of King Balak, he gave secret advice, saying that Israel would succumb if the daughters of Moab enticed the men of Israel. Many Israelites perished as a result, and even Balaam perished for having given that advice. The plague was *momentarily* stayed when the heads of those who perished were cut off and put on the staff of each man and turned to face the sun.

But right after this incident, while the people were weeping over the deaths, a seduction was taking place between a Midianite woman and an Israelite man out in the open where all could see. When they entered a tent to have intercourse, Phinehas got up, entered the tent, and thrust a javelin through the back of the man and into the stomach of the woman, killing them both (Num. 25:8). This incident is so notorious that the names of the man and the woman are recorded, Zimri and Cozbi, respectively. This incident happened after the staying of the plague, but the same type of fornication was involved. While the Israelites cut off the heads of 23,000 men as instructed, it appears that subsequent deaths trickled through afterwards so that an additional 1,000 died, for a total of 24,000 (1 Cor. 10:8; Num. 25:9). In other words, there was the death of another 1,000 who were oblivious to what Phinehas had done and were still committing fornication.

God has allowed such discrepancies to occasionally occur to test the faith of His people in the veracity of His Word. Those who are critical use the differences to discredit and dishonor the Bible. There is no sin in honestly questioning the disparity, but if one cannot resolve the differences, faith will say, “I do not understand, but there is a reason for it.” As Moses said, God proves His people, whether they really love Him—whether they have studied His Word and the principles in it. He is educating His people with the intent that in the Kingdom Age, they will be kings, priests, judges, and teachers of the world of mankind. Those who consecrate do not have to be brilliant students, but they do have to think. A man is judged according to what he is *capable* of understanding and will be rewarded accordingly.

**Q:** It seems hard to believe that the Israelites could be oblivious to 23,000 heads sitting on staffs. What is the correlation or antitype today?

**A:** Consider the account of Korah’s rebellion (Numbers 16). Moses said, “To show that I am a servant of Jehovah, let something happen that has never occurred before.” In response, the earth opened up, swallowing the rebellious ones and their families alive and their goods and tents, and the earth covered them over. Thus God destroyed Korah and those who were with him, yet the very next day the people complained that Moses and Aaron had a vindictive spirit. Spiritually speaking, we can be blind. Of those who go into outer darkness (Matt. 6:23), Jesus

said, “How great is that darkness!” It is scary to see darkness come upon some who were previously deeply consecrated.

**Comment:** Psalm 106:13-15 reads, “They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”

**Reply:** “Fornication” consisted of the lusting and intermarriage of “consecrated” Israelites with “unconsecrated” Moabites. The whole nation was baptized into Moses in the Red Sea under the cloud and was covenanted at Mount Sinai, saying, “All these things will we do,” so their marrying heathen Moabites was disobedience.

**Q:** Can “fornication” also apply to mixing church and state?

**A:** Spiritual fornication, which is a higher level, is the usual application. However, Paul was referring to the lower level—to the literal or natural application. He was saying that what happened to Israel can happen to the Christian.

Of all the attractions of Satan, fornication seems to be the most popular, for fornication is pleasing to all strata of society. Fleshly desires are part of the human organism, for God implanted in Adam and Eve the desire to become one flesh. There was (and is) the need for fellowship, but fornication is *inordinate, illegitimate* desire.

**1 Cor. 10:9** Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

**1 Cor. 10:10** Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of [the Israelites did] ... and were destroyed of serpents.” When the people chided Moses and murmured at him for leading them out of Egypt, fiery serpents were sent as a punishment. Numbers 21:5-9 reads:

“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

“And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

The original complaint in this incident was about the manna, which was bread, yet the Israelites wanted “bread.” What was the difference? They considered the manna “light bread,” and they wanted something more substantial with more ingredients and flavor. As a punishment, small “fiery” (very poisonous) serpents bit the people. Moses made the cure by putting a brass

serpent on a pole and going throughout the camp. When anyone who was bitten looked at the serpent of brass, he lived. Of course Moses prefigured Christ in this illustration.

Paul gave the murmuring a Gospel Age application, whereas Jesus gave a Kingdom Age application, for he said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [like a serpent], will draw *all men* unto me” (John 3:14,15; 12:32). Jesus likened the serpent affixed to a pole at the time of Moses to himself on the Cross. All of the Israelites who looked on that serpent were healed, and Jesus prophesied that he would draw “*all men*” unto him. In the Gospel Age, *God* draws *Christians*, and in the Kingdom Age, *Jesus* will draw *mankind*.

Why did Paul apply this incident to the Christian? He was saying that while the experiences back in the wilderness can apply to the Millennial Age—and some in a very specific way—they are just as true today for the Christian from a practical standpoint. The incidents are meant to be instructive to both Christians and the world, but since the world is not on trial now and we, as Christians, are living in the Gospel Age, the Bible is of primary importance to us for instruction and admonition.

Each individual who murmured back there was bitten by (*plural*) fiery serpents. And those who were bitten were forgiven and healed *if* they looked upon the serpent on the pole. Jeremiah 31:29,30 tells how judgment will be accomplished in the Kingdom Age: “In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” Through the sin of one man, Adam, the Fall came on the human family, so that the children’s teeth are set on edge, but in the next age, each one who eats the sour grape will be responsible for his *own* personal sin and will be punished accordingly. The serpent on the pole was a personification of sin. The plural serpents show that this picture has an application in the Kingdom. While Christ will be ruling with an iron rod, he will not fetter people’s minds, and there will be sin. As people try to get life, they will be cured in proportion to their obedience, but they must confess their sin and come to Jesus (or his representatives). If they do not look to Jesus for forgiveness and help, they will perish in Second Death.

Now let us consider the nature of the temptations, type and antitype, as follows:

1. *Idolatry*—worshipping the golden calf as a god. When this picture of idolatry is applied to the Gospel Age, the golden calf represents Papacy, a religious aberration. Since gold is a symbol of the divine nature, the golden calf represents another way of coming to God than through Jesus personally (pictured by Moses). Instead of waiting for Moses’ return from the mountain during his long absence, the people said to Aaron, “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him” (Exod. 32:1). When Moses came down from the mountain, he rebuked Aaron. Although the account does say that *Aaron* made the people “naked unto their shame among their enemies,” the Scriptures state time after time that the *people* made the calf (Exod. 32:25). Evidently, Aaron tried a delaying tactic when the people put the responsibility on him, for he requested that the women break off their earrings from their ears, knowing this action would require time and sacrifice. And the men had to contribute pieces of gold. It is remarkable that the people complied, sacrificing things dear to them, in order to have their idol. When Aaron got all the gold, he melted it and made a golden bullock, but then he tooled and engraved the calf to stall for more time.

The Israelites did not consider that they were involved in pagan worship, for the calf was made in the name of *Jehovah*. Accordingly, Aaron said, “Tomorrow [a delay of another day] is a feast to the LORD” (Exod. 32:5). The people “rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Exod. 32:6). The people were ready *early in the morning* with their peace offerings,

of which they could eat a portion. Ostensibly the offerings were to Jehovah, but as soon as the praise service was over, the people got up and danced. The dancing was an orgy—a form of revelry and lust like that which was done in Egypt to the Apis bull with all kinds of inordinate practices. In antitype, people go to Mass and/or Confession and then leave for the saloon. The impropriety of the one action following immediately after the other was (and is) not seen.

We cannot worship both God and mammon. When one consecrates, there is responsibility. Mammon can be considered literal wealth, possessions, or even a worldly institution such as a church with a choir, vestments, etc. Another philosophy or way must not be incorporated into the Christian religion. Instead of listening to the advice of Moses (a picture of Jesus), the Israelites made a golden calf.

2. *Fornication*—committing whoredom with (marrying) Moabite daughters (Numbers 25). The antitype would be for someone who is consecrated to marry a person who is not consecrated. There is danger in doing so, for marrying an unconsecrated partner can result in Second Death. This issue is not discussed sufficiently today. Just as the Israelites were not to marry the Moabites, so Christians should not marry someone of the world. If an elder does this, he should be immediately debarred from eldership for disobedience. The action should not be dismissed with a comment like, “Well, that is his responsibility.” No, it is the responsibility of the ecclesia as well. One who does not study this subject does not see the proper perspective.

3. *Lust*—having inordinate desires. The Israelites lusted for the fish, cucumbers, leeks, garlic, and meat (“flesh”) of Egypt (Numbers 11).

4. *Murmuring* and tempting Christ. To murmur either audibly with our mouth or inaudibly in our heart against responsibilities the Lord has placed on us is to murmur against our consecration. The Israelites murmured, “Hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” (Exod. 14:11,12; 16:2,3). In one incident, fiery (venomous) serpents were sent as a punishment (Num. 21:5,6). In thus murmuring, the Israelites tempted God and Moses, who pictured Christ. The counterpart for the Christian is to say, “I would never have consecrated if I had known what trials lay ahead.” Although we do not know in advance all that is involved, we consecrate to do the Lord’s will, and we must keep that vow.

Another example of tempting Christ is the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against the leadership of Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16). And still another example is the unfavorable report of the ten spies who searched out the Promised Land (Numbers 13).

Idolatry, fornication, and lust with the Israelites were along *natural* lines. In the past, it was frequently said from the platform that the Christian would never do any of these things and that, therefore, these sins or temptations had to be spiritual, but many Christians who fall away do so along *natural* lines.

Murmuring is the easiest of the temptations for the Christian to fall into—complaining about the Lord’s providence and murmuring about one’s lot. But what are the promises? God said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Bread and water are secure (Isa. 33:16). As Paul said, “Godliness with contentment [that is, without murmuring] is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). When the Israelites murmured, the punishment of death sometimes came on the ringleaders and sometimes on the people at large.

“And were destroyed of the destroyer [that is, the destroying angel].” This incident in the night of the first Passover helps us see the principle or method God sometimes uses. In one night, a pestilence, or mysterious plague, slew all of the firstborn who were not under the blood (Exod.



12:23,29). In addition, the principal gods of Egypt were destroyed. In another incident, 185,000 of King Sennacherib's army were slain in one night by a plague of some kind (2 Kings 19:35).

**Comment:** With the death of the firstborn in Egypt, the slaying was selective.

**Reply:** That fits the antitype, for the "firstborn" who died because they were not under the blood represent those of the consecrated who go into Second Death.

**Comment:** The "destroyer" in verse 10 could have an initial capital letter—"Destroyer"—to indicate Satan's getting into the hearts of the consecrated.

**Reply:** Yes, the destroying angel is Satan, or Satan and his minions. He is the great Serpent, the great Dragon, but he has a lot of offspring. Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees were of their "father the devil" (John 8:44). Satan is Beelzebub, the mastermind behind all of the other demons.

Paul was thinking of the antitype in verse 10. In a particular sense, the Adversary, who is far from being bound, is involved with God's professed people. Just as the Israelites, the professed people of God, were affected in Moses' day, so professed Christians, both nominal and true, are the antitype in our day. Part of the problem with the Israelites in the wilderness was not mixing God's Word with faith, but there was also the problem of a mixed multitude in their midst. A mixed element also exists today in the midst of the professed people of God.

**1 Cor. 10:11** Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

"Now all these ... examples ... are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [age] are come." Verse 11 is similar to verse 6. These incidents are examples (or types) to help us, as Christians, not to be overcome by similar temptations (see verses 12 and 13). Paul was saying that the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness have a special application to those upon whom the ends of the age come. The Israelites had trials both at the beginning and at the end of the 40 years in the wilderness. The antitype would be trials in the apostles' day (at the beginning of the Gospel Age) and trials in our day (at the end of the age). The implication is that the Laodicean church would have very crucial problems as the Gospel Age is about to end. These illustrations, these temptations, are particularly pertinent NOW. Accordingly, Paul admonished that as we see the evil day coming closer and closer, we are not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). In this dangerous time, we need all of the strengthening that we can get in fellowship, doctrine, companionship, and prayers.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* interlinear phraseology is, "On whom the ends of the ages met."

**Reply:** We are living at the ending of the Gospel Age and the beginning of the Millennial Age.

**1 Cor. 10:12** Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

**1 Cor. 10:13** There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Paul was saying that the consecrated have the same type of temptations in the flesh that those of the world have. Therefore, the Christian should not be deceived by thinking he does not have to be concerned. We are to take heed *lest we fall*. We must *watch!* "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Here is where many Christians fall today, for the tendency is to overspiritualize such admonitions and thus not get the lessons

regarding our flesh. Paul was warning, “Do not be deceived. The consecrated have trouble with their flesh and are not immune to such temptations.” If we think of ourselves too highly and are not careful to avoid dangerous situations, we can be overcome, for Christians are born in imperfection just like other people. We have two kinds of temptations: those that are *common* to the world and those that are *uncommon* to the world.

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Paul was not talking along the lines of pride, as is usually said. He was stating that these temptations of the world can overtake a Christian. Hence we should not be overconfident in matters of idolatry, fornication, or murmuring against Christ. The implication is that God’s people would overlook these dangers and thus be prone to think they stand, the attitude being, “Those temptations are too obvious.” Because we are imperfect, being born and shapen in iniquity, we have these problems.

**Comment:** With regard to verse 13, the Christian has to recognize the way of escape in order to take it. Also, if this verse were taken out of context, one might falsely conclude that no one could go into Second Death. Paul was showing that one can fall through temptation.

**Reply:** Many do fall, but which “fall” is referred to here? In the type, the Israelites who died picture going into perdition, but Paul was referring to a stumbling. “A just [righteous, justified] man falleth seven times, and riseth up again” (Prov. 24:16). That kind of fall is a stumbling out of which the Christian is extricated. The point is that there are different degrees of falling.

**1 Cor. 10:14** Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

**1 Cor. 10:15** I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

**1 Cor. 10:16** The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

**1 Cor. 10:17** For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

“Flee from idolatry.” Verse 14 sums up the previous 13 verses, for in one way or another, all of these temptations pertain to *idolatry*. From this standpoint, notice verses 16 and 17. Paul used illustrations of the Memorial to lead up to the principle that “evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” (1 Cor. 15:33). The subject matter of the first 14 verses has a bearing on partaking of the emblems to memorialize Jesus’ death.

“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.” Paul was addressing those who were more mature in the truth about the insidious corruption that can take place when one becomes acclimated to eating meat offered to idols. Then he went into the subject of the Memorial, which Jesus instituted.

The Pastor wrote on the Memorial in depth, showing that more was involved than just an eating or partaking, but he did not elaborate on what Paul was talking about *in context*. He pointed out that Paul’s reasoning revealed insightful information about the cup and the bread; namely, “The cup of blessing [with the wine] ... is it not the communion of [the participation in] the blood of Christ?” In other words, the word “communion” means even more than a common union, for it is a *partnership in the blood of Christ*. On the Memorial night, the wine pictures Jesus primarily, for he said, “This is my blood” (Matt. 26:28). Nevertheless, there is a secondary signification, for Christians are also pictured in the wine. Likewise, the bread is a *partnership—a partnership in the body of Christ*. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of [the participation in] the body of Christ?”

In the nominal Church, as well as with those who do not see the Church's share in the sin offering for the world, communion is thought of as a fellowship, but it is more. It is a *partnership* in the blood and in the bread. This depth of understanding, which the Pastor brought forth, is startling; it is a tremendous insight.

Notice how Paul wove the illustration of the Memorial into the context of the four temptations. The usual thought of Fundamentalists is that the bread and the wine represent the body and the blood of Christ, respectively, and that taking the Holy Communion emblems, however often, signifies one is a Christian. In the Bible Student movement, some do not see the Church's participation in the sin offering of the next age. They feel that we are merely benefactors of Christ's blood and flesh and that in partaking of the emblems, we are forgiven of our sins and are being sustained. It is further reasoned that the emblems are food and light, and that taking the emblems as a group shows we are one body. But the Pastor emphasized a higher thought, namely, that we are *partakers* in Christ's sufferings. We are represented in the loaf—we are the loaf being broken—and we also partake of it. The blood that Christ shed on our behalf signifies we have to suffer and die; we participate in (are in common union with) that blood. Not only do we partake of the bread, but in a secondary sense, we see our responsibility to be broken. While we need to be justified by Christ and to recognize that he died for us, and while we commemorate *his* death, not our death, we see our responsibility to be broken as he was.

Now we will consider the context here in chapter 10. Paul was speaking to the Corinthians (and us) as “wise men” (verse 15). Why did he bring the “cup of blessing” into the picture? *All* Israel partook of the manna and drank the water. Jesus said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). He was saying, “I am the bread from heaven, and you must eat my flesh [manna in the type, bread in the antitype] and drink my blood [water in the type, wine in the antitype].” Thus Paul drew the analogy that just as all of the Israelites back there were baptized in the sea, ate the manna, and drank the water, so all Christians, having been baptized into Christ's death, partake of the common-union bread and participate in the blood at the Memorial. Then, as a further illustration, Paul added verse 17.

“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Jesus' saying, “Do this in remembrance of me,” shows that the Christian enters into the Memorial service by partaking of the bread and the wine (Luke 22:19). The Pastor said that just as many seeds in the grain are ground together to produce flour, which is used to make the bread, so many grapes have to be squeezed to make the wine. That is a true statement. However, Paul's argument on this occasion was that the Christian *participates* in the service, he becomes *identified* with it, when he attends and partakes, for he is then doing as the Master instructed. Paul reasoned that the pagans did exactly the same thing in principle, but they did it to other gods, to *demons*, not to Almighty God.

The term “cup of blessing” indicates it is a *privilege* to participate in the Memorial service and partake of the emblems. Paul used this expression because he was referring to the careless and negligent practices of the children of Israel in connection with things God did on their behalf. For the Church, spiritual Israel, the lesson is even more sober, for the Christian must be careful in partaking of the symbols of God, the Word of God, and the privileges of service.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” In the chapter entitled “The Passover of the New Creation” in the *Sixth Volume*, the Pastor broke the word “communion” into two words: common union. Then he showed that not only does the Christian participate in the Memorial service, but a partnership is involved. The term “common union” includes the thought of both participation and partnership. Yes, we participate in the Memorial service, but there is a *deeper* involvement.

Next Paul said, “The bread which we break, is it not the communion [common union] of the

body of Christ?” Verse 17 is proof that partaking of the bread at the Memorial represents a deeper involvement than just eating the bread: “For we being *many* are [the] *one* bread.” As Christians, we are *part* of the bread, and we also *partake* of the bread. There is a *partnership* in the loaf. Jesus is the Head, and Christians are enjoined to suffer *with* him. Jesus said, “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). He also said, “The bread that I will give is my flesh”; that is, he laid down his life not only during his ministry but also on the Cross (John 6:51). If it is true that we are represented by the bread, does that not infer we are also represented in the cup (Jesus’ blood)?

**Q:** Is the bread, which represents Jesus’ flesh, sacrificed on behalf of Adam and the world, whereas the blood is just for the sanctification of the Church?

**A:** The Law prohibited, under penalty of death, the partaking of blood. The eating of kosher food, particularly meat in which the blood was drained, is a picture of the requirements in the Kingdom Age. In the next age, people will eventually get the gift of life, but they will not be partakers of Christ’s sufferings and death. Jesus’ institution of the Memorial emblems was a separate picture altogether, applying to the Gospel Age. The bread and wine were separate from the Passover supper, which immediately preceded the institution of the Memorial service. This service is peculiar to the Gospel Age, for in the Kingdom, the people will not eat meat in which the blood is still resident.

**Comment:** Many left when Jesus said they would have to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

**Reply:** Yes, the disciples were puzzled by that hard saying. When Jesus asked the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou [only] hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:53-69). Even though Peter did not fully understand, his faith was so strong in the Master that in spite of the shock, he felt there was something he just did not understand yet. And sure enough, as soon as Pentecost arrived after Jesus’ death, the Holy Spirit came down on the Church, and the disciples could understand what Jesus meant about eating his flesh and partaking of his blood. Now the words took on a different light.

**1 Cor. 10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?**

Paul was talking particularly about the priests of Israel in connection with the sacrifices. In the Tabernacle arrangement, depending on the type of offering, the priesthood partook of the sacrifices that the people brought; that is, the priests were allowed to eat part of the animal that was offered (Lev. 6:14,16; 7:1,6; etc.). The priests not only offered the sacrifices on behalf of the people but partook of the food—they got the benefit of the sacrifices.

In the partaking of the bread and the wine in the Memorial service, those who are pictured in the one loaf and in the cup of blessing, in communion with their Head and Lord, are prospective members of the future priesthood. They have the special privilege of partaking of the cup of *blessing* and the loaf of *blessing*. The partaking should be done with reverence, carefulness, and, as far as possible, purity of motive and thought, that is, with sincerity.

The people who brought the offerings also ate of that which was dedicated and placed on the altar. Therefore, Paul applied the lesson that with the nation of Israel, good communications enhanced good conduct, for the sacrifices were ordained of God. The more the people entered into the spirit of that which was ordained of God, to that extent they were partaking of His fellowship and of His approval. Paul was using common sense to wake up the Corinthians.

Incidentally, this practice shows the Church’s share in the sin offering. Partaking of the people’s offerings applies to the Kingdom because that is when the world will come to The Christ. The

Church will be priests (plural), and Jesus will be the High Priest. The world will come to God through the priesthood, who will take of the people's offerings and communicate with God. Jesus will be the Mediator in that day between God and the people.

However, Paul was applying the principle now, in the Gospel Age. The fact that the priesthood partook of the offerings has a special significance to those who are called to be antitypical priests. By eating of these sacrifices, the particular Levites admitted they were the priestly class. Partaking of the Memorial emblems is somewhat the same. We are called to this work, and certain obligations must be fulfilled before we can be kings and priests of the next age. By partaking of the bread and the wine, not only are we partakers of the Lord's altar, but we incur certain responsibilities.

In the lesson here in chapter 10, Paul compared eating the bread and drinking the wine (the flesh and blood of Christ, respectively) to the golden calf incident, in which the Israelites sat down and ate and drank but then rose up to play. The golden calf feast was ostensibly to the Lord. They were supposedly praising God and eating and drinking to His honor, but their rising up was utterly contradictory. Accordingly, Paul warned the Christian not to eat and drink the emblems unworthily (1 Cor. 11:27). The danger with the Christian is hypocrisy.

**1 Cor. 10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?**

Now Paul changed the subject: "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?" He was comparing the partaking of the bread and the wine to the bacchanalian Roman and Greek services, in which the people drank wine and ate bread and meat and then got up to "play" in an orgy, as happened in the worship of the golden calf. Paul was saying, "Do not confuse this partaking of the holy bread and the holy cup with that which is observed by the heathen in connection with the worship of idols."

To repeat: Paul had just talked about Israel after the flesh and the bread and the wine of the Memorial service. The main theme was, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved [brethren], *flee from idolatry*" (verse 14). Of course sacrificing according to God's Law in the Tabernacle arrangement was not idolatry, and Paul was using the principle that when individuals willingly participated in that service, they were honoring what God had arranged. In the case of the Memorial, Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." Thus the Christian feels obligated to observe the Memorial every year in remembrance of Jesus' death, as he instructed. The Memorial service was instituted in the very day of Jesus' death, for 21 hours later he died on the Cross. Therefore, would not the timing in itself infer that the observance of the Memorial supper is an annual occurrence? In contrast, not only were the bacchanalian services held on all different holidays, but they were completely different in character. Similarly, the Israelites took the holy commandments, as given by the mouth of Moses from God, and turned some of them into evil things, even while Moses was yet alive. Therefore, God struck them dead in various ways. The lesson is that we, as Christians, should be very careful not to denigrate the observance of the Memorial and change the meaning from what was originally intended, as the world has done.

Paul was saying that what others worship as an idol does not exist. There is no Bacchus or Venus or Jupiter. All of these gods are figments of the imagination, whereas Jehovah is the sole entity to whom every human being will eventually have to give his complete reverence in order to get life. Christians, who are called to a spirit nature, give that reverence in the Gospel Age. They do not get the benefit of health, life, and happiness in the present life but, instead, lay down their life in sacrifice with the hope of getting immortality in the future. The scenario with the Christian is completely different, and the Adversary is trying to distort the true picture into an abnormality he has cunningly devised to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh.

Paul again brought up the subject of temple meat. “Just use this reasoning about the sacrifices of Israel and transfer it over to the pagan temple arrangement. Is the idol anything?” Of course the Corinthians knew there is only one God, so the answer was no. “Is that which is offered in sacrifice to idols anything?” Again the answer was no. The meat, the nutrients, were the same whether offered in sacrifice under the Mosaic Law or to idols in the pagan temple. What mattered was the *principle* in connection with the atmosphere, or environment, in which the participation took place. Eating under the Lord’s arrangement in the Old Testament, as well as partaking of the bread and the wine at the Memorial, was a *good* thing, but to partake of meat offered to idols meant participation in the *evil* atmosphere of pagan worship.

Paul was showing the responsibility that was involved. He said earlier, “As concerning eating those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.... For if any man sees the Christian, who has knowledge, sit at meat in the idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols? Therefore, through knowledge, do not destroy your brother” (1 Cor. 8:4,10,11 paraphrase). Here in chapter 10, Paul was talking about the same subject and using similar language. “What say I then? that the idol is any thing?” In finishing, or summing up, his remarks in chapter 8 about eating meat offered to idols, he was saying, “While you might eat meat offered to idols and reason that the idol is nothing and that the idol does not hurt the meat, there is the danger that a weak brother might be observing you. In short, you might stumble the conscience of less mature Christians, who could misunderstand your liberty.”

The Christian should watch his liberty. From one standpoint, while he may feel that through liberty and knowledge, he can do certain things, he has to consider others who are weaker in the faith. From another standpoint, the Christian may think he is standing and get overconfident, but there is danger in fraternizing with suspicious or tainted things. Therefore, the best course is to avoid them. Later, at the end of chapter 10, Paul made exceptions and told why. Of course there are spiritual applications as well, but we are emphasizing the natural application because it is less studied.

**1 Cor. 10:20** But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

**1 Cor. 10:21** Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.

Paul brought in another danger. “If you think you can eat meat offered to idols and remain uncontaminated, you are fooling yourself because little by little, you will gradually become involved and fall yourself. Even though your conscience is not defiled initially, by *practicing* the eating of meat offered to idols, you will be corrupted.”

The whole setup of sacrifice in the pagan arrangement was to a false idol representing a false god that does not exist. Paul did not want the Corinthians to have fellowship in that atmosphere, for it was “fellowship with devils.” Paul used the Memorial from the standpoint of fellowship, but the words had a deeper significance. The Christian cannot please God by having one foot in the world and one foot in heaven. “No man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24). Therefore, Paul was saying, “*Flee* from idolatry” (verse 14).

**1 Cor. 10:22** Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

To think that we can fraternize with evil doctrines and evil companionship with immunity is presumptuous. In fact, it is spiritual pride. “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he [God]?” If God Himself abhors such relationships, can we associate with evil

with immunity? No! We would be high-minded to think we could drink of the “cup of devils” without contamination. Sometimes fraternizing is done without the Christian’s realization, but the sooner presumptuousness is recognized, the better the possibility of change.

Jesus was in the world but not of the world. He preached to sinners, but he was not a sinner. A study of his life shows how he behaved. If we carefully study what he did, we will maintain a separation from the world, even in the workplace, although it is permissible to have secular work in order to provide things decent and honest in the sight of men (Rom. 12:17).

One’s guilt is proportionate to his participation in a service in a pagan temple. In principle then, a Christian who has the understanding of present truth cannot go into the nominal Church and participate in the services and think he is strong enough to help the members of the congregation and perhaps win some over to a deeper understanding through his influence. To do so would be going exactly opposite to the Lord’s counsel. Paul was saying, “Are you stronger than God and stronger than Jesus, who was very discreet in his life and behavior and kept himself separate?” With a false sense of confidence, some felt they could continue their previous life and enjoy the benefits of the new Christian religion at the same time.

**Comment:** Back there the problem of eating meat offered to idols was clearly partaking of the “table of devils,” but the Pastor suggested that if someone were isolated today, with no other place to go for study and fellowship, the individual could perhaps attend a testimony meeting with those from a nominal Church or a midweek Bible study where there is communication and scriptural reasoning. Such attendance would be permissible as long as one’s liberty in Christ was preserved.

**Reply:** Wisdom would have to be used. Paul was cautioning the Corinthians, “You are going right into the devil’s apartment, yet you think you will help them? By your actions, you are provoking the Lord to jealousy.” Those who return to the tables of vomit are very displeasing to the Lord (Isa. 28:8). In fact, they cease to provoke Him, for they are no longer under His control. Only under dire circumstances of isolation can a Christian be selective.

**1 Cor. 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.**

Verse 23, which is similar to 1 Corinthians 6:12, pertains to eating meat that is sacrificed to idols. Verse 23 in the *Diaglott* reads, “All things are allowed—but all things are not beneficial. All things are allowed—but all things do not edify.” While we may reason with the head that certain things are acceptable, common sense tells us otherwise. The Christian must consider the welfare and conscience of others lest his own conscience and theirs be damaged.

Not only should the Christian be careful not to offend or stumble a weak brother or sister unnecessarily, but also he should be ready to curb liberties momentarily under such circumstances. There was a big difference between eating meat in the shambles, that is, outside on the street, and going into the temple, participating in the services, and eating meat consecrated to an idol. In the latter circumstance, the Christian would be guilty of spiritual fornication. Nevertheless, while the Christian had the liberty to purchase and eat meat outside in the market, that liberty was to be used with discretion. He had to make sure that no other Christians were nearby observing. Thus there were three levels of responsibility. (1) To eat meat in the temple was forbidden. (2) To eat meat outside the temple in a public manner was wrong and would dishonor Christ if one knew that a consecrated Christian might walk by and see the partaking. Only with discretion was meat to be bought in the shambles. (3) In the privacy of one’s home, the meat could be eaten.

In short, the Christian was to have nothing to do with the meat, the food, and the cup of devils

in the temple service. The Memorial service of the *true* bread and the *true* wine should be kept separate, distinct, and holy.

**Comment:** The Pastor said in a nutshell, “Control your liberty by the law of love.”

**1 Cor. 10:24** Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.

Paul was saying, “Eating meat sacrificed to idols is harmful not only to you but also to others who may respect you or see your example and thus be harmed.” “Wealth,” a supplied word, is rendered “good,” “well-being,” etc., in other translations.

**1 Cor. 10:25** Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

**1 Cor. 10:26** For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.

**1 Cor. 10:27** If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

Paul gave two examples of places where a Christian might eat meat offered to idols, as follows:

1. Verse 25 pertains to eating in the “shambles,” that is, in the *public* marketplace. (The meat was being sold in the marketplace, which was *near* the temple for idols but *not in* it.) If no one said anything about the meat being offered to idols, a Christian could eat it and was not to ask questions “for [his own] conscience sake.” In other words, a Christian was to just accept the meat as if the Lord had opened the way to obtain something cheap.

2. Verse 27 pertains to eating at a *private* home through the invitation of an unbeliever. (The words “to a feast” are supplied.) If nothing was said about the meat being sacrificed to idols, a Christian could eat and was not to ask questions, again, “for [his own] conscience sake.” However, if the Christian was informed that the meat had been offered to idols, he was not to partake, for he would be concerned about his own integrity. Of course if the Christian asked the source of the meat and was told, for example, “It came from the Temple of Jupiter,” he could not eat lest he violate his own conscience as well as that of the host. Moreover, in order not to insult the host, the Christian would then have to give a mini-sermon to explain why he would not eat the meat. Therefore, the Christian was not to ask questions in either the public marketplace or the private feast “for [not merely his own but also for others’] conscience sake.” Love and concern for the conscience of others dictate behavior. Incidentally, a reason to accept the invitation in the first place would be to try to use the occasion as a witnessing opportunity along another line.

**Q:** What if a Christian suspects that the meat was offered to an idol?

**A:** Paul was trying to say that a Christian must educate his conscience. If a person’s conscience is so twisted that he imagines all kinds of things, that is his problem. Paul was simply saying, “Do not ask unnecessary questions,” but if the Christian is informed that the meat was offered to an idol, then he must refuse to eat.

**Comment:** It is like the principle “Unto the pure all things are pure” (Titus 1:15). One should assume the meat is pure unless he is otherwise informed.

**Reply:** Another application of the same principle is that a person is presumed innocent until he is proven guilty.



Paul's advice in verse 18 was given with regard to *holy and profitable* association, which the priests enjoyed under the Levitical arrangement established by God. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" In contrast, verses 19 and 20 state, "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?... I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." In other words, Paul advised the Corinthian brethren not to make a practice of eating things offered to idols lest their conscience be damaged, but then he mentioned two exceptions to the rule. Similarly, when Christians, as citizens of a country, pay taxes to the government, they should not ask questions. However, a war bond is a completely different matter because it helps to sustain the war effort and thus involves conscience. And if a Christian was informed that the meat had been offered to idols, he was to abstain. To eat under that circumstance would put a seal of approval on the meat and the idol(s).

"If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go" for reasons such as friendship or the hope of conversion, the Christian was to eat what was set before him and not ask questions, for he had enough trouble without digging up more. Moreover, to ask questions would be setting the stage for the violation of conscience of not only the consecrated but also the unconsecrated who were present. Incidentally, in most cases, when a Christian is invited to a private home by one who is not a believer, there is no prayer before the meal.

**1 Cor. 10:28** But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

The reason for not asking about the source of the meat is "for conscience sake"—the conscience of both the one who told that the meat had been offered to idols and the one who received the information. For example, if a Christian was a guest, and the unconsecrated host offered the meat to an idol in prayer, the Christian should not eat lest his own conscience be defiled and the conscience of the host be strengthened in what he was doing. Elsewhere Paul put the emphasis on the weak brother's conscience, but now he was saying that the conscience of the Christian could be involved too. In other words, "If any man say unto you, This [meat] is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not [the meat] for his [conscience'] sake ... and for [your] conscience sake." Eating the meat under that circumstance would be detrimental in two ways.

**Comment:** The statement "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" is spurious here.

**1 Cor. 10:29** Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

Verse 29 reinforces the thought of verse 28. "Conscience, I say, not thine own [only], but [also the conscience] of the other." As our brother's (or other people's) keeper, we are to curb our liberties at times in consideration of the conscience of others. Of course those "liberties" could be either real or fancied depending on the circumstances.

"For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" If a Christian properly curbs his own liberty, yet others eat the meat offered to idols anyway, the Christian's responsibility is absolved along that line.

**1 Cor. 10:30** For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

Evidently, the Apostle Paul's freedom in doing certain things was criticized by some who did not understand the situation. For that reason, the eating of meat offered to idols entailed multiple circumstances with multiple responsibilities. When Paul's critics saw him doing

something, they assumed it was evil, but he was saying, “I have given thanks for the partaking.” A present-day example could be if a state auditor had to go into a bar for his secular work and someone who saw him exit assumed he had been drinking. The point is that there are rare circumstances where a person can be innocent, even though he appears guilty.

Verse 30 can also be considered from the standpoint that Paul was expressing the argument of those who were opposed to his advice and wanted to eat meat offered to idols regardless of the circumstances. Such individuals confidently reasoned, “We do not want to be fettered with rules and regulations. We know the idols are imaginary, so eating meat offered to them does not hurt us.” Paul expressed their reasoning as, “If I am a partaker of grace, why should I worry about what other people think?” In doing God’s will, we should proceed regardless of what others think, but Paul was referring to liberty along the lines of eating meat offered to idols—a circumstance where the conscience of others was to be considered.

**1 Cor. 10:31** Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

**1 Cor. 10:32** Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

Whether the Christian eats or drinks, it should be done with the understanding of giving honor and glory to God. In other words, one is to think twice about his eating and drinking, and to ask himself, “Am I honoring or dishonoring God?” Some use as a rationale, “We give thanks and offer a prayer, so we can eat and drink what we want,” but Paul was saying to give thanks with the understanding of *giving no offense*, if possible, to either Jews or Gentiles, consecrated or unconsecrated.

**1 Cor. 10:33** Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Verse 33 brings out the nobility of Paul’s character. His consecration was so deep that he was willing to sacrifice what seemed to be a justifiable liberty if in so doing, he would help and be a blessing to others and perhaps gain even one more believer.

The above reasoning is all part of his reply to 1 Corinthians 9:3,4, “Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink?” In trying to wake up those brethren who were criticizing him, Paul demeaned himself by calling attention to the liberties he was sacrificing. He was saying, “I have the liberty and the power to eat and drink, but I curtail myself so that I might gain others that they might be saved.”

If Paul had not stated all of the preceding details in chapter 10, his saying, “Even as I please all men in all things,” would seem to indicate he was a compromiser. To the contrary, Paul was very principled and made distinctions according to the situation.

**1 Cor. 11:1** Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Verse 1 belongs at the end of the tenth chapter, as shown in the Revised Standard Version. Paul was urging the Corinthian brethren to follow his example in circumscribing or sacrificing his liberties for others. The word “followers” should be “imitators,” for we are followers of *Christ*. “Be ye imitators of me [Paul], even as I also am of Christ.” The last clause, “even as I also am of Christ,” is a modifying factor.

**1 Cor. 11:2** Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

“Now I praise you, brethren.” Verse 2 begins a new subject. Characteristically, wherever possible, Paul put a word of commendation in his epistles, complimenting the brethren. Here he praised the brethren for trying to obey and for remembering him, for even though he had left Corinth, they were writing to him for advice.

Many of the brethren in the class were looking to Paul for advice, and they were troubled by certain leaders in their midst who, although a minority, were influential. These leaders found fault with Paul’s judgment on various matters, and in “examining” him, they raised seeds of doubt in the other brethren. In an indirect but very effective manner, Paul was trying to strengthen the brethren to realize that these leaders, who were not apostles, were putting forth wrong teachings; namely, he called attention to what he was doing and to the fact that the others were not suffering for Christ. Paul advised the brethren to listen to his admonitions and to be imitators of him *as he was a follower of Christ*.

We do not fully know what “ordinances” Paul had previously delivered to the Corinthians. Whether they were given when he first established the ecclesia and/or subsequently in his first letter, which is not recorded in Scripture, we do not know.

**Comment:** Some feel that Paul’s advice later on in this chapter with regard to a woman’s head being covered is not a commandment, but the fact he is introducing the subject by praising the Corinthians for keeping his previous instructions, ordinances, and traditions indicates that he will be giving them yet another instruction from God, which is meant to be kept.

Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping “the ordinances, as I [had previously] delivered them [un]to you.” 1 Corinthians 7:17 provides a possible clue as to what Paul had ordained: “But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.” What did God deliver unto every man? Those in the early Church did not have personal copies of the Old Testament, let alone complete Bibles. Therefore, when a person consecrated, he was given a mechanical gift of the Holy Spirit along one or more lines. Some were given the gift of a startling memory, being able to quote the entire Old Testament (probably in the Hebrew tongue). Others who attended the local meetings might not know Hebrew but could speak Greek. Someone else in the congregation had the gift of putting the Hebrew into Greek so that the others could clearly understand the lesson for the day. Still others had the gift of prophecy. Thus the brethren had plenty of help from one another. However, Paul had to tell them not to all speak at the same time and to caution them that one individual should not monopolize too much of the time but should endeavor to be as brief and as clear as possible. Another person would have the gift of explaining what the text meant in a more doctrinal fashion. After that, the meeting was open for commentary. As long as everything was done decently and in order, the class got the maximum profit. Paul said, “I would rather speak five words that the brethren could understand than 10,000 words that would not be helpful” (1 Cor. 14:19 paraphrase). Evidently, he had given previous instructions to the Corinthians along various lines, so we are not exactly sure what ordinances he was referring to in verse 2.

**1 Cor. 11:3** But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Paul was calling attention to headship. The order, hierarchy, or chain of command, starting at the top, is God, Christ, man, woman. With all being *separate* individuals, verse 3 refutes the Trinity. Just as the man being the head of the woman indicates two separate people, so God being the head of Christ indicates two separate beings. God is supreme over all.

The theme of headship becomes prominent in subsequent verses, so verse 3 was gradually

introducing a new subject. Also, verse 3 indicates that a man should have headship in the home. Especially today headship in the home is a touchy subject, but the scriptural principle is plain. Christ wanted his disciples to suffer and be tried along Christian lines and the commandments of God rather than on social issues, which have both justices and injustices. The attention of the Christian is not to be diverted into these paths and away from Christ.

A possible problem in the church at Corinth was that the sisters were teaching indiscriminately, and perhaps even more than the brothers. Clues back in the apostles' day, as well as in our present experience at this end of the age, indicate that the majority of those who give their hearts to the Lord are women. Therefore, a reasonable assumption is that sisters were teaching. Paul would now give advice along that line. In fact, the discussion of this issue, as well as other practical, pragmatic matters that can be disturbing factors in the Christian church, is what makes 1 and 2 Corinthians startlingly different from Paul's other epistles.

**Comment:** Galatians 3:28 reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, ... bond nor free, ... male nor female [in the church]: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," but that text is not discussing the hierarchical standpoint.

**Reply:** That is true. Each consecrated individual is a child of God, and one who may seem to us to be inferior in knowledge or development may end up, before finishing his (or her) course, much more advanced than we are. Therefore, in looking upon one another, we should try to find some quality in each individual, male or female, that we lack. By observing behavior in meetings and in fellowship, we can see brethren who are an example and a help to us in our own development. We should not be unduly influenced by any ethnic or other type of differentiation of the body members of Christ. In the organization and functioning of church meetings, we need decency and order, but otherwise, all are equal. We should not be high-minded.

**1 Cor. 11:4** Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

**1 Cor. 11:5** But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

**1 Cor. 11:6** For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

Paul now began to discuss praying and prophesying. Prophesying is usually thought of as public speaking, but it can also be a public statement either to the Church or to others. Attention was being called to the brother or sister who *verbally expresses a thought*. If the man prays or prophesies with his head *covered*, he dishonors God. To the contrary, if the woman prays or prophesies with an *uncovered* head, she dishonors God. It is permissible for a woman to speak with her head uncovered *only if she is shorn of her hair*. Stated another way, the woman should either cover her head or have her scalp shaved. This comment was a dig, for Grecian women were noted for their long, beautiful hair and the way it was adorned and displayed. Since they prized their hair, of the two choices, it was better for them to cover their heads when praying or prophesying. To get his point across, Paul used sarcasm: "For those women who do not want to cover the head, let them cut off their hair. And if to cut off the hair would be a shame for a woman, let her take the lesser of the two restrictions. Since it is severe to have the hair removed, why not take the more moderate course of just covering the head?"

**Comment:** If a woman would not cover her head, she was acting like a man and should look like a man.

Again Paul used common-sense reasoning. To the women, he was saying, “Can you not forbear a moment of glory and subdue yourselves by this act of covering your heads? Not only does an uncovered head call attention to yourselves, but you would be violating the symbolism.” Today brethren emphasize the symbolism, which is proper, for a covered head shows the headship of Christ. However, there is also the practical aspect, which was especially pertinent in the early Church, of not calling attention to oneself.

**Comment:** A woman should cover her head in the ecclesia arrangement, which is *public* praying or prophesying, but not for something like saying grace at the table with the family.

**Q:** Should a sister cover her head in witnessing, colporteur work, follow-up work, and tracting?

**A:** Covering the head pertains more to the ecclesia arrangement. However, for planned witnessing to the public, such as colporteur work, a sister should be especially careful of her dress because she is going forth expressly to speak as a representative of the Lord, and a head covering is advisable. In principle, a sister should always dress appropriately, but when the purpose is to go out witnessing, a little more discretion should be used.

**Q:** Should a sister who sings before a congregation have her head covered?

**A:** Yes, because she is singing publicly.

**Q:** If sisters meet together and no brother is present, should they cover their heads?

**A:** In sisters’ meetings that are planned, not impromptu, it is advisable for them to cover their heads, but head coverings are more important when brothers are present. Sisters might not cover their heads if praying or witnessing on the street, for example, but would cover them in a friend’s house when praying. The point is to obey the *principle* of what Paul was saying with regard to *public* praying and prophesying and to try to judge (and follow) the propriety of its application under various circumstances. As a guideline along another line, a woman can express herself—she can pray and prophesy in the Church—as long as she uses moderation and does not monopolize a meeting or try to be the elder.

Having the head covered was a sore issue in the Corinthian ecclesia. Because many sisters did not want to cover their heads, Paul led into the subject by thanking the brethren for asking his advice (verse 1). Then he explained that the head of woman is man, the head of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God (verse 2). Now he would devote a number of verses to the subject of covering the head.

Incidentally, some of the Christian Jews might have thought a man should cover his head when praying or prophesying because in the type, the underpriests in the Levitical priesthood wore bonnets according to the Law, and the head of the high priest was uncovered. However, in that symbolism, the underpriests (men) represented the Bride of Christ, whereas the high priest represented Jesus. (The high priest wore a turban that left the top of the head bare. The purpose of the turban was to hold the golden plate, which was affixed to the turban with a blue lacer. Thus the turban and the golden plate became like a tiara.) To preserve the symbolism in the Gospel Age, the men with their heads uncovered represent Jesus, the Head and High Priest of the Church, and the women with their heads covered picture the Bride.

**Comment:** Some have tried to say a woman’s hair is her “covering,” but Weymouth, Moffatt, and other translations use the word “veil,” showing that the covering is something external and separate. Verses 4 and 6 state, “A man who wears a veil when praying or prophesying dishonors his Head.... If a woman will not wear a veil, let her also cut off her hair.”

**Comment:** Phillips is also clear: “But in the case of a woman, if she prays or preaches with her head uncovered, it is just as much a disgrace as if she had had it closely shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head she might just as well have her head cropped. And if to be cropped or closely shaven is the sign of disgrace to a woman (as it is with many peoples), then that is all the more reason for her to cover her head.”

**Reply:** Phillips goes into the philosophy from a natural standpoint. Subsequent verses in the King James will shed more light.

Although the usual definition of prophesying is “public teaching,” there were women who prophesied when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Generally speaking, they prophesied in a mechanical fashion, as they were moved, making utterances that were profitable particularly to the consecrated. Sometimes women prophesied to the public, but Paul seems to have been speaking about the ecclesia arrangement. This “prophesying” was not teaching, for Paul said that a woman was not to “usurp [teaching] authority over the man” (1 Tim. 2:12).

Referring to Old Testament times, the Apostle Peter said that holy men of old spoke “as they were moved” by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). On different occasions, the Prophet Jeremiah was told to go to a specific location and make a certain statement to the Jewish people. The prophets typically went to the city gate and waited. Meanwhile, the people saw them standing there silently. All of a sudden, a seizure or some outside invisible force would move them to speak in an extraordinary fashion. So unusual was the speaking that if their ordinary voice did not have a carrying quality so people afar off could hear, their own voice was amplified in a startling fashion as though they were speaking through a loudspeaker. On these occasions, if the Lord wished to witness to a great many people in a noisy marketplace, for example, the voice was miraculously amplified. Similarly, when a woman stood up in an ecclesia meeting, the brethren saw that she was teaching not with her own understanding but under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The brethren recognized what was happening.

**Comment:** How fitting, then, for the woman to have her head covered! Her speaking under such circumstances was not ordinary teaching but was something a little above and beyond and very necessary and significant to the Church back there.

“Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for [she] ... is ... as if she were shaven.” A woman’s uncovered head was shameful to God. If she prophesied with her head uncovered, speaking in the name of the Lord, it was so dishonoring to the Holy Spirit coming upon her that it was like seeing her prophesying with a bald head, which would be so distracting that the hearers would not receive what she had to say. Therefore, in God’s sight, if a woman’s head was uncovered in prophesying, it was as though she were preaching with a *stark bald head*.

**Comment:** If an elder is in an ecclesia or a setting where sisters do not cover their heads, he should not call on them for prayer. And conversely, if a man has abnormally long hair, he should not be called on for prayer.

**Reply:** Yes, to ask them to pray would be unbecoming. Elders are responsible for doing the admonishing in such instances.

**1 Cor. 11:7** For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

**1 Cor. 11:8** For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

**1 Cor. 11:9** Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

Paul certainly was not encouraging women's liberation! Some limitations in the ecclesia arrangement have remained throughout the Gospel Age. Generally speaking, persecution during the Dark Ages was harsher on Christian men than on women. Teaching publicly and having the prestige that accompanies such teaching, the men often received greater outward persecution, whereas the women were judged on the basis of being the wives, friends, and companions of the men who suffered; that is, God regarded the women's support for and cooperation with the men who were physically persecuted as equal loyalty. In the final analysis, God is looking for faithfulness to Him, so a sister can be just as loyal by obeying the Word as a man is in suffering physical persecution. What is important is the manifestation of loyalty with regard to the truth and doing God's will.

Some would feel the relationship of men and women is unfair, but it is not. Similarly, the gospel is not one of freedom for slaves or emancipation of the oppressed of the world. Rather, the gospel speaks of liberty for those under sin and moral degradation. What is important is liberty of the *spirit* and of the *soul*. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest [of soul]" (Matt. 11:28). The Christian may have to contend with poverty, but internal comfort gives an entirely different perspective on life. The Lord looks on the *inner* man, and the degree of loyalty is manifested by one's effort to follow God's Word.

**Comment:** Since the world today is interested in women's liberation, the persecution to come on the Church in the near future during the church-state hour of power will probably be equally severe for men and women.

**Reply:** Yes. Even in the past, as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* testifies, many women suffered harsh persecution, but in numerical terms, men usually got the brunt of the persecution.

Why did Paul say, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man"? If headship of the man was a problem in the ecclesia, with women wanting an equal say, then surely it was also a problem in the home. However, although the office of elder, with the function of teaching, is one thing, there should be liberty to question. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). All who are being taught, both male and female, should have free communication on the subject matter being presented.

**Comment:** There seems to have been a problem in the Corinthian church with the women being too outspoken. Apparently, the Greek women tended to be overbearing.

**Reply:** Since Paul said there is neither male nor female in Christ, some of the Corinthian women might have felt there should be no sex discrimination at all in the ecclesia (Gal. 3:28). However, only men are to be elders. And yes, the Corinthian women were too outspoken. After instructing the women to cover their heads, Paul had to go further and tell them to be silent in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 14:34). Paul met this problem with common-sense reasoning from the Bible. Man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man, that is, to be his helpmate. All down through history, women have given birth to both males and females, but if we go back to Adam, woman came out of man. Using a little sarcasm and constructive criticism, Paul said, "If you are going to reason that there is neither male nor female in Christ, then go back to the original picture with Adam and Eve."

Saying that man "is the image and glory of God" is another reference to Adam. God created man (Adam) first and then woman (Eve) out of man. God stretched out and enlarged a rib of Adam to make a very beautiful woman, who was given to Adam as a companion. Thus "the woman is the glory of the man," for her origin goes back to the man.

Paul's reasoning continued. If man, when originally made, was the glory of God, then from a practical standpoint, that glory would be inhibited if a hat, or covering, were worn. Just from a natural, psychological standpoint, when man was created, he must have had beautiful hair. To have the hair covered under that circumstance would seem inauspicious, for those beholding Adam should see all of him.

"If the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn" (verse 6). Paul knew that no woman in her right senses would be so interested in prophesying that she would shave her head and be bald in order to do so. This unusual approach was his way of stating the reason why a woman should have her head covered. He was saying, "If you want to be stubborn and different from other women by not covering your head, then you can have that privilege, but make sure that you take off all your hair." Of course Paul knew that this logic, a form of sarcasm, would silence the women along this line, but this reasoning was only a part of the answer.

In verse 7, Paul switched back to the man: "A man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God." The scriptural precedent of Genesis 1:27, that man was created in the image of God, was a reasonable explanation as to why a man should not cover his head. Paul used common-sense reasoning on this delicate, troublesome subject. He gave a good, solid reason for reversing the former Jewish practice.

"The woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man" (verses 7b and 8). Paul was giving a lesson according to a particular question the Corinthian brethren wanted him to resolve. Verse 9 continued the same theme: "Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." This was practical advice that if a woman faithfully curbed her inhibitions and frustrations along this line, she would be rewarded in proportion to her obedience.

**Comment:** Just as Eve would not have existed without Adam, so the Church would not exist without Jesus.

**1 Cor. 11:10** For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

The woman ought to have "power [a covering] on her head because of the angels," the messengers, that is, primarily the elders. The ministers to the church are called "angels" (1 Tim. 5:21). In the sin city of Corinth, women had long hair richly adorned in various ways. If an elder was giving a sermon or a lesson, and right in front of him was a beautiful woman with an elaborate hairdo, she would be a distraction. The principle is the same with a short skirt or any part of a woman's external appearance that calls attention to herself.

**Comment:** Other males in the ecclesia could also be distracted and thus not pay attention to the speaker. And a woman with an elaborate hairdo could even distract other sisters.

**Reply:** That is true, and the principle of a woman being "covered" is to be applied in each circumstance. When a woman prays or a man teaches in a meeting, the individual becomes the focus of attention. There are two possible dangers: The person praying or teaching can be (1) a distraction to others or (2) distracted by others.

**Comment:** Young's *Analytical Concordance* defines "power" as "authority" or "privilege." It is a privilege for a woman to cover her head and thus show the headship of Christ.

**Reply:** Obedience to the instruction to cover the head is in itself a privilege. It is also an evidence of her humility.



Incidentally, a certain amount of formality and decorum is desirable but not so much that spirituality is destroyed. Either extreme is a problem—carelessness and being too relaxed are not conducive to spirituality, but neither is an atmosphere that is too rigid and strict.

The margins of some Bibles have a reference to literal spiritual angels. That thought goes back to the days prior to the Flood, when some of the angels were attracted to the daughters of men. “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Gen. 6:2). However, Paul was talking primarily of human “messengers” in the church, that is, elders. The “power,” or head covering, subdues and modifies the distracting influence. It is also a symbol of the woman’s humility and her recognition of the male as the head in the marriage relationship.

**Comment:** The Weymouth translation reads, “That is why a woman ought to have on her head a symbol of subjection, because of the angels.”

**1 Cor. 11:11** Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

**1 Cor. 11:12** For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Paul made these statements in order to keep the relationship balanced between the man and the woman. He kept the right perspective by not letting the issue go too far in the other direction with the man becoming a dictator. Verses 11 and 12 are balancing-out statements.

Man and woman are not completely independent of each other in the marriage relationship—there should be a close rapport between the two—“but all things [both man and woman are] of God.” In other words, the obligation toward God is superior to the marriage relationship. Paul was directing attention away from the male and female aspect and giving the perspective that all things are of God. The order of importance is God first, family second (particularly the marriage as a mortgage), and duty to fellow man third.

One should not think too much of himself or herself, especially in the family relationship. Even though an order is to be observed, there is not to be a dictator relationship but a relationship based on respect for the principles laid down in God’s Word.

**Comment:** Paul had said that the head of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God. Now, lest the woman (the wife) become a slave to the man (her husband), Paul was showing the balance.

**Reply:** The wife should try to be responsive to her husband and vice versa, but the husband has the decision-making role in the marriage. However, he is not to be a dictator.

**Q:** How is the woman “of the man,” and how is the man “by the woman”?

**A:** Eve was made out of Adam’s rib, and a man is born by a woman. They both (the man and the woman) need each other in one way or other. Verses 8 and 9 refer to Adam and Eve: “The man is not of the woman [originally]; but the woman [was] of the man. Neither was the man [Adam] created for the woman [Eve]; but the woman [was originally created as a helpmate] for the man.” But lest the reader get an imbalanced view of this matter, Paul was saying, “Do not go too far in this analogy.” He put both the man and the woman in the proper perspective. Both have their place in God’s arrangement, and they need each other, so the man should not feel too independent or be too domineering. An abnormal condition existed in Corinth.

**Comment:** Because of the type, the man is above the woman, but nevertheless, both are needed for propagation. On the one hand, the man needs the woman in order to keep the human race going, and on the other hand, the woman needs the man.

**Reply:** “In the Lord” there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). In their relationship to God, the man and the woman are equal. There may be a few exceptions where some men are more recognized, but it should never be in a domineering sense. Prophetesses and deaconesses were in the ecclesia, but modesty and decorum were needed by the women.

**1 Cor. 11:13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?**

In verses 13 and 14, Paul gave a practical, pragmatic evaluation in regard to covering the head. How does the subject pertain to a woman? How does the subject pertain to a man?

If a woman prays (or prophesies) unto God, especially in the ecclesia, she should cover her head. Paul then asked a common-sense rhetorical question: “Is it becoming for a woman to pray unto God with an uncovered head?” By nature, women are endowed with beautiful hair, so when they pray *publicly*, where brethren are trying to commune with God, the less distraction the sisters cause with their hair, the better. Covering the head is a mark of humility and modesty in a woman. The women in Corinth were more apt to adorn themselves with long and ornamented hair. Consecrated women should have a reverent, modest appearance in dress as well as hair.

**Comment:** Paul was saying, “I have given you evidence and the reasons for a woman to cover her head. Now you judge the matter.”

**Reply:** Yes, he gave about three perspectives on the propriety of a woman covering her head.

**1 Cor. 11:14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?**

“Nature itself” teaches that it is shameful for a man to have long hair, for long hair makes him look effeminate. When a man’s hair creeps down over the back of his shoulders, it is hard to tell the difference between a man and a woman.

**Q:** Did Jesus have long hair?

**A:** He probably had longer hair but not down to his shoulders, as is often portrayed. The Gospels do not tell what Jesus’ face looked like, how tall he was, or what he weighed, but they do indicate that he was very handsome like Moses. When born, Moses was a “goodly [fair] child” (Exod. 2:2). No doubt when he grew up, he was unusual in his bearing. We believe that Jesus had a natural grooming and bearing befitting one who would become, in a special sense, the image of God.

With regard to Jesus’ hair, much would have to do with the way it was cut. It could be worn long, but not abnormally long. Just as a woman is to exercise moderation, so a man should do likewise. The manliness of Jesus was not feminized, even though, in a sense, he was representative of Adam before Eve was taken out of his side. As originally created, man had in his person a blend of male and female qualities. When the rib was taken out of Adam’s side and woman was made, there was a separation of the common characteristics of true womanhood (a certain delicateness) and true manhood (manliness). We think, therefore, that there was an unusual blend of both natures in the personage of Jesus Christ himself.

Apparently, the length of the man’s hair was another problem in the church at Corinth. Some

of the men were beginning to let their hair grow long. First, Paul said it was a shame for a man's head to be covered. Now he added that a man's hair should not be allowed to grow to an unseemly length.

Today the main motivation for long hair is rebellion, independence, and nonconformity. One who wants to be different also wants to call attention to himself and show that he is liberal and a free thinker. The practice, or habit, of being different is somewhat like the conscience. The conscience is tender, but through disobedience, it becomes hardened.

**1 Cor. 11:15** But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

To the contrary, a woman's long hair is natural; it is a glory given to her by God. Therefore, she should humble herself in prayer by covering that glory. Verses 14 and 15 are common sense.

**Comment:** The length of a woman's hair is modified somewhat by the custom of the time. The main point is that it should look feminine.

**Reply:** Similarly under the Law, a man was not to wear woman's clothing and vice versa in order to preserve masculinity and femininity, respectively. Today, with changing customs, a woman can wear pants under certain circumstances, but there are still guidelines.

Incidentally, at the time Paul was speaking, the Roman men who were eligible for warfare did not have long hair because long hair would have been a real handicap in hand-to-hand combat. Grabbing another man's long hair would give considerable control and psychologically break his spirit, especially since the neck represents pride, resistance, and stubbornness. The long hair of Absalom, the son of David, got caught in an oak tree and led to his downfall. "And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away" (2 Sam. 14:25,26; 18:9).

If a fair, noble woman shaved off all her hair, making herself bald, her femininity would be lost. Of course if a woman lost her hair through radiation treatments or an illness, or if she became naturally bald, we would not disapprove of her wearing a wig. Certainly there should be more empathy for a woman in that circumstance than for a man.

When God made woman from Adam, she was startlingly different—almost like a new creation—for the angels were all sons (males) of God. When angels materialize, they can assume the likeness of a woman, but they do not have that likeness in their normal spiritual estate. When man was created, the morning stars sang together, and the angels shouted for joy (Job 38:7). However, we can imagine that the angels were silent in their astonishment and pleasure at seeing Eve, for she was unique and so different from what the angels were accustomed to. In fact, many of the angels were so enamored with the arrangement God had made for the multiplication of the human race that they left their first estate and stayed down here, taking unto themselves wives as they chose (Gen. 6:2). Thus we can see that hair is like an essential for one to be a woman. This is a sensitive subject, but in an idealistic sense, we can see that there is a distinction between male and female.

**Comment:** For verse 15, the King James margin has "veil" for "covering."

**Reply:** The thought is of a *natural* veil: "[A woman's] hair is given [to] her for a [natural] covering" *outside* the Church, but *inside* the Church is a different situation because of the new nature and Spirit-begettal. God made woman with long hair, but there is a problem inside the

Church, for as new creatures, we are told that henceforth we know neither male nor female. Of course we recognize that we are all of God's family, being either sons or daughters, but we do not make that distinction in the Church as far as our relationship to each other and to God is concerned. An equality exists, yet there is a dual role in that a woman should have her head, including her hair, covered during the church service.

The woman covers her head in the Church for two reasons. (1) Long, flowing hair is not a distraction if covered. (2) The symbolism of headship is important. The woman shows deference in covering her head. Therefore, Paul's advice is proper from both a pragmatic and a symbolic standpoint.

**Q:** Wouldn't the fallen angels appear as men rather than women?

**A:** They can do either according to their purpose, and they can even materialize as animals. They fashion garments and appearances that best suit their intended purpose of deception. It is true that the fallen angels do not usually appear as woman because their very aggressiveness and hardness make them desire to be of the male sex. They enjoy the capacity of the male, and they want license to accommodate it.

**1 Cor. 11:16** But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

There was trouble in the Corinthian church. Some, both male and female, were contending for their liberty. At first, Paul seems to be saying, "If you are going to be contentious, let's drop the matter. Do not worry, for this is just my advice and not dogma." The *Diaglott* and the *Sinaitic* harmonize with the King James translation, but there is a problem, and some of the other translations are helpful. "But if anyone wants to argue about this, all I can say is that we never teach anything else than this—that a woman should wear a covering when prophesying or praying publicly in the church, and all the churches feel the same way about it" (*Living Bible*). "If anyone is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (*Revised Standard*). "But if anyone wants to be argumentative about it, I can only say that we and the churches of God generally hold this ruling on the matter" (*Phillips*). What, then was Paul calling attention to? The *Phillips* translation and the *Living Bible* properly reflect the context—it does matter that a woman's head should be covered. Notice verses 4 and 5: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." It would be strange if the Apostle Paul was saying in one place, "You are dishonoring the head," and then said in verse 16, "What you do does not matter. If you are going to be argumentative, we do not have any ruling on the matter."

We will make a suggestion for verse 16 that favors the King James translation but gives a different twist. Notice, first, that verse 6 says, "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn [either close-cropped like a crew cut or clean-shaven with a razor]." Either way the lack of hair was a shame, as shown by customs of the past. For instance, when barbarians invaded Italy and became converted, it was a custom among the Jews to cut off the hair of a woman found in adultery. To have the hair cut was both a symbol of shame and a punishment.

In the East, generally speaking, when a woman was out in public, she covered her hair, and some even wore a veil. The covering was a symbol of modesty, decorum, and headship either to her husband, who was her head, or to her father if she was single. The covering showed that the woman recognized her place, or station, in life.

Corinth was a worldly commercial city. In connection with their rights, the women were beginning to abandon this practice and not wear a head covering. They were known for their

beautiful hair, and now, instead of the hair being just for their husbands, the women were demonstrating their long hair to the public. Paul was saying that this practice was bad enough in the world, but it should not be carried into the Church. In alluding to the practice of shaming the woman by cutting off her hair, Paul was asking the Corinthians, “If you are contentious about the matter, would you want your head shaved?”

In other words, we understand verse 16 to have an opposite connotation to what is expressed in the King James. Paul said, “If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom,” but what was the “such custom”? Invariably, translators misapply this term. Paul was referring to the custom of a women having an uncovered or shorn head, or of a man having a covered head or long hair, when praying or prophesying. Any of these customs would be “a shame.”

The women in the church in Corinth were following the practice of not covering the head. Paul said, “Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head [Christ]” (verse 5). He recognized that women had the right to pray and to prophesy publicly—he was not abridging their liberty of expression. A woman has a place in God’s arrangement, but in that capacity, she should modestly cover her hair with a veil. Therefore, Paul was advising modesty and decorum and not trying to curtail liberty in praying and prophesying.

Some women in the Corinthian church were praying and prophesying with uncovered heads, and some men had long hair. In addition, a number of the male Christian Jews were probably covering their heads because of the Jewish custom under the Law. Hence in verse 16, Paul was talking about the *wrong* “custom.” He was saying, “I am not in favor of, nor do I advise, this innovation, which is improperly being brought into the church in Corinth. This custom is not practiced in any of the other churches. Therefore, you are setting a precedent that dishonors Christ.” A woman who refuses to cover her head dishonors her own natural head, her family head, and Christ—she destroys the whole arrangement. And the man who covers his head does likewise. Even in appearance, he looks foolish. Christ, as the High Priest, had his head *uncovered*. The woman, as a picture of the Church *under* Christ, should have her head *covered*.

When this subject matter originally came up, Paul commended the Corinthians: “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things [I advised], and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (verse 2). Evidently, Paul had instructed earlier, and set as a pattern in the Church, that women should cover their heads and men should have uncovered heads. The Corinthians were following this practice while Paul was with them, but in his absence, others introduced new ideas. Apparently, however, Paul had not explained in depth the *reason* for the practice. Therefore, he now gave the *basis* for the ordinances. The Corinthians seemed to have a logical reasoning for doing otherwise—that there is neither male nor female in the Church, for example—but they were giving the Scriptures a twist that was not permissible. In summation, the King James translation of verse 16 is all right when we realize that Paul was saying, “We have no such custom as these new teachers are bringing in.”

**Q:** Should a woman cut her hair?

**A:** To do so back there was a shame. The problem is where a woman tries to appear masculine and loses her femininity. The criteria pertain to decorum, modesty, and femininity. By nature, a woman should be feminine, and a man should be masculine. Each Christian is responsible for where he or she draws the line, but Paul gave clear-cut instructions on the matter of having a head covered or uncovered in the Church.

**Comment:** An argument sometimes used for women not covering their heads is that her hair is her covering (verse 15). The premise continues that back in Paul’s day, only those who had shaved heads were required to cover their heads, but the argument falls flat because, both then

and now, women do not have shaved heads.

**Reply:** Verse 6 contradicts the argument, for it says that if a woman does not want her head to be covered, her hair should be cut off. Paul coupled verse 15 with verse 14 and was talking along natural lines. If a man tries to grow long hair, he loses his masculinity and begins to look like a woman. With a woman, however, the longer her hair, the more beautiful it is. Long hair is God's gift, or endowment, to the woman; it is her "glory." The hair itself is not a covering in the Church because Paul said that a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. Moreover, verse 10 uses the word *power*: "For this cause ought the woman to have power [an additional covering, that is, a veil] on her head because of the angels." In other words, "For this reason, it is necessary for a woman not merely to have hair on her head but also to have a veil above that hair."

**Comment:** The point is not to distract those in the congregation by the beauty of the woman's hair. A general rule is not to call attention to self, and that rule is somewhat based on the custom of the time. For example, a distraction today would be inordinate makeup.

**Reply:** In the Church, a woman's hair is to be covered. What is done in the private home is another matter. In Paul's day, the longer the hair, the better. With regard to today, Paul merely used the criterion that it is not becoming for a woman to pray with her hair uncovered. The general rule is that the beauty of a woman's hair should be subdued when praying to God. The real issue is not so much the length of the hair as it is to maintain femininity or masculinity.

**Comment:** Today a head covering for a woman is more symbolic than practical because the covering is often very small.

**Reply:** If a woman has unusual adornment such as an elaborate hairdo or excessive jewelry, she should put a larger covering on the head, but if a woman's head is not adorned, the simple small covering is sufficient because it shows she recognizes her submission. As has been expressed, a woman should not call attention to self—in other words, she should be modest.

Being a Christian today is difficult. Because of the subtle temptations, very few Christians will make the Little Flock. Throughout the Gospel Age, there has been physical persecution except for the Laodicean period thus far, so we are living in a peculiar time. Nevertheless, the Scriptures teach that some members of the Little Flock are still in the flesh. The battle now is primarily *mental*—it is one of *decision making with principles involved in a subtle way*. In the future, when members of the Little Flock consider one another impartially, those who suffered physical persecution will recognize that the ones chosen now are just as worthy because of the subtle and severe trials along mental lines. Of course at the very end of the age, there will again be physical persecution, for the feet members have to be off the scene at a time known to the Lord. Meanwhile, Christians in this country are living in luxury and ease with many study helps like concordances and numerous Bible translations.

In the near future, the "mark of the beast" will be applied in the business and social world of Christendom (Rev. 13:16,17). Efforts are already being made to organize orthodox Christians to buy from other orthodox Christians. And methods are being devised to eliminate the need for checkbooks. Advancing technology is hastening the coming persecution.

Let us consider verse 16 again but from another standpoint. "But if any man [that is, any individual, man or woman] seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Who was contentious? Why did Paul, after making strong recommendations and giving logical reasons for his advice, from both a spiritual and a natural standpoint, say that his advice on covering the head could not be made mandatory in this situation?

**Comment:** Paul felt his advice had God's approval but did not want the issue to cause divisions.

**Reply:** Paul's advice was important but not absolutely essential. If there were to be a split in the class, which could be proper depending on the circumstance, it should not occur over this particular issue. However, he had something else in mind.

**Comment:** 1 Timothy 6:3-5 reads, "If any man teach otherwise [being contentious], and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

**Reply:** That is part of the reason for not making the advice mandatory at the present time, but a peculiar circumstance existed, chiefly with regard to men, at the time Paul wrote this advice. The Christian Jews in Corinth had a problem because in the Tabernacle arrangement, all of the underpriests wore bonnets. In addition, when the people came into the Tabernacle arrangement after the services, there was no particular injunction whether they had their heads covered or uncovered. A radical dispensational change took place at the beginning of the Gospel Age. That which was proper from a natural standpoint in common society was now considered otherwise when it came to spiritual worship as a new creature. In the gospel Church, those who ministered in the services were not to have their head covered, whereas those who participated in the Tabernacle service did have their head covered. It was difficult for some of the Jews to understand and thus make the distinction and heartily accept Paul's advice. Because their conscience had been trained the other way, they thought, "We are not so sure that Paul is correct on this particular issue." Therefore, because of this problem, it was not absolutely necessary for a class to split on this issue, but as time went on in the gospel Church, this indoctrination of the Jews evaporated, for relatively few Jews accepted the gospel. The point is that it is more important today to observe the Apostle Paul's advice, for the exceptions he made during the transitional period from the Jewish Age to the Gospel Age no longer apply. In other words, the Jews had difficulty overcoming the culture they were born into, but now Paul's advice is more essential.

**Comment:** If a sister in our day refuses to wear a head covering, we would not make an issue out of her refusal, but she should not be called on to pray.

**Reply:** That is one way this problem could be treated. Back there quite a number of Jewish Christians did not follow Paul's advice and thus were contentious about this matter.

**Comment:** After discussing the subject for many verses, Paul now seems to be diminishing his reasoning by saying the issue is not that important.

**Reply:** From the standpoint of back there, *under those circumstances*, the issue was not dogmatic.

**1 Cor. 11:17** Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

"Now in this [custom not practiced in other churches] ... I praise you not." Paul did not praise the Corinthians for their innovations. Therefore, when he said in verse 16, "We have no such custom, [and] neither [do] the [other] churches of God," he was talking about customs that were not praiseworthy. He did not approve of the novel practices the new teachers were trying to introduce. Not only did they come in with new teachings, but they tried to bring Paul down to their level from his pedestal as an apostle.

Verse 17 expresses the situation in some ecclesias; namely, when the brethren come together, it is “not for the better, but for the worse.” Various issues and contentions can destroy the spirituality of the meetings. In the apostle’s absence, a number of problems arose in Corinth, with some brethren defending one side and others arguing for the other side. Nevertheless, Paul praised the ecclesia for trying as a whole. And it was praiseworthy that at least some in the class sought his advice by sending him a list of questions.

Blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity, as is increasingly happening today, encourages the problems of homosexuality and lesbianism, for by culture and practice, one can become abnormal. As for those who are born with this weakness, we can have more commiseration for them if they fight and desperately try to overcome that which seems to be in their genes. We would have less sympathy for those who deliberately indulge themselves in a culture along that line, for they are doing that which is forbidden in the Old Testament. This danger is surfacing now with women becoming more and more liberal and men becoming abnormal in many respects. We are truly living in “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1).

Evidently, there was much contention about the covering of the head in the class at Corinth. Paul was saying, “Rather than make a hard-and-fast rule, I will give you my advice and thinking on the matter. In the final analysis, it is more important not to have these arguments when you get together, with some taking one side and others taking the other side. Let every man be persuaded in his own mind.”

**1 Cor. 11:18** For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

In review, the Corinthian church had numerous problems, and the letter sent to Paul contained questions on various issues: (1) There were divisions with brethren saying “I am of Paul,” “I am of Cephas,” etc. (chapters 1-3). (2) When Paul’s authority was questioned, he first tried to minimize himself, showing that all were of God in Christ (chapter 4). But rather than to deprecate himself continually, he then showed that the new teachers were puffed up and trying to reign as kings. They began to minimize Paul and inflate their own importance. (3) The next problem was fornication, which involved a particular individual in the church (chapter 5). (4) Judging and taking a brother to court were another problem (chapter 6). (5) Paul gave advice on marriage problems and relationships (chapter 7). (6) Meat offered to idols was next addressed (chapters 8-10). (7) Paul defended his apostleship and the things he sacrificed. He showed that the Christian is called to suffer and that the suffering should be marks of commendation rather than of criticism (also in chapter 9). (8) Praying with the head covered or uncovered was another issue (chapter 11). Imagine getting a letter with all of these questions! Any one of them could have been treated as a separate epistle, but Paul, through the help of the Holy Spirit, was able to condense the advice into one epistle.

Verse 18 can be read two ways. “I partly believe it” is sometimes rendered, and more properly, “I believe it respecting part of you.” When Paul mentioned the divisions in chapter 1, it sounded as if all of the brethren were being divisive, but that was not the case, as is seen here. There were divisions with some of the Corinthians—with a *major part* of the class.

**1 Cor. 11:19** For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

It is important to realize that divisions must come eventually. The “heresies” (or sects) were the attitudes “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” etc. Different brethren followed different individuals, all the while thinking they were doing God a service. The attitude of some was, “Since Christ is the Head of the Church, how can saying, ‘I am of Christ,’ be wrong?” The error



was their use of the pronoun “I” instead of saying, “We are all of God in Christ.” Harmony in the class would be impossible unless the Corinthians were straightened out on this matter. Probably some even met separately according to the leader they were following, so that the ecclesia Paul had established was fragmented into three or four smaller classes.

Perhaps some of the advice for our day, at the end of the Gospel Age, would be a little different from that given in the early Church, when there was no collated Bible. At most, the brethren had just a few isolated letters in their possession. And with Paul having been cast out of the synagogues, there was not even access to the scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, it was important for the Corinthians to get together to learn the basics of truth so that later, as dispensational truths became due, they had a background or substance from which to reason on the Old and New Testaments. Paul was very concerned that the Corinthians become established in truth. Not until after his death and the Apostle John was on the scene was the greater part of the New Testament available, and even then the manuscripts were handwritten. Of course, since the invention of the printing press in the 1400s and the Reformation in the 1500s, Bibles have been much more readily available.

**Comment:** Paul was saying, “Ideally, there should not be divisions, yet differences of opinion and divisions will occur in order for the Lord to judge how we reason and to see which side we take when principle is involved.”

**Reply:** As a peacemaker, one should try, if possible, to find a solution that is amicable to all, but the solution must not compromise principle. Nevertheless, from a practical standpoint, the history of the Church has been one of divisions and contentions, not only *between* the nominal Church and the true Church but also *within* both the nominal and the real Church.

**Comment:** Verses 17-19 read as follows in the *Diaglott*: “But in noticing this matter, that you come together not for the better but for the worse, I do not praise you. For indeed, in the first place, I hear that, on your coming together in the assembly, there are divisions among you; and, as to a certain part I believe it; for it is necessary that there be factions among you, so that the approved may be apparent among you.”

**Reply:** On the one hand, Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send [bring] peace on earth: I came not to send [bring] peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). On the other hand, he said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Along another line, the Apostle Paul said, “Be angry, but sin not” (Eph. 4:26 paraphrase). The point is that we must consider the *circumstance* of each issue.

**Comment:** If there are differences of opinion on a matter and no discussion, the class does not grow. But if the matter is prayerfully discussed, and the class works together based on God’s Word, those with the improper understanding or thinking have an opportunity to learn.

**Reply:** There are different responsibilities. For instance, if the division is fixed, onerous, and contentious, the class should split, for in continuous bickering, no progress will be made, and both those with the proper view and those with the wrong view will be sullied. Where a difference of opinion exists, the matter can be brought up when a pertinent Scripture being studied justifies a particular line of reasoning. Otherwise, to keep bringing up the matter is the characteristic of thorns and thistles. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things [in study]” is the principle (Gal. 6:6).

**Comment:** The matter should be aired, however.

**Reply:** Yes, and especially among elders, the one who seems to be the most contentious should be given opportunity to speak on one occasion on the issue. Then he should refrain from

bringing up the matter. With a difference of opinion, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5). We can compromise on preference but *never on principle*.

There were not many sects until after the Protestant Reformation. Previously, one was either a Catholic or a “heretic,” and depending on the period of history, the latter was a Waldensian or an Albigensian.

**Q:** What would “heresies” be in our day?

**A:** The King James margin has “sects,” and the Revised Standard has “factions,” the latter being closer to what we would think of today. In order to be approved of God, any divisions have to be according to His Word. For instance, Paul said, “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine [instruction] which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). Some divisions are proper, but they must be according to the Word of the Lord and not according to a misapplication of the Word. Paul was trying to keep the class together, and the brethren surely needed Paul’s letter. There may still have been divisions later, but those who accepted Paul’s advice and obeyed got the right perspective. If the others persisted in their wrong ways, either they were demoted from office, or a division was necessary based on the Word of God. In other words, a division should be according to understanding, not according to misunderstanding. Paul was saying, “Divisions must come but not now.” He wanted the Corinthians to meet in harmony if possible, but if some were still disobedient after receiving his advice, then divisions would come so that those “which are approved [those who take the right stand] may be made manifest.” The principle of division has to come eventually.

“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” On the surface, verse 19 sounds different from Paul’s advice in the first chapter, where he mentioned having heard from the house of Chloe and others that a sectarian spirit existed in the class. He tried to correct the attitude “I am of Paul,” “I am of Christ,” etc. It is well, if possible, that brethren dwell together in unity. An exception would be where a violation of conscience is involved. In other words, the ideal is unity of doctrine without any violation of principle, not unity just for the sake of peace regardless of conscience. Here Paul was emphasizing that divisions manifest to God those who stand up for principle. In some instances, divisions are necessary, and they are actually profitable to those who are rightly exercised by taking the proper stand on principle. When divisions occur, those who take the right stand are seen not only by God and Jesus but also by the angels.

Jesus said, as quoted earlier, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). In other words, the “sword,” divisions, are absolutely necessary in some cases.

The main theme or burden on the apostle’s heart is the remaining portion of the chapter.

**1 Cor. 11:20** When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.

**1 Cor. 11:21** For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

**1 Cor. 11:22** What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

**1 Cor. 11:23** For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

**1 Cor. 11:24** And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

**1 Cor. 11:25** After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

**1 Cor. 11:26** For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

**1 Cor. 11:27** Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

**1 Cor. 11:28** But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

**1 Cor. 11:29** For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

**1 Cor. 11:30** For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

**1 Cor. 11:31** For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

**1 Cor. 11:32** But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

**1 Cor. 11:33** Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

**1 Cor. 11:34** And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

The full understanding of what Paul was driving at in verses 20-34 is difficult to grasp, and we know of no one who has written on the subject. Others have written on isolated verses—what the Lord's Supper is and what the bread and the cup represent—but that is not the point here. We want to understand why Paul used this argument with the Corinthians.

Other translations usually break these verses down into one of two lines of thought. They may use different words, but the words all add up to one of the two standpoints. One thought is that verse 20 refers to the weekly meeting and verses 23-26 refer to the annual Memorial, but we have to analyze the context to see if that thought is correct.

Some of the other translations for verse 20 (or verses 20 and 21) are as follows. The Living Bible is more or less the same as the King James: "When you come together to eat, it isn't the Lord's Supper you are eating." The Revised Standard is in agreement that the eating does not pertain to the Lord's Supper. The New English Bible reads, "The result is that when you meet as a congregation, it is impossible for you to eat the Lord's Supper." The Phillips translation states, "It follows, then, that when you are assembled in one place you do not eat the *Lord's* supper. For everyone tries to grab his food before anyone else, with the result that one goes hungry and another has too much to drink." In other words, "You come to the Lord's Supper, but the spirit that is manifested is not pleasing to the Lord." The Jerusalem Bible reads, "The point is, when you hold these meetings, it is not the Lord's Supper that you are eating, since when the time comes to eat, everyone is in such a hurry to start his own supper that one person goes hungry while another is getting drunk." Obviously, there was a lot of confusion on how to translate verse 20, so we need a background picture.

Jesus' institution of the emblems at the original Memorial was preceded by a regular meal. After the Last Supper, he took bread and broke it and gave wine to his apostles to drink. When the disciples celebrated the Memorial the following year—after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven—the circumstances were different from those of today, where a short sermon is usually followed by the bread and wine symbols. Brethren in the early Church came from great distances to celebrate the Memorial, and travel methods were slow. Therefore, when they came together, they met not for just an hour or two but spent considerable time fellowshiping. In addition, they tried to get the feeling of the original Memorial by eating a lamb supper (like the Jewish Passover) and afterwards having the Memorial observance.

Under those conditions, the translators felt that each Christian brought his own meal and that some could not wait until the others arrived but went ahead and ate. "For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper" (verse 21). However, there is an incongruity in giving this interpretation, for when others came late, one was "hungry," and another was "drunken [full]." The problem was that some had consumed all of the food before the others got there. In other words, the brethren should have tarried for one another and then all eaten together. Being "drunken" was not being inebriated. Rather, by not waiting for the others, some had too much to eat and drink and others did not have enough. In the household where they met for the Memorial, a Passover lamb was prepared, and as in the Jewish arrangement, all partook of the one meal and wholly consumed it. They were trying to observe the Jewish Passover plus the Lord's Memorial.

With this explanation, all of the details in verses 20-34 fit the situation. In the house where the brethren met for Memorial, the lamb was already prepared. As they came in one by one, they sat down and, without waiting for the others, began to eat and totally consumed the lamb. Then when the others arrived from a long distance, they went hungry. Moreover, those who did not wait ate more than their share of the lamb and were overfull.

Now we can understand why Paul said, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry [wait] one for another" (verse 33). The meal and the fellowship were supposed to take a couple of hours, and then later, at a convenient time, the Memorial was celebrated. By having the lamb meal first, the brethren were trying to re-create the atmosphere of the original Memorial when Jesus first observed the Passover. However, not waiting for one another spoiled the spirit, or atmosphere, of the Memorial. Those who went ahead and ate sinned by not considering, and thus shaming, their late brethren. Therefore, Paul was saying, "The practice of having a Passover lamb meal is not mandatory, but if you do this, I suggest the following. Those who cannot wait to eat should fill their stomachs *before* they get to the meeting, for it would be better for them to eat at home first than to arrive and deprive the others of a meal by eating too hastily."

Why did Paul say in verse 20, "When ye come together ... into *one place*"? Because of the divisions in the class in Corinth, the weekly meetings were held in various homes, but the brethren came together and met in *one place* for the Memorial. They forgot their clique divisions at Memorial time and assembled in one home. However, when they came together, there were a lot of problems. Accordingly, Paul was sarcastic in verse 22: "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not [because there is no food to partake of when they arrive]? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

In verse 17, Paul said, "I praise you not, that ye come together [in separate groups] not for the better, but for the worse." When the Corinthians came together as separate groups, they manifested a bad disposition. Ostensibly they met to be edified, but the meeting was otherwise. In verse 22, Paul was saying, "Not only do you have problems in your regular meetings,

where you meet in separate groups and have divisions and strife, but even when you get together in one place for the Memorial and momentarily forget your differences, you show a wrong spirit and a lack of understanding. Therefore, I will not praise you.” Then Paul gave the illustration of not waiting until all could eat together. The Passover lamb, with bread, bitter herbs, etc., was a substantial meal, and those who came from a distance were hungry, so to not wait until everyone had arrived was wrong.

This principle is not discussed in any length in Bible commentaries because there is more interest in the technical doctrinal aspects of the Lord’s Supper as an institution. The Pastor beautifully brought out the Church’s share in the sin offering, but he compared this portion of chapter 11 with previous chapters and other parts of the Bible to explain the Memorial, whereas Paul was telling the Corinthians that they had a wrong spirit and did not know proper Christian conduct. Similarly, at the end of the Parable of the Unjust Steward, Jesus brought in the subject of divorce, but his purpose was not to discuss the technicalities (Luke 16:1-18). Rather, he used the marriage contract to emphasize the point of the parable. Likewise, Paul used the Memorial here in chapter 11 to emphasize another point.

In verse 23, Paul said, “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread.” Then Paul went into the Memorial. The question is, What was Paul’s purpose in introducing the Memorial? The main reason for the Corinthians to get together should have been the Memorial; the preceding meal was secondary. However, the Corinthians did the reverse—they gathered primarily for the substantial meal, and only secondarily for the Memorial as a procedural matter. To emphasize that the Memorial was the important part, Paul repeated Jesus’ words: “This [bread] is [represents] my body, which is broken for you: *this do in remembrance of me.... This cup is [represents] the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*” (verses 24 and 25). The Corinthians were to eat the bread and drink the wine *in remembrance of Jesus*. They were to emphasize the *emblems*, but instead they focused on the *preceding supper*, the lamb meal. Thus the emphasis was misplaced.

Another point was that the cup represents the “new testament [the New Covenant]” in contradistinction to the Law Covenant and the Passover of the Jews. Then Paul gave a still further slant. Not only was the instruction (1) “this do” (2) “in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19) and (3) the cup represents the New Covenant, but he was saying that (4) the occasion is solemn (verse 26). The statement that the Memorial shows forth “the Lord’s *death till he come*” indicates the *solemnity* of the occasion—as opposed to the Jewish Passover, which was a relatively *festive* occasion of *rejoicing* over deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Passover was a national patriotic holiday as the Jews celebrated their “declaration of independence” in coming out of the Red Sea.

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (verse 27). The Corinthians were eating and drinking unworthily because of their selfish attitude in connection with the previous meal. By their actions in not waiting for the other brethren, they showed they were not in proper heart condition to realize the significance of the Memorial. Of course many lessons and principles can be drawn from Paul’s words, but the context was a specific situation back there. Selfishness and greed kept the Corinthians from realizing the importance of the emblems, which pertained to *Jesus’ death*. They were not in a worthy condition to partake of the emblems because they had not examined themselves and what they were really doing. They had not considered the depth of the significance of the emblems with regard to Jesus’ crucifixion.

At the Memorial, we are to think of the bread as *Jesus’ body*, which was broken for us, and the cup as *Jesus’ blood*, which was shed for the remission of our sins. Paul showed that there is a secondary application for the Church as being *part of the loaf* that is broken, and their blood is

*commingled with Jesus' blood in connection with the cup. However, this secondary application is not to be the focus on the night of the Memorial. To repeat: The purpose of the Memorial is to remember Jesus, not our share in the sin offering. We memorialize Jesus' personal death.*

**Comment:** If one has not been living up to his consecration and feels estranged from the Lord, he should attend the Memorial and partake of the emblems after having asked for forgiveness.

**Reply:** Yes, we should encourage such an individual to partake. A tactic of the Adversary is to discourage one into thinking he is not worthy. The danger in not partaking is that a second Memorial will also be missed and a third, etc. Finally, the individual is apt to forsake his consecration entirely. Actually, none of us are worthy to partake of the emblems in our own righteousness. What counts is the *spirit* in which we partake. Paul was criticizing the Corinthian brethren for partaking perfunctorily and manifesting a wrong disposition.

Some Christians are such introverts that they examine themselves too closely. Jesus said that the robe of his righteousness covers our faults if we recognize them and ask for forgiveness. And when we ask for forgiveness, we should *believe* his promise of forgiveness.

When the brethren came together, their main purpose should not have been to eat the Lord's Supper. A meal could be eaten first, but the *main* purpose was to partake of the emblems, the lamb meal being secondary and earlier. However, the meal was to be eaten quietly and more solemnly than on other occasions. The brethren could eat heartily, but they had to consider one another. Even today there would be nothing wrong in having a meal first followed by an intermission and then the partaking of the emblems.

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (verse 30). Many of the Corinthians were spiritually weak, sick, and lethargic because they did not properly consider what they were doing with regard to the Memorial. The lesson for us is that we should reflect on the meaning of these symbols.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (verses 31 and 32). If we follow the Lord's advice and examine and judge ourselves, we will be spiritually strong. We should *grow* in understanding what our proper spirit should be. Otherwise, there is a danger of drifting out into the world, and we will be condemned.

Verse 33 is a summation of what Paul was saying: “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another [so that you can eat together].”

We will now review many of the verses in chapter 11, for a reconsideration will enhance our understanding of the details. Verse 20 reads, “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's [combined] supper [primarily the Passover meal, plus the Memorial].” In other words, the brethren thought of the Memorial as consisting of two parts—the Passover meal and the emblems—but Paul was saying that Christians are to observe the Memorial and to think of *Jesus* on that occasion.

Verse 22 states, “What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.” The wealthier Corinthians feasted before solemnly partaking of the emblems in remembrance of Jesus' death and, in doing so, embarrassed those who were poor. If, instead, the wealthy ate at home first, then their coming together would be just for the Memorial service. The poorer Corinthians were accustomed to a plain diet, and that meager fare sustained them. Therefore, it was not fitting for them to either precede or follow the Memorial with a feast, for this one day of the year was especially sacred and solemn for the Christian.

Incidentally, Paul was very sensitive about embarrassing other people.

With the Jewish day beginning at 6 p.m. one day and extending until 6 p.m. the next day, Jesus took the bread (instituted the Memorial service) in “the same night in which he was betrayed” (verse 23). He died at 3 p.m. the following day, three hours before the end of that 24-hour day.

“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me” (verse 24). Although the bread is composed of many grains, representing us, the emphasis the night of the Memorial is on *Jesus’* flesh. The “bread from heaven,” pictured by the manna in the Old Testament, was Jesus’ body, his flesh, “which is broken for you [the Christian]” (John 6:31,32). In other words, the main theme at the Memorial service is not the Church’s share in the sin offering but what our Lord did for us.

Verse 25 discusses the second symbol, the cup. “After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” The cup of wine represents Jesus’ blood. “When he had supped [that is, after Jesus had partaken of the cup at the conclusion of the Passover meal],” he instituted the symbols as a new service. The word “sup” comes from “sip,” which pertains to liquid. Jesus said to John and James Zebedee, “Are ye able to drink of the *cup* that I shall drink of?” (Matt. 20:22). Without knowing the full significance, they answered, “We are able.”

It was not necessary for Jesus to partake of the bread, but the wine represented his death. Blood in the veins is a symbol of life; blood outside the veins represents death. When Paul said on another occasion, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood,” he meant *unto death* (Heb. 12:4). Blood, then, has the basic connotation of *death*, and bread signifies *life*. Since Jesus is the bread of life, we must partake of the bread first, before partaking of the blood. We must be justified through consecration and thus become a member of Christ’s body before we can partake of the blood. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

In this eleventh chapter, Paul was speaking of the Memorial from the practical standpoint of attitudes and behavior. Verse 27 reads, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

**Comment:** This is the second time Paul brought up the Memorial emblems (see 1 Cor. 10:16,17). Earlier he showed the partnership aspect—that one cannot take the cup of the Lord and also the cup of devils. Now he was showing the importance of discerning the body of Christ and drinking the cup worthily.

**Reply:** There are perhaps a dozen ways the Christian can partake of the emblems unworthily. For example, one who is not consecrated or one who is living in sin such as adultery should not partake. But Paul was saying that even this simple matter of shaming the poor made some of the Corinthians unworthy to partake of the emblems, for they were sinning against Christ. Their actions showed a lack of appreciation for his death on the Cross. Levity would be another way of partaking unworthily. Of course in rare instances, some allowance may be made because of certain circumstances unknown to those who are partaking.

**Comment:** Appropriate, darker clothing should be worn.

**Reply:** Yes, to do otherwise would also be partaking unworthily.

**Comment:** Paul spoke clearly: “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (verse 28). One should make an internal inspection before partaking.

Verse 30 not only figuratively describes a spiritual state but also sets forth a principle that

applies to the Memorial and other aspects of the Christian walk. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (verse 30). Many do not grow because they fail to take the proper steps. A babe should desire the sincere milk of the Word with the intent of both reading and *doing*. Eventually, one should eat meat, which requires more discernment and discipline.

“For if we would judge [and examine and discipline] ourselves, we should not be judged” (verse 31). “Discipline” can include prayer, repentance, and even fasting to make one right. In proportion as we examine ourselves, there will be less need for the Lord to judge us. If we do not judge ourselves, the Lord will draw our attention to our negligence—not necessarily immediately but sooner or later. When the correction is seen, it should be acted upon. If we do foolish things, they usually boomerang on us, and we learn by mistakes. This is a form of discipline, but the higher discipline is doing what is right and suffering for it. That is the difference between self-denial and cross bearing.

The reason for judging ourselves is so that “we should not be condemned with the world” (verse 32). Why did Paul make this statement?

**Comment:** If we are not circumspect in our walk, we will start to drift back into the world. The Lord may provide discipline, but if we fail to recognize the discipline, we could lose everything.

**Reply:** Yes, if we do not realize what is happening and we go back into sin, the robe of Christ’s righteousness will begin to slip off and expose our nakedness. We would then be in danger of eternal death.

Verse 33 reads, “When ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.” The brethren could have a meal together before the Memorial, but they would have to wait and consider the feelings of one another. This principle should be followed on other occasions as well. The value of eating together is in having fellowship. Even having the blessing on the meal together gives a better spirit.

**Comment:** In the early Church, some traveled for miles to get to the meeting, so they could eat a little snack first and then wait for the others for the main meal.

Verse 34 reads, “And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation.” The advice to “let him eat at home” applied to all in the class—to the “haves” as well as the “have-nots,” but particularly to the “haves,” for they were doing the sinning. The word “condemnation” does not limit this principle to the Memorial. For instance, when we have a doctrinal difference with someone, to bring up the matter continually would show a wrong spirit. When two who are at loggerheads get together, one may see the occasion as an opportunity to straighten out the other person. In fact, it becomes his mission. Such a spirit is wrong. Another example is a difference of opinion on the observance of a holy day, but one has to be careful not to infringe upon the conscience of another. Paul said, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5). Another principle that would apply is, “Let your moderation [reasonableness] be [made] known unto all men” (Phil. 4:5). In other words, we should be flexible where principles are not involved.

Verse 34 continues, “And the rest will I set in order when I come.” Paul was given a list of problems, which he answered, but other issues still needed to be addressed. Some of the issues are treated in the second epistle. Paul was criticized for this comment, for some claimed he did not keep his word when his coming was delayed. Paul was laying down his life in many ways, but when he wrote the reason for not being able to come to Corinth, some of the brethren did not believe him. Paul was wounded many times by misunderstandings.



Because the “cup” is mentioned, verses 23-26 refer to the annual celebration of the Memorial in remembrance of Jesus’ death, and not to a weekly meeting with the breaking of bread. Verse 20 reads, “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.” The word “this,” in italics, is a supplied word that should be omitted, for it tends to throw off the understanding, even though what remains does not sound grammatically correct. The disparity between rich and poor was particularly grievous at the time of the Memorial. Therefore, Paul wanted to stop a custom that was beginning to develop, a practice that was well-intentioned and benign in appearance; namely, brethren who had means wanted to replicate what had happened at the first Memorial by eating the Passover meal just as Jesus did before instituting the Memorial service. They felt this custom would create a nice mood, but for several reasons, it should not be followed. For one thing, the Passover supper and the Memorial are separate and distinct institutions that should not be confused. The Memorial is not an antitype of the Passover.

Some of the Corinthians were wealthy, but the majority were poor. Although, presumably, the rich intended to share the lamb meal with the poor, the meal brought in a mood that was injurious to the celebration of the Memorial, for it accentuated the temporal lack of the poor. This thought would then be in the minds of the poor when they subsequently partook of the more serious service, the Memorial. Not only would the lavish and sumptuous meal create wrong feelings between the “haves” and the “have-nots” at the Memorial, but the poor would carry home the seeds of this disparity and feed on them in later days. Therefore, Paul said, “When you come to the Memorial, eat at home first, for you are coming together to have the Memorial service.”

Verse 21 continues: “For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken [overfull].” At the time of the Memorial, both conditions were wrong. Thus the Corinthians were to eat at home so that (1) they would not be hungry at the Memorial and (2) they would not bring food and be stuffed immediately before the Memorial.

“What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?” (verse 22). In other words, the brethren were to eat and drink at home. “Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.” Now we are coming to a point that has not been perceived clearly.

Before considering verses 23-25, we will read Matthew 26:26-29. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” The clause “as they were eating” indicates that Jesus instituted the emblems *during* the Passover meal. Moreover, the eating of the bread preceded the drinking of the cup, for Jesus first asked a blessing on the bread and then on the cup. The sequence was (1) Jesus blessed the bread, (2) the disciples ate the bread, (3) Jesus blessed the cup, and (4) Jesus and the disciples drank the cup. Then Jesus said, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” The Luke account proves that Jesus drank of the cup before making this statement.

Luke 22:15-20 reads, “And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for

you.” Here in Luke’s Gospel, (1) the cup is mentioned first, (2) the bread is second, and (3) the cup is third. The Luke account harmonizes all of the Gospels with regard to sequence and Jesus’ partaking of the cup but not the bread. In other words, Jesus did something with the cup, he did something with the bread, and then he did something again with the cup.

Jesus said, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” Thus Jesus actually ate the Passover supper with his disciples. While the others were still eating, Jesus began to institute the emblems. First, he said, “I will not any more eat thereof [of the Passover], until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” In other words, the words “not any more” do not prohibit his partaking of the Passover meal.

The account continues, “He took the cup, and gave thanks”; that is, Jesus gave thanks at the first mention of the cup. He next said, “Take this [cup], and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink [any more] of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” The point is that Jesus partook of the cup, just as he had partaken of the Passover supper. He gave thanks for the cup *for himself*; thanking his Father for *his own privilege* of drinking the cup. Then he set the cup down on the table and instructed the disciples to divide the cup among themselves—but he *did not pass*, or distribute, the cup to them at that time. Right away Jesus then took the bread.

The disciples were a little confused, but they reverently watched as Jesus next gave thanks for the bread; that is, he gave thanks for the bread *before* the disciples got the cup. After thanking God for the bread and breaking it, Jesus gave the bread to his disciples and said, “This is my body which is given for you: this [eating] do in remembrance of me.” Proof that Jesus did not partake of the bread is the next statement: “Likewise also the cup after supper [the Greek indicates ‘after having previously partaken, or supped’].” In other words, after Jesus had *previously drunk a good portion of the cup*, he took the same cup again and said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” He had already earlier asked a blessing on this cup for himself, but now “likewise also”—that is, in the same manner that he had given the bread, first asking a blessing and then distributing it to the disciples—he asked a second blessing on the cup, this time *on behalf of the brotherhood*, and gave it to them to drink. It is important to compare the five accounts of the Memorial (the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke plus 1 Corinthians 10:16,17 and 11:23-29).

Mark 14:25 reads, “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the *fruit of the vine*, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” It is significant that Jesus did not say he would no more eat the bread. Only with regard to the wine did he make this statement. With silence here and nothing in the account to indicate otherwise, we can conclude that he did not partake of the bread. Since he needed no justification because he already had pure and perfect humanity, the symbolism of not eating is fitting. However, the disciples needed justification before they could lay down their lives in sacrifice. Jesus said, “The bread that I will give is my flesh” (John 6:51). In drinking the cup, Jesus drank his own death, showing that he voluntarily laid down his life. With Paul being responsible for the Gospel of Luke, we know that he saw the distinction of Jesus’ partaking of the cup but not eating of the bread.

Verse 26, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come,” refers to the *annual* observance of the Lord’s Memorial, which is as close as possible to the time of year Jesus instituted the emblems and died on the Cross. The main purpose of participation in the Memorial is to remember *his* death. Our consecration and dedication are not the focus on that night but the memory of Jesus: “Do this in remembrance of *me*,” he said.

What time is referred to in the expression “till he come”? Not only does the Second Presence embrace a period of time, but Jesus “comes” in various ways: on a horse, seated on a white cloud, with a shout, with a sickle, etc. His initial coming was secret and invisible, but later, in

connection with the inauguration of the Kingdom, his presence will be made known by great signs and wonders in the earth so that all will know. The Memorial is to be celebrated until Jesus' revelation to the whole Christian church, particularly the Little Flock, with whom he will drink the fruit of the vine anew in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14:25). Of course the Church will be complete and glorified when Jesus drinks the wine with them in the spirit realm. However, even after the Little Flock is glorified, it will behoove the consecrated down here in the flesh to continue to memorialize his death until all are changed to spirit nature.

**Q:** For clarification, even though the door is closed and the Little Flock is complete, should the consecrated who remain behind continue to celebrate the Memorial service? At the most, those still here will be Great Company.

**A:** Yes, the celebration will still be appropriate, although the wine will not have the same significance from the standpoint that the sin offering will be complete. However, the Great Company must still be faithful unto death.

**Comment:** When Jesus drinks the wine with his Bride in the spirit realm, it will no longer be a cup of sorrow, trials, and death but a cup of *joy, gladness, and victory*.

**Q:** Will the drinking of the cup of joy be strictly between Jesus and the Bride only, or will it be between Jesus and all who overcome on any level?

**A:** It may be both, but not at the same time. The drinking with all overcomers would have to occur after the testing period of the Little Season at the end of the Millennial Age.

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Verse 27 is starkly stated, but the thought is softened somewhat in subsequent verses. A judgment of condemnation comes on an individual in proportion to his partaking unworthily of the bread and the wine. In other words, there are *degrees* of unworthiness in connection with partaking of the symbols. Not only is the Memorial not to be celebrated in a prosaic manner, but it should be observed with sufficient sobriety and sincerity to show that we appreciate what the Lord did for us in dying on the Cross. Our attire and conduct should befit the occasion.

Verse 28 says, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” If we deeply think about and consider the Lord and his death, our attitude and heart condition should automatically be appropriate. Verse 29 is similar to verse 27: “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [judgment] to himself [proportionate to the lack of reverence], not discerning the Lord's body.”

**Comment:** The *Sixth Volume*, page 473, states that verses 27-29 are a warning “against a careless celebration of this Memorial, which would make of it a feast, and against inviting persons to it in a promiscuous manner.”

**Reply:** A good *Reprint* article (No. 5186) is “Decorum in the House of God.” Particularly on this occasion, a more reverential attitude is in order. Of course the unconsecrated should not partake.

The Catholic Church wrongly teaches that the bread and the wine are, respectively, the *actual* body and blood of Christ, whereas the Bible tells that the emblems are to be taken *in memory of what Jesus did on our behalf*. Because we have a little more understanding than those in the nominal Church, we should more deeply appreciate the symbols and have proper respect and reverence. Any who have been disfellowshipped for gross immoralities should be discouraged from partaking unless there has been proper repentance. Otherwise, the atmosphere of the

service would be adversely affected.

One who feels unworthy should prepare himself and then partake, for not partaking can be dangerous, even leading, little by little, to thinking, “Perhaps the Lord did not accept my consecration.” The Adversary tries to discourage those who have a tender conscience, whereas the Scriptures encourage them to go to the throne of grace for forgiveness and for a renewal of their consecration.

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (verse 30). We should guard against seeing the Memorial as a perfunctory ritual like “going to church once a year.” The angels are witnessing our zeal in performing Christian duties. If we run the race with the attitude and focus that there is only one prize and one winner, we will make our calling and election sure. Paul said that he did not shadowbox and hit the air, for he had a focus and an end in sight. Those who pursue that goal are certainly much more apt to make the Little Flock. “This one thing I do” should be our attitude (Phil. 3:13). There are different degrees of sickness, weakness, and slothfulness on the one hand, and of zeal in following in the Lord’s footsteps on the other hand.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (verse 31). In examining ourselves with introspective judgment, we should ask for forgiveness at the throne of grace for those things we have done amiss. And then we should try to reform and rebuild our conduct.

**Comment:** If we judge ourselves properly, we will not have to worry about being judged by the Lord for partaking unworthily.

**Comment:** Psalm 32:5 reads, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

**Reply:** That cross-reference is good. Even though David had faults, his repentant attitude and *public* acknowledgment were admirable.

**Comment:** Paul said earlier, “It is a very small matter that I should be judged of others, for I judge not mine own self,” yet here he said that we should judge (examine) ourselves (1 Cor. 4:3 paraphrase). The Scriptures have to be balanced.

**Reply:** We are not to judge our eternal destiny. We should not assume we have made our calling and election sure and thus take off the armor. Nor are we to condemn ourselves by saying, “I committed the sin unto Second Death, so I will go back into the world and not serve the Lord anymore.”

**Comment:** One who sins the sin unto Second Death sears his conscience beyond the point of repentance.

**Reply:** The individual becomes blind. “If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). One does not change overnight to that condition. The sin unto Second Death comes with little slides here and there until it goes rapidly downhill.

In stating, “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world,” verse 32 describes Christians who have not committed the sin unto Second Death, but they have failed to examine themselves. David said, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous [fully willful] sins” (Psa. 19:13). Those who commit fully willful sins merit death, but with those who are just careless, the Lord causes a providentially severe experience to wake them up. Unfortunately, many do not recognize the providence as a

judgment from the Lord and thus miss the lesson. When trials happen to us, we should stop and think, “Did I do something wrong? Is there a reason for this experience?” If we have honestly searched our heart and find no cause, then we should conclude the trial is for an educational purpose. For example, perhaps we should be more sympathetic toward others. The principle is, “If a man is judged for his faults, what reward does he have?” (compare 1 Pet. 2:20). An experience may be a correction, a chastening, to bring us to our senses. But if we suffer for righteousness’ sake, if we are persecuted for faithfulness to the Lord, we should rejoice in the privilege. The Scriptures help us to become more mature in our thinking, so that we will grow up into manhood in Christ and be acceptable as kings and priests.

“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another” (verse 33). In olden times when one had to walk several miles to attend a meeting in someone’s home, a meal was necessary. Moreover, when brethren came together under those hardships, having to sacrifice to get there, they met for several hours. Paul was saying, “When someone is a little late in coming to the weekly meeting, wait for him so that you can all eat together.” When that individual saw everyone waiting for him, he would make an extra effort to be on time in the future. Eating together provided a wonderful communal spirit in the early Church.

“And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come” (verse 34). One should either eat enough at home to get the most benefit from the spiritual service or be on time to eat with the brethren at the meeting. It would be wrong for someone to bring a lunch and start eating after the meeting had started. The point was to have no distractions (such as habitual lateness or improper dress) when the meeting was in progress. The main purpose of the gathering was for spiritual food, but the circumstances of natural hunger made a meal necessary. However, the meal was to be done decently and in order, either at home or at the meeting at the appointed time.

Notice that Paul again promised to return to Corinth: “when I come [at a future time].” When certain providences delayed his coming, some in the class criticized him.

**1 Cor. 12:1** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Apparently, Paul was next asked a question in the letter from some of the Corinthian brethren about the gifts of the Spirit. Verse 1 starts his reply. Paul entered sympathetically into the subject because he felt the question was important, requiring explanation: “I would not have you ignorant.” This clause was characteristic of the Apostle Paul. Since it was his goal to declare the *whole* counsel of God, he would not want to willingly forget, evade, or omit some parts for fear of, or because of, what others might think (Acts 20:27).

Chapter 12 pertains to “spiritual” matters. The word “gifts,” in italics, is supplied. “Gifts” are only one aspect of the Holy Spirit, and at least four different categories of how the Holy Spirit operates are enumerated in this chapter.

**1 Cor. 12:2** Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

**1 Cor. 12:3** Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

In addressing the subject of gifts of the Spirit, why did Paul first remind the Corinthians of their former practices with dumb idols? Since they were previously deceived along this line, they would have to be on guard lest they be deceived again along another line. The mention of idols being “dumb” indicates that henceforth the brethren would have to be more discriminating. Paul added the words “even as ye were led” because they were “led” by the Adversary in their

former practices, and that could happen again.

The Living Bible reads as follows for verses 1-3: “And now, brothers, I want to write about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of you, for I don’t want any misunderstanding about them. You will remember that before you became Christians you went around from one idol to another, not one of which could speak a single word. But now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God. How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? Here is the test: no one speaking by the power of the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.” The brethren had formerly believed one way, and now they were getting an opposite experience in regard to speaking in tongues. A certain danger existed, and in order not to get deceived, the brethren needed a test of discernment.

With regard to this test, why did Paul say that “no man speaking by the Spirit of God” calls Jesus a curse? How might that happen? The fallen angels, then and now, have a lot of fun with coarse humor in trying to imitate the legitimate gift in the early Church of speaking in tongues. For example, they may be cursing Jesus in a foreign language and doing all kinds of mischief. Therefore, if one who spoke in a tongue gave an evidence of misbehavior, it was an indication right away of falseness and danger. The brethren should then try to separate themselves from that circumstance.

Sometimes people hear but ignore things that are inconsistent because other factors hold them to the communion. However, Paul was cautioning that observing the *unholy* spirit should cause one to separate.

“No man can say that Jesus is the Lord [Master], but by the Holy Spirit.” Counterfeit “Holy Spirits” could also say that Jesus is Lord, but as the Living Bible states, “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.” The nominal system has taught that all one has to do to be saved is to confess a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). However, the Greek word *eis* means “into.” One must *continually* believe *into* Christ after confessing him as Savior and live henceforth in accordance with that profession. A momentary solitary act of belief—the mere declaration that “Jesus is Lord”—is not sufficient to save one. A person must *unreservedly* consecrate his life and recognize Jesus as his Lord on a *continuous* basis. Then Jesus would be Master in the full sense of the word.

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is of God? 1 John 4:2 states, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God”; that is, Jesus Christ came *in the flesh as a human being*. Any one Scripture by itself can be twisted. Therefore, we must consider the testimony of *all Scripture together*.

The next verse, 1 John 4:3, reads, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” The term “incarnate” means to be “invested with flesh or bodily nature or form, especially embodied in human form, hence personified.” The Incarnation of Christ is defined as the “union of Godhead with manhood.” The emphasis of 1 John 4:3 is, “Every spirit that confesseth not that *Jesus Christ* is come in the flesh,” but the term is “*God* incarnate,” not “*Jesus* incarnate.” In other words, the false doctrine of antichrist is that Jesus was half God and half man, that he was a mixture of God in the flesh in human form. But that is not true, for Jesus is the *Son* of God, and the Son of God came *in the flesh*. 1 John 4:15 states the test: “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the *Son of God*, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” Verse 15 is needed, for verses 2 and 3 can be twisted.

**Comment:** The nearness of verse 15 to the end of the Bible seems to indicate a test at the end of the age will be to confess that Jesus is the *Son* of God.

**Reply:** Yes, the doctrine of the Trinity will come to the fore again in the future. The thrust of John's first epistle is to show Jesus' relationship to God. We cannot be indifferent in our stand on this point. Silence will be wrong at the end of the age. When the Trinity is made dogmatic, we must throw caution to the wind and speak out. When a falsehood is mentioned as dogma, a stand has to be taken; otherwise, silence gives consent.

By worshipping idols, the people of Corinth hoped to get answers to their questions, the Oracle of Delphi being one of their sources. But the idols were *dumb*. Before consecration, some of the Corinthian brethren went to their favorite idol (god or goddess) and in their prayers looked for a sign, or evidence, that would favor them, but the statues were "dumb"—they could not speak. Now Paul would go to the opposite side of the issue and explain how God operates, how He confides in His people, *unlike the dumb idols*.

"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." The Apostle John mentioned the same principle in his epistles—that we can judge things to a certain extent by what we see evidenced. From an unclean stream comes unclean water. Some who were possessed by demons both at the First Advent and during the apostles' ministry actually cursed Jesus. Several occasions where fallen spirits spoke out are recorded in Holy Writ. For example, a woman prophetess kept following Paul, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:16-18). She kept insisting until her speaking got on Paul's nerves and he rebuked the spirit so that it came out of her.

Such incidents were miraculous manifestations, but Jesus said that a tree is to be judged by its fruits. If the fruits are evil, the spirit is evil. And the Christian has to be even more discerning than that because soothsayers and other counterfeits are trying to lead people astray. Manifestations during healings today, such as people falling backward and crawling along the floor in a grotesque fashion, are miraculous, but they are done by fallen angels. There is a *Holy Spirit*, and there is an *unholy spirit*.

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." When Jesus asked his apostles, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:15-17). In other words, that information was conveyed to Peter in a miraculous fashion.

The atmosphere surrounding a type of service often gives a clue for discerning whether a person is speaking according to the Holy Spirit of God, the spirit of the world, or the spirit of the Adversary. The climate of the service helps us to see whether the message is truly of the Holy Spirit. An atmosphere that is tumultuous, worldly, accompanied with rock music, etc., is not conducive to holiness and truth. Questions to be asked are the following: Does the leader speak according to the Word? Is the message in harmony with Scripture? Does the speaker quote Scripture? Is the service a social gospel? Is it a gospel of healing?

To be spiritually edifying, a service should be centered on the teachings of God, of Christ, of the Old Testament, or of the New Testament. From this standpoint, the questions to be answered in the affirmative are the following: Is the message a gospel of self-denial? Is it a gospel of character development? Is the gospel of the high calling being preached? If the religious service promotes friendship with the world, the Christian should go elsewhere.

**1 Cor. 12:4** Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

**1 Cor. 12:5** And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

**1 Cor. 12:6** And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

The same Holy Spirit from God manifests itself in diverse ways. Stated another way, with the *one* Holy Spirit, there is a *variety* of methods. One category is “diversities of *gifts*,” another is “differences of *administrations*,” and the third category is “diversities of *operations*.” And within each of these categories are additional differences. Despite the differences, it is the *same* Holy Spirit, the *same* Lord Jesus, and the *same* God, who works all in all.

Why did Paul make three distinctions in verses 4-6? (1) “Gifts” are miraculous gifts from God through Jesus that are manifested in the Church. Jesus “gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4:8). Therefore, gifts are *something we receive from someone else*. The largesse, beneficence, or appreciation of someone else is made manifest by the giving of a gift. For example, God gave miraculous gifts to those in the early Church such as tongues, prophecy, interpretation, and healing. (2) “Administrations” are *how we serve, or minister, to someone else* in various fields of endeavor. What we do to others can be manifested in a variety of ways. Administrations (giving in service) include such activities as visiting the sick and comforting or evangelizing through speech, letters, etc. In other words, there are multiple ways in which we can receive a miraculous gift or serve the truth. (3) The third category, “operations,” refers to various types of activity that include *both giving and receiving*. Examples are a convention and tracting.

Why did Paul emphasize the different departments of activity of the Holy Spirit and the variety within each department? The problem was that the subject of the Holy Spirit could be looked at from the wrong standpoint. Those who had a particular gift might think something was wrong with brethren who did not have the same gift. Thus, if the Corinthians’ view of the subject was too introspective, they were apt to think in terms of their own gift and conclude that others did not have the Holy Spirit. Instead Paul said that there was a great variety of operations of the Holy Spirit and that brethren could not judge one another in that respect.

All of the consecrated in Paul’s day received at least one manifestation of the Holy Spirit from one of the three categories. The manifestation came from God—“the same God which worketh all in all [in every member].” Each person was to examine himself to try to see which category he had received. For example, if one could now speak in a foreign language, he knew he had received the gift of tongues. Such outward mechanical-like manifestations indicated that the consecration had been accepted. As time went on and the apostles died, the mechanical gifts phased out. The gifts were needed before the New Testament was available.

**1 Cor. 12:7** But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

**1 Cor. 12:8** For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

**1 Cor. 12:9** To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

**1 Cor. 12:10** To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

**1 Cor. 12:11** But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Paul’s explanation was like that of a mastermind. Not only did his advice provide a balance for viewing one another, but it helped the brethren to live in harmony with their different talents for serving the Lord. No one should feel there is only one way to serve the Lord and then try



to force others into that type of service. Each one should use his own talents and opportunities as the Lord gives them. For example, those who are evangelistically minded may emphasize works and witnessing and downgrade those who have other talents. However, with the variety of ways to serve, Paul was saying that the brethren should not lose sight of the fact that there is only *one* Holy Spirit. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit.” As Paul said earlier, no man who speaks by the Holy Spirit calls Jesus a curse, and no one can call Jesus “Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is important to know if the *Holy Spirit* is doing these things or some other spirit. Brethren should be discerning in examining the “spirit.” They should expect *diversity* in the gifts but uniformity, or agreement, that Jesus is *Lord*.

In verses 8-10, nine gifts are listed: wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Generally speaking, they are listed in a descending order of importance. Tongues and the interpretation of tongues are at the bottom of the list both here and at the end of the chapter. Thus the very gifts the Corinthians might magnify were mentioned last.

Verse 11 puts the Holy Spirit in the masculine, as it is in the Greek, but the pronoun “it” is more proper to use. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame [Holy] Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he [it] will.”

When the listing is read, the overall impression is the *variety* in the distribution of the gifts. If there was only one gift, and that gift was harped on incessantly, what profit would there be to the body? For example, if the whole service consisted of speaking in tongues without any explanation or interpretation, how could the ecclesia benefit? To the contrary, if the great variety of gifts was used decently and in order, with the brethren not all speaking at one time but each being given a segment of the service, the gifts would be very helpful. All would be edified, and each of the brethren would feel he had contributed.

In the absence of the Holy Scriptures at that time, it was God’s purpose for early Christians who were inducted into the body, or fellowship, of Jesus Christ to have a manifestation along at least one of the nine lines of gifts. The repetition of the phrase “to another” in verses 8-10 indicates that the gifts were given to individuals, not just to apostles. The Holy Spirit motivated the brethren to use the gifts mechanically so that, working in harmony, they were all blessed. Someone could mechanically remember what Jesus had said in a particular sermon, and another could interpret the words into a tongue (language) so that those of a foreign extraction could benefit. Without the New Testament, the gifts were absolutely necessary in the early Church, and they resulted in meetings that were a wonderful blessing. Today, with the availability of Bibles, this type of service is not needed. Nevertheless, although the mechanical gifts given in the beginning of the Gospel Age have ceased, different brethren have different talents along one line or another in their service of God and of the truth. As witnesses, we can see what each brother or sister is doing, and each one becomes an encouragement to the others. However, it is important to realize that the instantaneous mechanical *gifts* of the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the Gospel Age and the spiritual development of *fruits* of the Holy Spirit in our day, especially along the lines of character development, are two different things. We will now take time to examine the gifts, one by one, as experienced by the early Church.

**1. Word of wisdom.** When the early body members of Christ met together in fellowship, they had no Bibles. Therefore, some individual in the class would have the gift of being able to quote verbatim, accurately, the Old Testament Scriptures. The Lord’s Spirit operated so that a brother would be moved to quote a Scripture. On occasion, depending on the location and the circumstance of the ecclesia, a sister would also be so moved. Today the Word of God is provided through the mechanical operation of a printing press but not back there.

**2. Word of knowledge.** An example of this gift would be the following. Someone quoted a

Scripture verbatim, perhaps in Hebrew. However, Gentiles who were present could not understand Hebrew, so another individual repeated the Scripture in Greek, Latin, Syriac, or whatever was needed. Even if the Scripture was verbatim and correct, unless the hearer could understand it, what purpose was served? Thus the “word of knowledge” was the understanding or hearing of Scripture in a more superficial sense.

Different nationalities could be in one ecclesia. The three prevalent languages in Jesus’ day were Hebrew, Greek, and the civil Roman language. Even the public in Israel knew certain Roman laws, although they could not speak the language. Whether two or three were gathered together, or 15 or 25, the Holy Spirit manifested itself in the congregation so that later, when the brethren departed, they would say, “The Lord was there.” With the lesson for the day being miraculous, the brethren were inspired and edified. The result was the creation of a mood or desire for fellowship, as opposed to staying in isolation. Many had to walk long distances to a meeting, but they knew that when they arrived, the Lord would be there and they would get a blessing.

**3. Faith.** Normally, there are two kinds of faith (natural and spiritual), but the situation in the early Church was slightly different. *All* who consecrate have natural faith to start with, for “without faith it is impossible to please him [God],” but spiritual faith comes as a fruit (Heb. 11:6). However, here Paul was talking not about the fruits of the Holy Spirit but about the *gifts*. Gifts came instantly and mechanically, whereas fruits require time for development—first, the seed, then the bud and the blossom, and finally the fruit.

Although the account does not say “the word of faith,” that is the thought. Suppose something ominous was on the horizon, such as famine or persecution, and the brethren were meeting together for help and edification. At the right moment, someone would quote an appropriate Scripture, perhaps from a Psalm, that would greatly encourage the ecclesia and give them the necessary strength and establish their faith in the face of the threatening cloud. Thus a word of faith, given with expression and meaning, was very reassuring.

**4. Healing.** Certain sicknesses and diseases were miraculously healed. The principle in the early Church was that individuals would get enough truth over a period of time to make their calling and election sure. The only one to have a fast conversion and translation was Stephen, who was most unusual. He was prepared beforehand to such an extent that he did not require much time to fully mature. Although the purpose of the gift of healing was not to heal all diseases, we can be sure that the one who was healed was miraculously restored for a purpose.

**Comment:** Apparently, the gifts were not full-time possessions of the brethren but were used at appropriate moments.

**Reply:** Yes, and prayer probably preceded the healing. Those present had to be in the right frame of mind and mood. Mostly the manifestations of the gifts occurred when the brethren were gathered together from various locations. In fact, the manifestations were an incentive for the brethren to meet, so that they could profit withal.

**5. Working of miracles.** “Miracles” were a higher gift than healing. An example of this gift would be exorcism, the casting out of demons. The miracle was something astonishing that occurred not at every meeting but in an opportune time of necessity, and seemingly out of nowhere, by an ordinary brother or sister. Early Christians suffered for what they believed—they lost homes, goods, health, etc. Another example of a miracle was when Ananias touched Paul’s eyes and the scales fell off (Acts 9:17,18). On a different occasion, Paul revived one who fell off a beam and died (Acts 20:9-12).

**6. Prophecy.** Sisters, as well as brothers, had the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:8,9). Also, Agabus

prophesied of a coming famine (Acts 11:28). A prophecy could pertain to something stated in the Old Testament or to something current. It was the foretelling of future events as a seer.

**7. Discerning of spirits.** Peter had the ability to discern wicked motives, for example, with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Thus this gift enabled one to tell the difference between good and evil.

**8. Divers kinds of tongues.** The one who had this gift was mechanically given the ability to speak in more than one language. Incidentally, it would be known which gift(s) each of the brethren had, not that the gifts were used indiscriminately but that they were possessed. The gift of speaking in tongues was useful not only in the ecclesia but also in missionary work.

**9. Interpretation of tongues.** Individuals with this gift interpreted an unknown language so that those present could understand what was being said.

**Comment:** Many were congregated on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, and each heard the sermon of Peter and John in his own language (Acts 2:4-6).

**Reply:** Yes, although at that time, it was particularly the apostles who manifested this capability. Subsequently the gift was given to others. Even today some in the brotherhood have marvelous mechanical memories, but they cannot "interpret," or *analyze*. Therefore, the interpretation of tongues in the early Church (an analytical ability) was on a higher level than speaking in tongues (a mechanical ability), although both gifts were very helpful. And the interpretation would be in the language of the tongue.

**Comment:** The repetitive use of the term "same Spirit" shows the necessity for early Christians to realize that the *same* Holy Spirit was giving the gifts and the power.

**Reply:** Yes, and Paul emphasized that the same Spirit of God was working "all in all" (verse 6).

**Q:** Is the thought that when one interpreted, he explained for those who *understood* the tongue, and not for those who did not understand the language?

**A:** That is correct.

Today the improper use of "speaking in tongues" often leads to pride. However, we do not want to concentrate on the present counterfeit use but on the principle that Paul was teaching. The gifts were needed back there, whereas today we have the Word of God, which is thoroughly sufficient for the Christian (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

**Q:** Would it be profitable to discuss an updated correspondency for these gifts? Today we do not receive mechanical gifts, but the brethren have "gifts" in another form. If we are alert to recognize them, we will be blessed accordingly. For instance, those who discern spirits have the ability to see quickly the heart of a matter, and this talent is reflected in their comments.

**A:** Yes, but we will have a short overview first.

Paul had been discussing the various spiritual gifts that were given to the early Church, particularly during the time of his ministry in the Ephesus period, when no New Testament was available. The gifts were helpful when the brethren congregated, for each of the ecclesia members supplied tidbits of information along different lines, and the collective assemblage of thoughts and worship was beneficial. However, Paul also said that things should be done decently and in order. Those who had the gifts of tongues, for example, probably had to hold back a little, for the temptation would be for those brethren to speak rapidly one after the

other with no real edification resulting for the church except for the one who had put the gift on public display. Whoever was leading the study was to act as a brake, so that each gift was thoroughly heard and appreciated before another was manifested.

Also, if one spoke in a foreign language, another was to interpret for the ecclesia. If no interpreter was present, the speaker should remain silent. That principle especially applied to visiting brethren who had a gift that was appreciated in their local class but was not necessarily helpful when attending a meeting in another place. The Holy Spirit was probably judicious in dispensing gifts so that not too many spoke along the same line in the same ecclesia. That way the needs of each class were accommodated. Brethren had their gifts for life, unless of course they became disobedient, for the gifts were the manifestation of their acceptance.

Paul said that the mechanical gifts would gradually disappear, for the need became less essential with the completion of the Bible. Certainly they are not needed in our day with the Bible being available in so many languages. The question today would be, Does the Holy Spirit in some way still dispense gifts but in a somewhat different fashion? Those who had the gifts in the early Church gave accurate utterances because the Holy Spirit directly and mechanically operated on them. For instance, the gift of prophecy operated very much like the way the Old Testament prophets spoke. The Holy Spirit moved the prophets of old in a mechanical manner, and that gift slid over for a time into the Gospel Age, going to the *sons* of God rather than to the *friends* of God in the new dispensation.

The Holy Spirit still operates today along these lines but not necessarily as profusely. We have to be very attentive, for example, to those who are being led by the Holy Spirit in a teaching or prophesying capacity, for today they are not infallible. We must exercise discrimination as to what we hear and then compare the teaching to the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul both spoke and explained, and his utterances contained no error. Gospel Age “prophets” are more or less public teachers, as the Pastor said. However, the function of present-day prophets is twofold. In the early Church, public teaching was involved depending on what account is being read, but events were also predicted. This latter type of prophecy is a little different today. Generally speaking, certain brethren have the spiritual gift of giving talks along a particular line. For example, brethren usually thought of Bro. Anton Frey in connection with the Tabernacle because he gave much thought and consideration to that subject, and what he said made sense. Bro. Magnuson did not have as much public recognition, but he was very adept at explanation as well. Other brothers are good on chronology and time features, character development, prophetic subjects, or doctrinal matters. Thus there continue to be diversities of gifts of the Holy Spirit. The counterpart “gifts” today, which are developed and not mechanically given, are as follows:

**1. Word of wisdom.** Some brethren have above-average common sense and practical applications. They are able to readily interject common-sense reasoning into discussions on various topics.

**2. Word of knowledge.** This gift of the Holy Spirit is manifested by those who are more mature in their thinking. These brethren have experience, especially if they have been consecrated for a longer period of time. The instruction in Leviticus 19:32 is to “rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man.”

**3. Faith.** Paul’s statement that without faith it is impossible to please God means that all who are called by God, whether they realize it or not, had natural faith to start with. They “must believe that he is [exists], and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). However, in the context here in chapter 12, faith is a distinct quality. The gift of faith is more along the lines of being an encouragement to the brotherhood. For example, when an emergency arises, the individual with this gift encourages the others to stand fast. He blesses

others by the exercise and expression of faith with regard to coming through the experience. In short, this “faith” is exhortation when needed; it is an energizing influence that helps others. Along another line, when someone cheerful and optimistic enters the room, that influence affects those who are congregated. The same principle is illustrated when our mood is favorably affected by a bright, sunny day with the birds singing. A word of faith is sometimes needed at a particular time to boost the thinking of the brotherhood.

**4. Healing.** This gift helps to create a family relationship among the consecrated, the feeling of being *one body* with many members. (In fact, all of the gifts have this effect.) For example, a brother or sister with the gift of healing can help one who is despondent or very discouraged. And when the brethren pray on behalf of that individual, they are manifesting the oneness of the body. At an appropriate moment, one might be motivated by the Holy Spirit to suggest, “Let us have a word of prayer on behalf of this brother [or sister].” Not only would the suggestion be beneficial, but it would have a healing and a purifying value to the member suffering from the affliction.

**Comment:** “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11).

**Comment:** When one confesses sin sickness, it is proper to have prayer for that individual (James 5:14,15).

**5. Working of miracles.** This gift would include, as a modern-day counterpart, brethren who have organizational capabilities, communications expertise, and unusual, distinctive administrative qualities. Such individuals are specially qualified in these areas.

While we believe that even miracles have been done at this end of the age, that occurrence is very rare. In the *Reprints*, the Pastor never ruled out miracles entirely, even in healing, because of certain experiences that happened at opportune times. However, we certainly do not look to be healed of our diseases. Paul tried to point out that the gift of healing was not usually exercised on the disciples themselves. For instance, he gave Timothy advice to drink a little wine for his stomach’s sake instead of curing him of his dyspepsia. And he said that bodily exercise profits only a little, so Christians are not to make exercise a major priority, although it can be beneficial in moderation.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are low-key today, and one has to discern as to who has them in an authentic sense. Of course sometimes those who are highly esteemed are not even qualified for their area of service. The point is that we should not accept everything we hear just because the person has the gift of oratory and presents his thoughts eloquently. The message must be analyzed to see if it harmonizes with the Scriptures. Along another line, some brethren are good at giving counsel, and they are not necessarily elders.

**6. Prophecy.** Today the gift of prophecy is the ability to teach, especially along prophetic lines, as a fruit of the Spirit. Certain brethren are given the special ability to dispense dispensational knowledge. When the seven messengers were selected down through the Gospel Age, there may have existed brothers of equal or even superior capability, but God selected the right servant at the right time. Various factors were involved in the selection. For instance, Stephen was a deacon, yet his zeal and level of understanding and the way the Holy Spirit moved him mightily showed that he would have been almost like the Apostle Paul had the Lord selected him. Perhaps one reason Paul was selected instead was that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel. The apostles, who are at the top of the list during the Gospel and Kingdom ages, were selected in a particular time frame. However, after the Kingdom Age is over, faithful Christians who lived in a subsequent time period may be given higher positions.

These gifts, or qualities, are developed, first, from a natural standpoint and then, later, from a

spiritual standpoint. Christians are being educated to be kings and priests during the Kingdom Age, but that education will certainly be given much more exercise in the planetary system after the Kingdom Age, that is, with yet unborn generations throughout the universe. An explosion of opportunities will take place beyond the Kingdom Age.

**7. Discerning of spirits.** The gift of discerning of spirits will operate at the end of the age among those who are not deceived when fallen angels have increased liberties (Matt. 24:24-26). This gift will be needed to counterbalance what is happening. Those who have this gift can also discern true and false doctrine. If one has a natural discerning ability to a certain extent and then is blessed by activity in the Lord's service, this ability becomes useful at a higher level.

Unfortunately, some brethren do not know how to discriminate between good and evil. Allowing violations of principle to occur right under their eyes, they seem to be oblivious. By distorting Scriptures from their proper perspective, they interpret Holy Writ to mean that love covers a multitude of sins. It takes time to become a discerner between good and evil, and this ability comes when one reaches a stage of maturity. All Christians start as a babe and hopefully grow to a youth, a teenager, a young man (or woman), and finally an adult. Paul implied that in the mature years of a Christian who has been living according to his covenant, the accumulation of experiences and doctrine enables him to become more and more capable of discerning between right and wrong under subtle conditions. (Some instances of right and wrong are self-evident and should be seen immediately.)

The gift of discerning doctrine and seeing where it leads—whether it is false, constructive, or whatever—is a gradual development rather than mechanical as in the early Church. We must study to know what is sound. Purportedly, elders are elected who are above average, not in diction and eloquence but in being apt to teach and living a blameless life. In addition, sisters should be able to discern between good and evil, although they are not in a public teaching role. Sometimes, especially in a small class, brethren recognize that a sister is much more mature than the one leading the study.

As the Pastor said, we should try to see the good in others, no matter how difficult the discernment is. We should have the attitude that each of the brethren excels over us in some way. And usually we can find some good quality another has that we do not possess. Unless there is some blatant act or conduct that shows otherwise, we should find our brethren beneficial, for a tree manifests its fruit in one form or another. Moreover, brethren may have more than one gift—gifts along various lines. Strange as it may seem, however, those who are advanced in service by the brethren are often the ones who are not as qualified. Why? Perhaps the reason is that the more prominent brethren are admired from a worldly standpoint and not according to scriptural qualifications. Thus it is more difficult today to see those who have the gift of discerning spirits in the proper sense. This gift is not as startling now as it was in the early Church.

**8. Divers kinds of tongues.** Today this gift is the ability to learn foreign languages. Translating, speaking, and/or writing in other languages is helpful to the brethren living in other countries.

**9. Interpretation of tongues.** Again there is a present-day counterpart. Although concordances assist us in Bible study, understanding Greek and Hebrew is different from just having an accumulation of facts and is study on a higher level.

With regard to both the early Church receiving instantaneous mechanical gifts and the Church during the Gospel Age up to the present time having “gifts,” or talents, a brother or sister who has one gift can receive additional gifts. For example, one who had the gift of speaking in tongues was told to pray for the ability to interpret (1 Cor. 14:13). Thus brethren can increase their gifts by praying for one they earnestly desire and feel they need. In regard to a “word of

knowledge,” if a particular Scripture is troubling, the individual can pray for understanding. Sometimes the answer comes quickly, and sometimes it is delayed, depending on what manner or time mode the Holy Spirit deems propitious in granting the understanding.

The Lord could have made us into perfect characters, but He does not want zombies who mechanically always do His will perfectly. Rather, He wants those who serve and worship Him of their *own initiative* as they *develop* the fruits of the Spirit.

Verse 11 sums up verses 7-10. God gave mechanical gifts to the early Church, but those gifts operated through the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as invisible electricity runs a motor and provides light, so the invisible Holy Spirit was very real and powerful.

**Comment:** Instead of each Christian in the early Church having all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the distribution of a variety of gifts within an ecclesia helped promote an interdependence among the brethren.

**Reply:** Yes, what one member lacked, another member supplied, and the result was that all functioned together as a whole. After the apostles died, the gifts persisted in a spiritual sense down through the Gospel Age, with Jesus remaining as the Head of the Church and the office of the 12 apostles being preserved as the foundation. With this unity continuing up to the present, we look for a blessing and further understanding when we meet as an ecclesia. In addition, private study is necessary.

After enumerating the gifts, Paul switched to another mode of thinking, starting in verse 12, with regard to certain other problems that had arisen in the class at Corinth. This First Epistle to the Corinthians was a mind-boggling task. How Paul covered so many subjects of such diverse nature in just one letter, giving constructive advice, is a miraculous overruling by the Holy Spirit. In fact, both of his epistles to the Corinthians are invaluable for practical Christian living.

**1 Cor. 12:12** For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

**1 Cor. 12:13** For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

**1 Cor. 12:14** For the body is not one member, but many.

**1 Cor. 12:15** If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

**1 Cor. 12:16** And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

**1 Cor. 12:17** If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

**1 Cor. 12:18** But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

**1 Cor. 12:19** And if they were all one member, where were the body?

**1 Cor. 12:20** But now are they many members, yet but one body.

**1 Cor. 12:21** And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

**1 Cor. 12:22** Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

**1 Cor. 12:23** And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

**1 Cor. 12:24** For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

**1 Cor. 12:25** That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

**1 Cor. 12:26** And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

**1 Cor. 12:27** Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Paul gave a practical illustration of the various members of the *one* human body. If any one member (such as an ear) occupied the whole, not only would the body be destroyed, but also the result would be a monstrosity. The danger was that some brethren in the Corinthian church were becoming high-minded about the gifts they had received. Paul treated the problem in a masterful way. Not only did he use the illustration that there are *many* members in the *one* body, but in addition, he used a standpoint that is generally overlooked. He used the body as a picture from two different standpoints, that is, from two types of reasoning. Most sermons are based on the standpoint of the many members being one body and of the varieties of service.

1. Verses 15 and 16 read, “If the foot [or ear] shall say, Because I am not the hand [or eye], I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” Paul wrote these verses from a passive, *introspective*, negative standpoint. The foot was discouraged, thinking it was not part of the body because it did not have the particular gift or opportunity of service that the hand had. And in discouragement, a Christian can feel, “The Lord is not dealing with me because I do not have the opportunities of service that others have.” Each Christian should examine himself honestly and do something according to his *own* talent(s) and ability.

2. Verse 21 is presented from the opposite standpoint—that of an aggressive *extrovert* person, who magnifies his own importance and the littleness of those who are not involved the way he is. “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” With the high-minded individuals in the class wrongly and assertively promoting their own importance, others were apt to go along with their thinking and teaching. After a while, those who were influenced would become discouraged, thinking the Lord was not using them.

Paul’s point was that *all* are needed in the body. Certain parts of the human body are clothed and hence are made to appear better, some parts are hidden, and still other parts are modified—but all are needed. Paul was insinuating that we are not to judge one another by outward appearance or prominence, for all members of the body are important, and each serves a function. For example, in God’s providence, sisters do not have opportunities of service like a brother, but this distinction is honorable and should not be a cause for discouragement.



**Comment:** One of the more feeble members of the human body is the little toe, yet without that toe, a person would be off-balance and could fall over.

Two gifts involved the tongue. Some could speak in a foreign language, and some could interpret, or translate; that is, some had the mouth of explanation, and others had the eye of discernment and gave understanding. Of the two, the latter gift was more important, but both were needed. Actually, the Apostle Paul had *all* of the gifts. If anyone could boast, it was Paul, so he was putting the others in their place.

While talking about the diversities of the Spirit, Paul wove in the theme of Jew and Gentile, showing that they should be in harmony, for God and Christ were dealing with both. Verse 13 reads, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” If all—Jew, Gentile, master, and slave—confessed that Jesus is the Christ, then all were members of the *one* body and, therefore, had a variety of expression. For the consecrated, diversities were to be forgotten, for all drank “into one Spirit” and were of the one family. On the one hand, the Jews felt they were more important because they had the Law and God had dealt with them as a people for 2,000 years before acknowledging the Gentiles. On the other hand, the Gentiles (Greeks) felt the Jews had been cast off from God’s favor. Instead Jews and Gentiles were to realize that *both* were members of the body and that when various ones were inducted into the body, they had different functions to perform.

Throughout the Gospel Age, the oneness of the body had to ever be kept in mind because we are all prone, by nature, to harp on our own ideas of importance. The mind, will, and conscience need to be continually educated and regulated by the Word to know what is right. Standards always need to be clarified and refined. We must guard against being satisfied with a certain level of development or opinion lest we become fixed, or crystallized, in something that may not be entirely proper in the Lord’s sight.

The Bible was not available in the early Church, the New Testament being only in the formative process. Other than the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, only fragmentary epistles were available to the different churches scattered throughout the Mediterranean area and the Mideast, where Christianity blossomed. Therefore, the diversity of talent, memory, and language was especially crucial and helpful to the Church.

Verses 12-27, which pertain to bodily functions of the ear, nose, eye, etc., are the category of “operations.” (The previous category was “gifts.”) Each of the component parts of the one body perform different functions, and this diversity is very helpful in unifying the body. This section climaxes with the theme that the body members should have the same care for one another because they see the need for this type of unity. In Paul’s day, the divisions were not as extensive as what occurred later in John’s day, but he used this lesson for the Corinthians because of the divisions in their locale. Paul showed that certain principles were being performed right under their eyes, but they did not grasp the significance. They saw the exercise of the gifts as unconnected happenings, whereas they were the *unifying* factor. God gave each of the brethren a gift so that they would have to help one another, and the help occurred when they got together in the ecclesia arrangement. Just as the operations, or functions, of the various members are needed in the natural body, so they are needed in the spiritual body. In making man with these component parts, God has made the “miracle machine.”

Earlier in the chapter, Paul just categorized the gifts. Now, in telling how those gifts were used, he was really going over the same list again but viewing the diversities of gifts from the perspective of how the parts of a human body operate. The gifts proved the Corinthian brethren had consecrated, but there was another lesson; namely, the gifts were given to edify

the body—that was the operational phase of the gifts. Like the different component parts of the body, the gifts were not identical, but they were useful in various ways. Especially when the brethren were together, the gifts provided edification, and when the brethren were apart, the gifts were used along another line in a private fashion.

**Q:** Was Paul saying that each member of the body of Christ has different talents?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What specific functions do the various parts of the body represent?

**A:** Spiritually speaking, the foot represents the walk, the conduct, of a Christian. From another standpoint, it shows activity in the Lord's service, in which some degree of travel is involved.

“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body,” is that true? No! A “foot” has to do with travel, such as witnessing from place to place. Consider the Apostle Paul, who was single and had a trade and thus could travel regularly, whereas those who were married had other responsibilities and could not spend their whole life on the road, going wherever the Spirit would lead them. If all were evangelists, who would lead studies and provide nurturing in the home ecclesias? If all were teachers, who would spread the Word? Another function of the “foot” might be travel to visit the sick.

With regard to the ear, three languages were prevalent in the days of the early Church: Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Since not all members of an ecclesia could understand all three languages, the gift of speaking in tongues was helpful in translating a Scripture into language(s) understood by the rest of the class. Thus the ear represented simple hearing, which was the basis for the more complicated interpretation of the meaning. Along another line, the ear is a wonderful asset for edification through reports of the brethren, for example.

The eye indicates the more intellectual and spiritual understanding of the lessons of Scripture as they apply to the Christian walk. In addition, the eye, pertaining to the future, represents insight into prophecy and pictures an individual with the gift of prophecy and/or wisdom.

The nose, with its sense of smell, is one with the ability to tell the difference between good and evil, which is the discerning of spirits. The ability to discern whether a matter was true or false, genuine or phony, was of great benefit to the early Church because if someone went off-track in extemporizing beyond his gift and thus gave improper instruction, the one with the discerning spirit would say, “That is not the right thought.” The response would have been blunt because the mechanical gift did not operate in a smooth, delicate way. As the brethren were gathered together, they could see the mechanical operation of the Holy Spirit moving the person to speak. It was obvious that the gift was extraneously imparted to the individual for the benefit of the whole.

The hand pertains to service along various lines. “Do with thy might what thy hands find to do” is the principle. The mouth helps with food, and the arm works in religious matters. Thus each of the component parts is meant to help the body of Christ in one way or another.

God hath “set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” However, how God sets the members in the body now may be entirely different from how He will set them in the body beyond the veil, so one should exercise patience and forbearance with the experiences he is undergoing. “Godliness with contentment is great gain,” and there are different types of contentment—temporal, spiritual, fellowship, etc. (1 Tim. 6:6). We must discern our own spiritual welfare and try to get into the atmosphere that is most conducive to our spiritual development. If we discern something harmful, we should remove ourselves

from that situation. If we see sin and iniquity, we should absent ourselves.

There are many members yet only one body. The component parts must not rebel against one another or feel they have no need for each other. Paul continued this theme and then said that the body parts are clothed, for if unclothed, they would bring shame on the ministry; that is, certain activities and habits are to be covered in the sense that they must be recognized and acted upon. Some brethren with certain weaknesses are repentant and remorseful. They make one mistake after another, but their attitude shows they are trying. They mean well, and we hope they will get stronger and come to a full knowledge of the truth as mature individuals.

Some in the body back there may have seemed insignificant, but when the gifts were given, one of these least ones, out of seemingly nowhere, would have a profound manifestation of the Spirit. Paul said, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto *edifying*” (1 Cor. 14:26). Paul was giving a thumbnail description, or lesson, but it was comprehensive. What a letter he composed!

**Q:** What is the meaning of verse 23, “And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness”?

**A:** Unseemly parts of the body need to be clothed. We are not living in Adam’s day when he walked around naked. Some who come into the body have a lot of problems. John Bunyan was one of the most reprobate characters in his city prior to consecration, but afterward he manifested the Spirit wondrously and was an influential example to others for edification. In fact, his book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, was second to the Bible for more than a hundred years.

**Comment:** Some of the weaker members of the body need more attention and earnest prayer so that they are built up.

**Reply:** The high priest of the Old Testament could not have six toes or fingers, for example, as a *public* representative, but sons of Aaron who were disqualified for such reasons were taken care of (Lev. 21:16-23). They had to be kept in the background and could not be high priest or perform public priestly functions, but as members of Aaron’s family, their bread and water were provided. Stuttering and being crippled were other disqualifications.

The purpose of the gifts was “that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (verse 25). When one suffers, the others should commiserate. When one rejoices, the others should rejoice with him. Indeed Paul had a purpose in introducing the thought, in this context, “that there should be no schism in the body” and “that the members should have the same care one for another.” He had just been talking about the natural body with its many members and its coordination. Just as in the human body, the various parts are not in rebellion, disfavor, or disharmony with each other, so it should be in the spiritual body of Christ. All of the members are needed, some in a more prominent way and others in a lesser fashion, but all have their part in the functioning of the human body. It would show a lack of understanding if a person worked out of harmony with his own body. Spiritually speaking, the same is true in the body of Christ.

The word “schism” means “division.” In 1 Corinthians 11:18,19, Paul said, “When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions [sects, the same Greek word] among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” Here in chapter 12, Paul was speaking from an idealistic standpoint. In other words, the motive and desire of the Christian should be for unity; however, unity is not always practical. If at all possible, brethren should work in harmony,

with all having the same hopes and aspirations in trying to achieve the same goal. If a division occurs, it should be for a legitimate reason. God favors divisions only when they are necessary, and in that case, those who are approved for proper behavior and decorum are made manifest in His sight and to Jesus and the angels.

If one member suffers, the other members should suffer with him. If one member rejoices, the other members should rejoice with him. The body of Christ is like a *family* relationship but *in the Lord*. This “family” feeling should keep the members knit together. A proper love would make allowances for one another where possible, and only a significant difference could break that bond.

Despite diversity of race or status as bond or free, all Christians have been made partakers of the one Holy Spirit of God (verse 13). Then, starting with verse 14, Paul began to discuss the diversity of the human body. A human body is composed of many members, and to function properly, each member has a specific work to benefit the whole. The apostle concluded that if there were not this diversity of functions by different members—that is, if they all performed the same function—the human body would have a very limited performance.

Each one who consecrated in the early Church was granted at least one mechanical gift. We can see the profit that would have accrued from such gifts if they were done in a decent and orderly fashion, with each Christian giving respect to the others and not monopolizing the time. The brethren were dependent upon each other’s capabilities. The same interdependence exists today but not in such a dramatic fashion. Many gatherings of the Lord’s people suffer because of the lack of recognition by members of the ecclesia as to which one has the better capability in performing a particular type of service. Now the gifts and talents are harder to determine, one reason being that the written Word of God is available. If we do not get from a meeting all that we would have desired, at least we can go home and meditate on the Word. Sometimes a discussion pro and con on the interpretation and significance of a Scripture provokes interest in trying to come to a definite conclusion as to the real meaning. Although the situation is different today from what existed back there, some of the principles still apply.

While the functioning of the body parts for the benefit of the whole was a blessed experience both for those who possessed and used the gift and for those who benefited from hearing and receiving such instruction, there were problems in the class at Corinth with regard to these miraculous gifts. Some who were too domineering used their gift to overshadow the gifts of others. And some became too heady and puffed up, especially if they had two gifts.

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (verse 18). In Paul’s day, all who made a bona fide consecration got a gift of the Holy Spirit, and the brethren knew that *God Himself* had determined what that gift should be. Ideally, that knowledge should have brought humility on the recipient of the gift and also appreciation by others of that individual. However, that did not always happen.

The comparison of verse 21 mentions a problem area; namely, the eye cannot say to the hand, or the head to the feet, “I have no need of thee.” Paul was referring to the head as part of the human body, and not to Christ as the Head of the body. The “head” was the leading personality in the ecclesia, usually an elder. As part of his service, an elder creates stability, organization, order, peace, and proper functioning in the ecclesia, but if, as a leader, he suppresses participation by others, he is not serving properly.

From a normal, literal standpoint, the eyes and the head would be considered more important, but those organs are not to domineer the whole functioning of the body. How did that happen in the early Church? Until Paul came along, the atmosphere of some classes was like mayhem with all of the brethren trying to use their gifts at the same time. Instead of the gifts being a

blessing, the meetings were confusion and anarchy. Without order in the ecclesia, there was no blessing. Suppose an elder was prejudiced against an individual who had a gift and allowed others to have their expressions but habitually ignored that individual. To not allow the airing of an issue or topic, to not grant liberty, would be presumptuous. We are told to preserve our liberty in Christ (Gal. 5:1).

“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary” (verse 22). Generosity of spirit should allow freedom of expression to one who appears to be feeble or to have a gift to a lesser miraculous degree. The exercise and use of a gift benefits the individual himself, as well as the other members of the body. And sometimes the one who seems to be feeble in his explanation may be of special benefit to another member of the body who is present at the meeting.

Verse 23 merits more discussion. “Those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.” Clothing discreetly covers different parts of the male and female human body lest they be given prominence or notoriety, but what is the spiritual lesson? Some in the Church today, as well as in the past, seem to have the gift of introducing the truth to others. With their simpler talk and style of witnessing, they are more potent—and, therefore, more useful—as an instrument of Spirit begettal than brethren who are more talented. Their zeal, even with their lack, can produce startling effects in introducing a new member into the body of Christ. The point of preaching the gospel is to try to reach the hearing ear of those who are hungering after truth and thirsting for righteousness. Thus those who might be considered insignificant can be especially useful and effective in the Master’s service.

“For our comely parts [hands, head, feet, etc.] have no need [to be specially covered with grace]: but God hath tempered the body together, having [ostensibly] given more abundant honour to that part which lacked” (verse 24). When a very humble person brings someone into the truth, the influence on those who are leading spirits and more outgoing is good, for the experience tends to curb any tendency to pride. For God to use someone who is regarded as unimportant for such an important purpose has a humbling and beneficial effect on the ecclesia.

In the context of chapter 12, verse 25 is the *normal* rule. “That there should be no schism [division] in the body.” Divisions should not be created in the body. However, circumstances sometimes arise where a division is necessary, for example, in an extraordinary situation where an individual gets into control who leads the class astray with his doctrine, personality, self-conceit, or dwelling on topics that are not spiritually beneficial. Generally speaking, there should be no schism in the body, the exception being where not to divide would be dangerous for the spiritual welfare of the whole. Here Paul did not bring in the opposing view, which was presented in the previous chapter. “When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved [in taking a proper stand for truth] may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:18,19). The normal spirit is brotherly kindness, forgiveness, graciousness, and mutual respect, but the liberty to take a stand is always held in reserve and not discarded. Some wrongly want to preserve peace at any cost, and others, characterized as brambles and thorns, cause divisions by always criticizing instead of talking on the truth. There were divisions in the Corinthian ecclesia, and in chapter 12, Paul was trying to heal the disunity so that there would once again be a cohesive whole that could function peacefully and properly.

**Comment:** 3 John 9-11 discusses a situation where Paul advised division because an individual not only was inhospitable to the brethren but advised others not to be hospitable. “I [the Apostle John] wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth,

prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, ... [but he] forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”

**Reply:** Yes, Diotrefes wanted to dominate the class and even tried to prevent the brethren from receiving the Apostle John.

The Lord allows such testings to come on the Church. Usually He grants a longer period of sunshine and gentle rain so that the new creature growing in our hearts will develop and prosper, but somewhere along the line, the testing will come. As Moses said, God doth “prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deut. 8:2). Conditions and trouble arise to see whether we really love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Verse 27 is interesting—“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”—for Paul was unifying two different thoughts. (1) “Now ye are the body of Christ” expresses the ideal feeling of *family oneness and identification*. (2) “Ye are ... members in particular” recognizes the role of *diversity and individuality*. A Christian should not be jealous of other brethren or be so introspective as to think his own way is the only way. The Christian life has different aspects—doctrine, morals, works, study, character, etc.—and all play a role in development. Therefore, the individual capabilities of the members should be recognized, such as organizational or musical ability or even exuberance, and each member should be encouraged to use his talent(s) for the Lord as best he can. It is wrong to try to force all brethren into the same mold.

**1 Cor. 12:28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Paul ended the category of operations with verse 27. Next he categorized all of the following as gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues.

In another sense, the apostles, prophets, and teachers were administrations, or different offices. For want of another term, Paul was giving a chain of authority. Thus the first three were presented in order of importance and, to a certain extent, authority. All three instructed with understanding, the apostles being on the highest level. (1) The 12 apostles were directly under Jesus, the Head. (2) Next came the “prophets,” the seven special messengers to the Church, of whom the first two were also apostles. More than elders, the prophets had the particular, distinct honor of revealing dispensational truths, which were necessary because of the peculiar trials in each period of the Church. Their messages extended to countries beyond their origin to an international realm. There are more than seven messengers but not in the sense that is pictured in the Book of Revelation, where the influence of the seven was most unusual. (3) “Teachers” are those with outstanding capabilities as elder, whose ministries are national in character. Examples of such teachers are individuals like John and Charles Wesley and John Knox. The term “teachers” also extends down to the regional level—to those who are prominent within a nation but are relatively ethnic in scope. With teachers, therefore, there are gradations. Some are teachers only on the local level, and others are recognized more widely. Although regional teachers might not have the gift of oratory, they are very helpful to the Church.

**Comment:** Ephesians 4:11 gives a similar listing: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” In this list, evangelists and pastors are inserted ahead of teachers.

**Reply:** That Scripture is slightly different, for Paul did not mention “first,” “second,” and “third.” Therefore, with regard to order, more priority should be given to verse 28.

Although, strictly speaking, the enumeration stops after “teachers,” the gifts listed in the remainder of verse 28 still follow a general sequence: miracles, healings, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues. “Miracles” were powers like raising (awakening) one from death and predicting future events such as a famine. Even though the miracles were spectacular, they were of lesser importance than the *messages* given by apostles, prophets, and teachers.

**Comment:** Young’s Literal Translation makes a distinction between miracles (powers) and gifts (such as healing). The ability to work miracles was considered superior to the gifts.

**Reply:** Yes. The phrase “after that” followed by “then” indicates not only separate categories but a general order of other gifts: healings, helps, governments, and tongues.

Of course, with regard to the miracles, Paul was talking about the circumstances that existed in his day, although miracles do still happen. Today we would have to study the Scriptures in depth to discern miracles because there are false miracle workers as well as true incidents. Now, in the day of the Lord’s presence, the Adversary is exerting a great energetic operation, so we must be on guard. An example of a miracle today could be something happening at a most convenient time that cannot be ruled as circumstantial. In Peter’s time, Rhoda answered a knock on the door and saw Peter, who had been miraculously delivered from prison after being shackled to two men (Acts 12:13-17). The brethren had been praying for a miracle, and when it happened, they were surprised. The incident was a miracle from God operating on an individual. That type of miracle can exist today, where God uses the Holy Spirit in a miraculous fashion to raise up someone in a most unusual fashion.

In other words, miracles are happening today in a more modified sense, but we may overlook them because we live in a fast-paced world and the cares of life press in on us. Eighty years ago, even though people worked a 12-hour day, they sat quietly in a rocker and meditated. They found time to contemplate.

“Gifts of healings” would be on two levels, spiritual healing being higher than natural healing. An example of present-day “healing” is the gift of helping those who are spiritually weak in faith and other matters, as well as those who are physically weak. James asked, “Is any [one spiritually] sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14). Those who were spiritual and sympathetic to an experience were to pray on behalf of the individual who asked. Oil, being symbolic of the Holy Spirit, was applied as a token recognition that the healing was brought about by the agency of God’s power and not by any human being. With physical healing, the prayer would be contingent on what God’s will is for a particular individual.

“Helps” can be assistants, that is, those who assist the Church with a special talent. Examples are brethren who can give a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge to provide comfort or advice at just the right time. These brethren, who do not have to be elders or teachers, are a wonderful asset to the Church. Another example is help for the brethren along financial and material lines such as money, a home, a particular position, or influence. Sisters can fall into this category. A *Manna* text expresses the thought that women have been a wonderful blessing to the Church down through the Gospel Age. It is questionable how successful the ministry and service of some brothers would have been without the help of faithful and loyal sisters behind the scenes. For instance, Aquila and Priscilla were a great help to the Apostle Paul. In short, “helps” are brethren who comfort and assist in the edification of the body in various ways.

Along another line, this category would include such “helps” as concordances, which took certain individuals a lifetime to develop. They wanted to assist people to appreciate the Bible more and to be blessed by it. *Strong’s Concordance* and *Young’s Analytical Concordance* have been of great help down through the decades. Now computer concordances are even faster.

“Governments” are directors, that is, good organizers and administrators along certain lines. Such brethren are very talented in establishing order and being chairmen, but they are not necessarily looked to for spiritual knowledge. Although not blessed with special spiritual understanding, they have either a financial administrative talent or the natural ability to get things done, and they can convince others of the need to listen to their advice. “Governments” have a recognizable value in the service of the whole body.

Another example of “governments” would be ecclesias, which are a form of modified regulation. An ecclesia is a group of called-out ones who have order to their meetings. Even with two or three individuals—and these could be sisters—there should be a degree of order. In a case where the sole consecrated brother recognizes his deficiencies, he could humbly defer to a sister to act as chairman. If the meeting consists of only women, a sister should be careful not to instruct as an elder. All of these situations are exercises of “government.” “Govern” means “control”—controlling one’s emotions, actions, and behavior and having rules and regulations. However, rules can become stultifying. If we have the correct focus, Jesus is kept as the Head, then the apostles, next the messengers, etc., down to “governments,” which can be a blessing if they do not suppress liberty.

“Diversities of tongues,” speaking different languages, is the last gift mentioned. It was purposely put at the bottom of the list because the Corinthians would have placed it at the top. Moreover, Paul said that if those who had tongues wanted more of a blessing, they should pray to interpret the tongues or to prophesy.

“Diversities of tongues” include aids such as the *Diaglott* with its interlinear translation. In fact, *dia* means “two,” and *glott* means “tongues.” This translation from the Greek into word-for-word English is both a translation and an interpretation. We think those who devoted so much time to these helps will be rewarded one way or another.

**Q:** We should still pray today for “prophecy” and other gifts, realizing that they would be given in a modified sense. If we do not hunger for prophecy, how can we expect to be fed?

**A:** Yes, we are told to covet earnestly the “best” gifts, and prophecy is one of the higher gifts.

In Paul’s day, the gift of remembering the entire Old Testament verbatim was very helpful when a class was studying a particular topic. However, those who had this gift did not necessarily have the ability to explain the Scriptures; they just quoted them mechanically. Incidentally, the “miracles,” or powers, happened on occasion, as needed, whereas the gifts were available daily.

In summary, Paul was saying that those in the Church would have all the necessary help for whatever experience they were going through. The fact that the comfort or need was supplied by different brethren helped to unify the body members and cause them to desire to meet together and have fellowship. Without that need, the brethren might have wanted to use their gifts in private, in isolation.

**1 Cor. 12:29** Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

**1 Cor. 12:30** Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?



After the listing, Paul asked these questions. He repeated the sequence of apostles, prophets, teachers, and (workers of) miracles, and again he put tongues and the interpretation of tongues last. The answer to all of the rhetorical questions is no. Not all brethren are apostles, prophets, and teachers, but *some* are. Not all brethren work miracles, healings, speaking with tongues, or interpreting tongues, but *some* do. A substitution of “some” for “all” would result in a “yes” answer.

The Church has only 12 foundations, 12 apostles. There are only seven “prophets,” special messengers, international in influence. Not all are teachers, with an aptness to teach. Some brothers have understanding but are not able to transmit it clearly. Verse 30 is a good Scripture to refute those who think it is necessary to speak in tongues in order to have the Holy Spirit. “Do all speak in tongues?” No!

Unfortunately, some in Corinth who thought they were apostles questioned Paul’s authority and even felt they were superior to him because they had heard and seen Jesus personally in the flesh. However, Paul saw Jesus under an even greater circumstance—as one born out of due time.

As stated earlier, the function “workers of *miracles*” was supernaturally observed in the early Church as being something different from the normal gifts. Next came the more common gifts of healing, speaking with tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Of course interpretation was more important than the tongue itself except that the person who heard and understood the tongue was greatly benefited. Someone had the gift of bringing the tongue down to a level where it could be understood. For instance, three languages were on the Cross: Hebrew (Aramaic), Latin, and Greek. Of the three tongues, almost all in Israel understood at least two of them. Latin was particularly used in the Roman law, and the Romans were known for using concise terminology. There would be someone in the class who could speak the Scriptures in a language that the remaining brethren would understand, and then another person interpreted the meaning.

**Comment:** The Scriptures emphasize the relative unimportance of the gift of tongues, yet the charismatic movement stresses tongues as being of extreme importance.

**Reply:** The Adversary or the demons seem to bring about this peculiarity. Some people magnify the extraordinary and exceptional doctrines and put the important doctrines on a back burner. One example is the priority being given to tongues. The point is that exceptions should not be made the general rule, yet the general rule must recognize the exceptions. In addition to the dispensational aspect, the balance is to rightly divide the word of truth by knowing what truths should receive more importance at a given time in the Gospel Age.

In the early Church, all who were consecrated got at least one gift as proof of their acceptance. Today several Scriptures help us to know that at least originally we were accepted. (1) The natural man cannot discern spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). (2) No man can say and really appreciate that Jesus Christ is Savior, the one and only way of communication with God, unless the blindness of Satan has been miraculously removed (Matt. 16:17). (3) No man can come unto Jesus except the Father first draw him (John 6:44). (4) Jesus will in no wise cast out those who come to him unless, of course, the individual denies him (John 6:37). One who consecrates should have sufficient faith to realize this fact.

Over the years, some who made a consecration and participated in meetings and activities began to wonder after a while if God accepted their consecration. As they entertained the idea, they started to think that He did not. It is very dangerous for one to commiserate with those who express this thinking and to admit that nonacceptance is a possibility. A good question to ask is, “When you first understood the truth, did you make a consecration, a commitment, to

serve the Lord?" If the answer is yes, then say, "You are responsible for that vow, and you must realize that you cannot retract the commitment."

**Comment:** Doubt is one of the Adversary's tools.

**Q:** Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matt. 7:22,23). Ostensibly they are doing these works for Jesus, yet he will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Would these individuals be those in the nominal system, generally speaking, who do the works in Jesus' name but in a perfunctory manner?

**A:** That would depend on whether they made a personal commitment. Did they, at any time, make a vow to serve the Lord Jesus Christ? Even among the preachers, probably many of them never confessed their sins and made a distinct personal commitment to follow Jesus to the best of their ability. Those who consecrate are in a different category.

**Comment:** Those who consecrate with limited knowledge—that is, without an understanding of dispensational truth—are still responsible.

**Reply:** Yes, that is why we believe many Spirit-begotten individuals are in the nominal system, and their lives will be saved as long as they do not deny the Lord Jesus. Not only at the end of the age will every man's work be tried with fire, but the same principle has applied throughout the Gospel Age (1 Cor. 3:13). When that personal experience comes—and it may occur toward the end of one's life—the individual must reaffirm his or her commitment. Many have attended a seminary and been ordained, but without a personal consecration to the Lord, the result is tares (Matt. 13:38). Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28).

**1 Cor. 12:31** But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

One should desire the best gift(s) it is possible to have if such is the Lord's will. Of course there were only 12 apostles and seven prophets, and sisters cannot be teachers (elders) in the present arrangement, but one should sit down and soberly and honestly appraise his talents and seek to use them. In other words, one should not aspire to things he is not capable of and think that the Lord will miraculously make him a musician, for example. If one legitimately and properly covets the best gifts possible, the Lord will probably give more than the individual has at present. The desire and interest to serve God in a higher capacity will be rewarded if, in God's wisdom, that is in the best interest of the individual and those he would influence. It is like a child asking his father for certain privileges.

After enumerating all of these *gifts* and saying to desire the best ones, Paul said he would show "a more excellent way," which he did in chapter 13 when he discussed the *fruits* of the Holy Spirit. Although not expressed in these words, his attitude was, "Even though I am an apostle and have been a great blessing of many Christians, I am more concerned that I myself will not be a castaway." Although he had preached to others as an apostle, his primary concern and motivation were about making his own calling and election sure. He was not negligent about his own salvation. Paul had a very unusual outlook. When necessary for the good of others, he pointed out his superiority, yet he was humble.

Verse 31 really introduces the next chapter, which is the nitty-gritty of what Christians should earnestly desire. Chapter 13 is the famous chapter on "love," but love needs to be defined. Godlike love is what we hope to attain, as opposed to carnal (fleshly) love or even earthly love.

Along another line, “faith” has to be distinguished from “credulity.” And “hope” must consist of proper hopes, for there are also false hopes.

Another way of saying, “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” is to say, “*Hunger* for more truth.” Hunger is equated with development. To qualify for the high calling, one needs four essential ingredients: *hunger*, *honesty*, and *humility*, which lead to *holiness* (development of character). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled (Matt. 5:6).

**Comment:** Verse 31 indicates that it was possible for general believers to have multiple gifts.

**Reply:** Yes, a reasonable number of the brethren may have possessed two or three gifts because they earnestly coveted improvement. The Laodicean spirit in the last stage of the Church is one of ease, comfort, and slumber (Rev. 3:16,17). The danger in the Ephesus period of the Church was to forget one’s first love (Rev. 2:4). Jesus admonished those in Ephesus to repent so that they would receive a renewal of the Holy Spirit and mount up, as it were, with eagle’s wings. But in times of bitter persecution, there was not much time for slumber. Therefore, proportionately speaking, periods of persecution probably produced the greater number of the Little Flock. The number of consecrations was smaller because persecution was sure to follow, but the consecrations that did take place were sincere.

Spiritually speaking, everyone who consecrates today gets at least one gift, although they do not know it. That is one reason why Paul said we should examine ourselves. Each Christian should soberly and honestly try to discern what gift he (or she) has to benefit others.

**Q:** When one comes to the point of quickening, should others be able to discern the gift?

**A:** Yes. The life is real prior to quickening, but it is manifest in the quickening phase. And quickening is proof to the individual that the fetus is alive.

The “more excellent way” refers to the *fruits* of the Spirit, which are more desirable than the mechanical gifts of the Spirit. Apostles, prophets, workers of miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, and diversity of tongues were all *gifts* from the Lord, whereas faith, hope, and love are fruits of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes fruits are mistaken for gifts. For instance, not all men have *natural* faith, but those whom the Lord calls do have natural faith. However, faith as a *fruit* of the Spirit, which is quite different from natural faith, is to be coveted and cultivated.

The same is true of love. Adam was created perfect, yet he fell. Originally, he had *natural* love and *natural* faith, but he did not have love and faith as *fruits* of the Spirit because he had not been tried and tested. Some people are born kind, generous, and patient, but those qualities are gifts, not fruits—they are parts of the original image of God that Adam had before his fall and that still remain with mankind. Those individuals have an *untested* love that goes by feeling, affection, politeness, courtesy, etc. However, Paul spoke of the fruits of the Spirit, which must be diligently obtained. We have to *grow and develop* in faith, hope, and love by instruction in and obedience to God’s Word. Nice deeds of the flesh are not evidences of the love that is taught in the Bible because they are even in the unconsecrated world. Thus the natural and the spiritual are two separate things. The Holy Spirit is the lifeblood that nurtures the fruits in the new creature.

**1 Cor. 13:1** Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

**1 Cor. 13:2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

**1 Cor. 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**

Chapter 13 is a practical way of pointing out what “charity” (love) is. Many Christians are apt to look at these categories and conclude they have love, yet the categories could be a false indicator. This love is not that easy to get, and it is not what is commonly perceived to be love.

The Corinthian brethren put speaking in tongues and oratory on a very high level. The Greeks were known for their ability to speak. They could express themselves in a fluid way and arouse the emotions of their audience to a high pitch. Moreover, they esteemed knowledge.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and [the tongues] of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” “Tongues of men” would be known languages such as Hebrew or Greek. For example, the apostles spoke to those gathered at Pentecost in their native tongues (Acts 2:7,8).

Paul then went to the highest extreme—the tongues of angels—to show that even if that level could be reached, love is far superior. Paul was contrasting men with literal angels. He also said, “Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.” Such a literal act is impossible for us to accomplish by faith. Jesus made a similar statement with regard to faith that can move a literal mountain—something that is impossible for us to do. “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto *this* mountain [he pointed to it], Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove” (Matt. 17:20). Jesus also said, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:6). Paul was using the utmost extreme to offset or contrast the importance of love. In other words, even if he could speak with the tongues of angels and even if he had faith to move mountains, those acts would not be commensurate with the importance of love.

“And though I ... understand all mysteries.” Actually, it would be impossible for one to know even *some* of God’s mysteries without having *some* love, but it is impossible for one to know *all* mysteries, for the Lord does not disclose all of them. Again Paul used the extreme to point out the importance of love. Many take just one little facet of love to downplay knowledge. And some try to minimize the ministry of others by pointing out that love is more important than knowledge. That is true from the apostle’s standpoint, but those who use that argument as a yardstick are putting themselves in the position of judging. To judge that others do not have enough love is not the prerogative of the Christian in the present life.

Generosity, faith, and knowledge are looked upon as evidences of love. It is true that they can be indicators, but they are not reliable proofs. A *Manna* comment states that the Lord gives intimate knowledge only to those who are faithful to Him. However, we cannot necessarily judge by that *general* rule. The subject of love is very deep. As brethren, we are inclined to think we know, by nature, what love is, but love must be studied over a lifetime.

Even if one gives all of his goods to feed the poor or gives his body to be burned, that is not a proof of love. In the latter case, consider that down through history, far more than 144,000 were martyred, and not all were Christians. Bro. Magnuson explained that there are two ways of dying in the Lord. One way is to die *for* Christ. The much superior way is to die *with* Christ. Some die just for a principle of truth, for what they believe is right, which has nothing to do with being a follower of Jesus. Therefore, to die as a martyr is not necessarily a proof of the possession of love, but to die in doing God’s will could be an evidence of love for the Lord.

Verses 1-3 show the primacy of the importance of love. The gifts enumerated—speaking,

prophesying, unraveling all mysteries, having all (encyclopedia-type) knowledge, and having all faith—do not usually come about except through much diligence. But with all such effort, love—*God's love*, a *principled love*—should always be kept in mind. Love has to be according to the rules and regulations laid down in the Word. If that love is lacking, one is “nothing” as far as the high calling is concerned. Certainly the individual will not be given the divine nature and be made a priest and a king in the next age.

“Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing [as regards the high calling].” In the Smyrna, or second, period of the Church, Christians looked upon the extent of persecution as a sign of God’s favor. Having a chip on their shoulder, they confronted even kings and were then executed for their bravado. Dying through persecution was considered being faithful unto death, but faithfulness depended on other factors such as the development of principled love. Paul was trying to counteract false conceptions of love.

Paul used a form of hyperbole to get his point across. True faith is exercised in harmony with God’s principles and is based on the understanding of Scripture. Faith is more than just confidence or belief; it is the exercise of obedience and hope with regard to the promises in God’s Word. Paul did not expect one to have faith that could move mountains or to have all knowledge. He used extremes to illustrate the importance and superiority of love.

What made the Pastor so unusual is not that he was the wisest man on the planet but that he was a faithful servant in the United States during the last period of the Church, ready and willing to spend all that he had to preach the gospel at a time when it was due to go out with great force into the international arena. He was the right man at the right time. The gift of speaking with the “tongues ... of angels”—a sort of supernatural understanding—attended his message. For instance, when the Pastor began to preach the Harvest message, he spoke on the secret presence of Christ. Isn’t that a startling “angelic” message—that Christ could be present yet invisible? It is almost unbelievable that Jesus could be here in earth’s atmosphere with no one knowing unless instructed through the Word. However, the invisible presence of Christ makes sense when we realize that Satan, the “god of this world,” is invisible, yet his influence can be seen (2 Cor. 4:4). The Lord introduced this wonderful truth of the secret presence through a specially selected human agency, opening up an arena of knowledge that is very much needed for the last stage of the Church.

“Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries.” The Pastor opened up many different “mystery” areas. God’s people can have the gift of understanding prophecy in either or both of two ways: (1) understanding future events already recorded in the Word and (2) predicting or interpreting future events not recorded in the Word. The gift of prophecy in the latter sense was given primarily in the early Church before the Bible was fully written.

The Pastor was a pioneer in bringing forth primary doctrines that were needed to open up the Word. Those who follow up may do greater works than the pioneers, but the pioneer broaches new “old” truths. Luther and Wycliffe were pioneers in the past who opened up the Word of truth. There existed in Germany people who could expound more than Luther, but it took Luther to open the door (Rev. 3:8).

“Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand ... all knowledge.” The understanding of knowledge applies to teachers in the Church on a more local level, elders or otherwise, who have the ability to explain truths. Their influence is very important—and hopefully for the good. Chapter 12 discussed the different functions of the various members of the body, but chapter 13 puts the functions in the format of their usefulness to the Church. Paul was implying that while these gifts were *mechanically* supplied to the early Church in the first 150 years, to some extent these artificial gifts have subsequently become *natural* talents and capabilities that the body members possessed down through the Gospel Age. While the tongues, etc., ceased as

given artificially in the early Church, they continue in a much subtler, more modified sense. Paul was now, in chapter 13, giving instruction that has been helpful, primarily, ever since the first period of the Church down to our day.

“Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Paul continued to state these matters in hyperbolic form, giving a starkly unrealistic scenario—“*all mysteries,*” “*all knowledge,*” and “*all faith*”—to emphasize the importance of love. When 12 spies were sent to view the Promised Land, ten came back with the discouraging report that the cities were walled up to heaven and the inhabitants were giants (Deut. 1:28; Num. 13:33). Only Joshua and Caleb said, “Do not be concerned. If we obey the Lord, He will subdue the enemy.” In other words, the Scriptures sometimes use hyperbole to indicate not a reality but that nothing is impossible for God or with us if we are in the proper attitude of heart, mind, and obedience to receive grace to help from the Holy Spirit to overcome.

Many who disparage knowledge because they are satisfied with what they already have, will use verse 2 to support their thinking. However, verse 2 teaches the opposite lesson. To understand prophecy is not a proof that one does not have love. Paul was saying that there were gifted speakers who were not sound in the truth. They had the eloquence to overwhelm and overawe hearers who, not grounded in prophetic understanding, concluded the speakers must know what they were talking about because of their confidence. The Lord’s people are like guileless sheep that are looking for leadership. They appreciate Jesus as their Shepherd, for they want someone to lead them with counsel. Although it is good for the Lord’s people to have sheeplike qualities, the danger is that they can be easily led astray by a false shepherd. The point, in the final analysis, is not to deprecate those who have speaking capabilities but to *analyze and soberly weigh* what is said. Most people are emotionally swayed at the time, but if they are asked an hour later what they heard, they can scarcely remember two sentences. Brethren should be like the noble Bereans, who listened with open and receptive minds but later tried to see if the Scriptures substantiated what they had heard. Although speaking qualities are wonderful gifts, we should always have a little reserve as receivers of the spirit that comes out of the mouth of a speaker until we have opportunity to square it with Scripture.

**Comment:** We can see why all except the very elect will be deceived (Matt. 24:24).

**Reply:** Yes, that will be true at the end of the age. We believe one of the leading deceptions at that time will be the false understanding of love. Love is repeatedly preached in the nominal system and on television. Everyone is supposed to be able to do what he or she wants, as long as it is identified with Jesus or God and the Trinity. When belief in the Trinity is used as the identification mark, however, that love will turn to real hatred for the opposers. Where this false love exists, there is a great euphoria, a mass hysteria, in receiving what are considered wonderful blessings. However, doing God’s will and following His instruction should be the supreme object of our consecration rather than being swayed by emotion, no matter how beautiful the words might sound.

How many people give all their goods to feed the poor? Certainly the Apostle Paul figuratively bestowed all his goods to feed the poor, for he lived from hand to mouth, earned his own living, and even supported those who followed him from place to place as he preached the gospel. Like Jesus, Paul did not have a place to lay his head, and he had *principled* love for God, *supreme* love, as well as Godlike love for the brethren.

How many give their “body to be burned [at the stake]”? Many were burned not because they were so faithful but because they were identified as believing the gospel and they did not deny Christ. In other words, they died for principle—they died *for* Christ but not necessarily *with* Christ. On the one hand, they lacked the necessary understanding to make their calling and election sure, but on the other hand, the thought is not that one must have a lot of knowledge.

Much has to do with whether the suffering is based on faithfulness and a freewill serving of the truth. Many serve the truth because of the way they were raised. They believe like their father and/or mother but not for themselves per se, that is, not to the extent that the Lord would commend and honor them as members of the Little Flock. We believe that the great majority of those who were burned at the stake will get spirit life but will not make the Little Flock.

These circumstances—losing all of our goods and giving our body to be burned—are what we should be prepared to accept as God’s will should they occur. Job lost everything, but what did he say? “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; *blessed be the name of the LORD*” (Job 1:21). God is looking for that type of spirit in us. He knows our frame. As we gradually grow stronger in the truth, we will get testings, and our reward will be proportionate to what we do. The Lord will honor and reward us according to our faithfulness, so we should not be intimidated but should want *His* strength. All we can rely on is the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of God’s Spirit and His Word to support us, plus His love.

**1 Cor. 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,**

Verses 4-8 give a partial description of the characteristics of love. Other Scriptures supplement this listing. Here Paul gave the *positive* actions of love, which are even recognized as loving righteousness. In other words, these verses are slanted in an optimistic and instructive sense.

“Charity suffereth long”; that is, love patiently endures and suffers long with regard to others. Patient endurance is developed slowly over a period of time and through many experiences.

In this chapter, the characteristics of love are not in sequential order. In contrast, Peter gave a sequence where he said, “*Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity*” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Paul was just describing the different aspects of the fruitage of love.

“Charity ... is kind” in various ways. Hospitality is one example.

**Comment:** Some brethren think that everything should be done with a sweet attitude, but there are times when doing someone a kindness might involve more sternness—like a child who is being disciplined. The experience may be a hard one, but the Heavenly Father is doing a kindness in the final analysis.

**Reply:** Where this chapter is treated in the *Sixth Volume*, the emphasis is on kindness toward the sinner. The thought is that we should be very merciful to the sinner as Jesus was, almost to the extent of condoning the sin. We question the expression “condoning,” but the emphasis was on leaning over backwards in hope and expectation. In the world, there are some truly kind people who do not know either God or His Word. This is an innate, natural kindness, but even atheists can be kind. This kind of love is a deception both to the individual and to others who draw wrong conclusions. The point is that *God’s* love is an *educated* kindness in harmony with the *principles* of His Word.

“Charity envieth not.” One translation has “love is generous,” but this would not be generosity in material possessions because the Apostle Paul had just said, “*Though I bestow [give] all my goods to feed the poor ... and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing [with regard to the high calling]*” (1 Cor. 13:3). One could not be more generous, but even in such a case, the motive is important and must be based on the fruitage of God’s Holy Spirit. Some are kind, polite, and generous because of ulterior motives such as a business strategy or technique.

Jesus asked the rich, young ruler to sell all of his goods, give the money to feed the poor, and then follow him (Luke 18:18-24). Why did Jesus say this, especially since he did not ask all of his disciples to do likewise? He knew that the request would accentuate the problem with the rich, young ruler; that is, although the ruler had many good qualities, his love or interest was centered on the acquisition of goods and wealth.

The love of money is the root of much evil because many envy those who have more (1 Tim. 6:10). Envy is an evil influence along any line. If the Lord advances another person and we see that he is prospering spiritually according to scriptural reasoning, we should not envy his promotion. In fact, we should rejoice in seeing that the Lord is using him and wish him well.

**Comment:** An incident in the Book of Numbers illustrates the point that love “envieth not.” “And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the LORD ... took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp, ... Eldad, and ... Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; ... but [they] went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun ... answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:24-29).

**Reply:** Yes, Moses showed a spirit of not being jealous. Jealousy is usually behind envy.

**Comment:** Jonathan’s attitude toward David is another example of not being envious.

Love “vaunteth not itself”; it is not boastful. In this same epistle, Paul proved his love for God by listing the things he suffered. This method was not boastfulness on Paul’s part, for he knew that if the brethren recognized him as a true teacher, they would listen, and they needed God’s instruction. To have a little doubt about an individual prevents one from receiving the full benefit of instruction. Therefore, Paul humbled himself to prove his apostleship in an effort to wake up the brethren.

Love “is not puffed up,” is not heady, does not have a big head. Worldly honors and degrees are not proofs or evidences of Christianity. Some translations combine this quality of love with not being boastful, implying that being puffed up causes the condition. Other translations combine the two thoughts and say, “Love is humble.” The point is that the Christian should not exalt himself at the expense of another; he should not put one down to elevate himself.

**Comment:** In verses 4-7, the Revised Standard breaks down love into ten ingredients: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

**Reply:** In analyzing these different ingredients, we tend to use dictionary definitions. Later we will try to use practical examples.

With regard to being “puffed up,” sometimes a person who gets a position of recognition, influence, or wealth undergoes a character and disposition change almost overnight. Being suddenly thrust from the position of worker to that of boss, or from poverty to wealth, an individual can become overbearing in his superior role and/or lifestyle. A similar character change can also occur in one who is made an elder too soon. Then unseen weaknesses, which



formerly were opposed by the new creature, become exaggerated and are manifested in wrong attitudes. Paul's analysis of love requires introspection on the part of a Christian.

**1 Cor. 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;**

Love "doth not behave itself unseemly [in an unbecoming way]." It is not rude but courteous. Some evangelists exhibit inordinate behavior on the street in order to attract the attention of passersby. They may tell a joke, for example, and then preach Christ to those who stop.

Love "seeketh not her own [way]"; in other words, love is unselfish. Some preachers have mansions and luxurious cars. Such temporal means add to their personal aggrandizement. Being "puffed up" pertains to areas such as teaching, whereas seeking one's "own" would be the inordinate acquisition of material possessions.

**Comment:** Abraham gave Lot the first choice of land (Gen. 13:8-11).

**Reply:** How grand the personalities of the Ancient Worthies were!

Love "is not easily provoked," is not irritable, does not anger easily. Stated another way, love is good-tempered. Being good-natured is the general disposition.

Love "thinketh no evil," does not impute evil to others, thinks generously as far as possible, overlooks faults, and is without guile.

**1 Cor. 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;**

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity." We should not rejoice to hear that one fell away from his consecration and deflected but should sorrow instead (1 Cor. 5:2). Love "rejoiceth in the truth." There is happiness in getting a deeper understanding and appreciation of God, Jesus, the apostles, and others. We rejoice more and more as our depth of understanding increases.

Love is sincere. It does not rejoice in the disclosure of a fault in another person, nor is it disposed to find fault. To the contrary, love is glad when something good about a person is made manifest. It sincerely loves another person and is not fickle.

When James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy some Samaritans who would not receive Jesus, he rebuked the two disciples; that is, he did not rejoice in the destruction of others (Luke 9:51-56). The Heavenly Father desires all to choose life because He does not delight in seeing death, but the choice is up to each individual.

We rejoice when sin is eradicated, but we do not rejoice in the sinner. In other words, we should make a distinction between the sin and the sinner. Where possible, we make allowances for the sinner but *only in harmony with God's Word*, for we are not to be more loving than God. When circumstances force us to see that a brother or sister in Christ is adhering to gross sin, we must take action, for tolerating the misdeed does not help the sinner. The principle is shown with Jesus. Because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows (Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). Unfortunately, many do not see that they should *hate* iniquity because they are fearful of misjudging or imputing evil to someone. As a result, the eye is winked at unrighteousness. However, love rejoices in righteousness and hates iniquity (unrighteousness).

"The *end* of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good [undefiled] conscience [void of offense toward God and toward man], and of faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5;

Acts 24:16). Hence love is an *objective*—what we should be striving for. We would not have consecrated and given our heart to God unless we had natural love for Him, but that love was not the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Many mistakenly think that we have the fruit of love to start with and that we just get a larger vessel as we go along. However, love has to be developed with understanding—it must be educated, disciplined, and refined.

**Comment:** “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). Strong words and even disfellowship, which some would not consider love, may be needed to “convert” the sinner.

**Reply:** The same principle applies along another line. A person considering suicide might ask, “Can a person who commits suicide be a member of the Little Flock?” To commiserate with that individual and give the idea that he could do so and still get the reward would be to mislead him. Some brethren are flattered when one comes to them for advice, but we must not have a “mother” instinct that is so overwhelmed by someone’s confidence in us that we sympathize with and improperly encourage the individual with wrong advice. Some are afraid that if they speak harshly, they will lose that close fellowship. Such an attitude is not real love, for love does not fear to speak sharply in accordance with God’s Word in order to help another. Love is predicated upon the doing of God’s will.

If we desire to be taught of God and pray for understanding, He will instruct us. His arm is not short no matter what our circumstance, but we must keep hungering and thirsting and not feel satisfied and content with the present level of attainment of what we feel is loyalty to truth and service. Otherwise, there will not be much opportunity for growth. We are in a marathon race and must keep running to win the prize, and not just stay at one level.

**1 Cor. 13:7** **Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.**

Love “beareth all things.” The Christian bears up under the severe experiences and heavy trials of the narrow way. Instead of giving up, he clings to the Lord and the Lord’s leadings. Along another line, those who “are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak [the burdens of others to the extent possible], and not to please [themselves]” (Rom. 15:1). Simon of Cyrene, who helped carry Jesus’ cross, is an example.

Bearing all things is a form of endurance from the standpoint of being *introspective*, whereas the patient endurance or long-suffering of verse 4 pertains to *others*. Now Paul was coming to the individual himself. The Christian is to bear, believe, hope, and endure with regard to himself. He is to accept his own circumstances and experiences in life. Disappointments in regard to himself or others are not to hopelessly discourage him, for he accepts the hardships of the narrow way.

Love “believeth all things” that are of value. The Christian should not be suspicious but should give credit to others in their Christian walk and endeavors. The exception would be when spiritual sickness is obvious and self-evident.

The term “all things” is used in a modified sense throughout verse 7. One does not literally bear, believe, hope, and endure everything but is reasonable. In other words, love has a *disposition* to believe good about others and their profession, giving the benefit of the doubt. And with regard to *self*, the Christian believes that God is dealing with him and working in his life. All four qualities—bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring—work both ways.

Love “hopeth all things”; that is, love is hopeful. If another Christian is in a difficult trial or character testing, we hope he will come out favorably in the final result. We hope one who is struggling to do the Lord’s will and to overcome evil will be successful—and we hope the same

for ourself and our own weaknesses. We hope the Lord will strengthen our character and influence us to do His will so that we will overcome.

For Christians now, the exercise of this love, patience, and kindness is primarily to the household of faith, who are separated, alienated, from the world. Of course the world will get the opportunity for restitution in the next age, and we hope and want individuals to gain life, even if there seems little likelihood at the present time.

These categories become more pointed if we look at Jesus' life. We can better understand the different aspects of love by seeing what he did under various circumstances. For example, with the statement love "is not easily provoked," some emphasize that the word "easily" is not in the Greek. It is true that the word is supplied, but to state unequivocally that love is not (or is never) provoked does not make sense, for God was provoked on certain occasions and so was Jesus. Thus the word "easily," inserted by the translators, is in harmony with the Scriptures. The Christian should have a disposition that is not easily provoked, but that does not mean he should never be provoked. Love is kind, but there are times when "kindness" requires a spanking and severe discipline. Hence the *general* disposition is to kindness, but to manifest kindness to one who is doing wrong would do more injury than good. In fact, it would strengthen and encourage the individual in his wrong course. Without reproof, he would be confirmed in his evil ways.

Jesus issued a reproof on several occasions, the following being two examples. (1) In the storm on the Sea of Galilee, he said to the disciples, "O ye of little faith" (Matt. 8:26). This was constructive criticism. (2) When Peter did not want Jesus to go to Jerusalem, the Master said, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23). Supposedly Peter was being kind to Jesus and looking out for his welfare, but Jesus rebuked him, for he saw that Satan was using this strategy as a deterrent from the narrow way. Instead of overlooking the situation and saying nothing, Jesus recognized the opportunity to teach a lesson. In rebuking Peter, Jesus showed that sometimes the Lord's people give wrong advice in spite of having good intentions.

Love is courteous, yet Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, whited sepulchers, a generation of vipers, etc., and he reproved his own disciples at times. When Philip said, "Show us the Father," Jesus replied, "I have been with you for a long time, yet do you not know me?" (John 14:8,9 paraphrase). When Thomas said he would not believe Jesus had been resurrected unless he could put his finger in the nail prints and his hand in the wounded side, the answer was a gentle reproof: "You requested tangible evidence of my resurrection. More blessed are those who do not make that request and have not seen yet have believed" (John 20:24-29 paraphrase). Many Christians put the Lord on the judging block numerous times by making propositions that the Lord do this and that for them.

Some reason, "Well, that was the Lord," but Jesus reproved and *he has love*. Therefore, it is *wrong* to say that love is never unkind or discourteous. Paul was merely saying that, generally speaking, love is kind and generous, but there are mitigating circumstances as to how love operates. The thinking, words, and actions of God, Jesus, and the apostles help us to know how to apply the principles of love.

Jesus was kind to his disciples in that he took time to deal with them. They were poor and unlearned fishermen, yet he laid down his life for them for 3 1/2 years and patiently instructed them for long hours at a time, even though they could not think at his level. He was always careful to obey his Father's will and hence was not subject to the whims and fancies of others, even the disciples, who loved God and His Word but were not in Jesus' category of knowledge. Nevertheless, he was patient with them. For example, he patiently gave a long sermon to the woman of Samaria when he was tired. Imagine, the *great Logos* giving a sermon to *one person!* In fact, his whole earthly ministry was dedicated to serving a relative handful of people. His

ministry manifested patience and kindness, but he also instructed and corrected them. He told the woman of Samaria that she had had five husbands and that the one she was currently living with was not her husband (John 4:18). He reproved the scribes and Pharisees strongly and his disciples gently, getting across the message or lesson each time.

Thus the “all things” of verse 7 have to be modified. Paul was showing how love would react under normal circumstances, but evil must be pointed out when it is of sufficient importance to cause more far-reaching damage.

If we have love, then when we are reproved, we will not turn against, ignore, or be offended by the reprover. The disciples could see that Jesus was rebuking them in love, even though he spoke with a somewhat strong tongue and in a straightforward manner. Realizing that this great person was humble to deal with, talk to, and share his thoughts with them, and not with the mighty ones of Israel, brought them to their senses.

**Comment:** Jesus might have said some things to the disciples with a sting in his voice in order to get his point across, but knowing his disposition, his rounded-out attitude, surmounted any tendency of the rebuke to crush them for the moment. They knew the ultimate purpose was to keep them on the right track.

**Reply:** If a person has a sharp tongue, but we see the next minute that he has no resentment and does not harbor a grudge or have a nasty, ill-tempered, hypercritical disposition, then we know the remark was meant to be constructive, not destructive. That is how the apostles reacted. They stayed with the Master, even when he said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). Under the Law, drinking blood incurred the death penalty, yet the one they so much admired suddenly made such a shocking statement. When Jesus asked the apostles why they did not leave, even though they were bewildered, Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68,69). Knowing Jesus’ normal life and realizing he had the message of life from the Father, they waited. Then Jesus explained that he was the Bread from heaven, that his flesh, his body, was the Bread of life, which he would give on behalf of the world. Although they did not fully understand until later, when they were begotten of the Holy Spirit, they knew he was not talking along literal lines but was discussing something figurative or symbolic. After Pentecost, they realized he had sacrificed his right to life, his flesh, to redeem mankind.

Love is not boastful, yet in this very epistle, Paul built himself up as an apostle, stating what he had suffered for Christ. He put himself forward as being superior to the other teachers in the church at Corinth, but that was not his *normal* disposition (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul had a proper purpose in mind; namely, if the brethren could see that he was an apostle appointed by Christ and that the others were just teachers, they would give more heed to his words. In this instance, it was necessary for Paul to call attention to his love and sufferings for Christ and his joy in sacrificing, but if this attitude were his *habit* of life, then he would have been exalting self instead of getting brethren to come to their senses.

Of necessity, Jesus called attention to the fact that he is the Son of God and that no man can come unto the Father except through him. If he had not exalted himself in this manner, we would not know what to believe. It was necessary for him to point out his headship and that he is the only way to salvation. From time to time, he had to declare the truth of his preeminence as Head of the Church, but most of his teaching was along other lines.

In verses 4-7, Paul said that love suffers long, is kind, is not envious, does not vaunt self, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, does not seek her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

However, all of these qualities can be seen in or copied by people who are not consecrated. Thus the qualities of love, as enumerated, are not a proof that one has *God's* love, for there are noble unconsecrated individuals with these qualities. They are interested in other people, they are not easily provoked, they are humble, they bear great burdens, etc., but verse 6 points out a quality that the unconsecrated do not have; namely, rejoicing not in iniquity but in the truth. To have the other qualities does not prove that a person has Godlike love, for one must have *the truth* as well and *rejoice* in it. That means witnessing, visiting the sick, praying for those in need, etc. One could easily mistake outward seeming manifestations of love for Godlike love. With regard to hope, for example, there are optimistic worldly people. Don't we like to be in the company of those who have a vivacious, cheerful attitude? Isn't that attitude contagious? But when one is fully consecrated, the added ingredient that changes the perspective is a love *according to God's instruction*.

**Comment:** Many get the wrong impression from these qualities, forgetting or not realizing that God gets angry at times and is a jealous God (Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24).

**Reply:** That is true. "God is love," but He punishes, rebukes, and gets angry—and so does Jesus (1 John 4:8). Articles on love usually emphasize that love is *always* kind and *never* gets angry, whereas the King James translation properly inserts a qualification by saying that love is not *easily* provoked. Love does get provoked but not easily. Paul's statement needs to be mentally modified to harmonize with love as exemplified by God Himself.

**Comment:** Even a loving parent will reprimand a disobedient child.

**Reply:** To withhold the rod from a disobedient child in order to get his affection is not real love. In fact, it is a form of selfishness. If the child disobeys, he should be punished for his own welfare. The discipline may be strong, but the parent administers it in love. Even with brethren, the tendency is to condone a wrong action by silence rather than to offend the individual. That attitude not only shows weakness but also hurts both the wrongdoer and the one who fails to correct the wrongdoer.

**Comment:** The purpose of punishing a disobedient child is to raise his appreciation to the higher level of the Heavenly Father.

**Reply:** One needs God's mind, or Spirit, in order to understand. If Jesus were here to instruct us audibly, he would not say all smooth things. Some statements would be hard to take.

**Comment:** Anyone who has a child realizes how much love is behind the discipline and how it hurts the parent to administer the punishment.

**Reply:** Sometimes a child never really appreciates the level of the discipline and how the parent sacrificed in his interest. Instead he develops a feeling of alienation. It is pitiful to see in later years a lack of love and respect for elderly parents who scrounged, suffered, and slaved for a child.

**Comment:** Paul gave the proper balance: "Watch ye, stand fast [firm] in the faith, quit you like men [be manly], be strong. Let all your things be done with charity [in love]" (1 Cor. 16:13,14).

**1 Cor. 13:8** **Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.**

Love abides; it never fails or becomes obsolete, whereas prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will all cease in one form or another. True prophecies "fail" when they are fulfilled; they then become past history—like the Flood of Noah's day—and are of relatively little value. Prophecy,

which pertains to history, is written in advance of fulfillment. When the fulfillment comes, it is no longer prophecy. A good *Reprint* article is No. 471, entitled “Foretold and Fulfilled.”

**Comment:** God is love (1 John 4:8).

**Reply:** Yes. Even though God possesses other qualities or attributes in the superlative degree, the Scriptures do not say that God is power or wisdom because the characteristic of love is His normal behavior. In other words, God does get angry, but that is not His normal disposition. When all things are perfect beyond the Kingdom Age, there will be no sin or opposition to incur God’s wrath. Of all the attributes, love is the most pleasant one to live under.

God’s love is from eternity to eternity, nonending, but the manifestation of that love upon others will occur way down the road. At present, we are in the middle of eternity, if there is such a thing. The nearest we can show in a diagram is a spot on the circumference of a circle. No matter where the spot is put on the rim, it is in the middle.

**Q:** Does the statement “prophecies ... shall fail” apply to the Gospel Age and not the Kingdom Age because Joel 2:28 says that God’s Spirit will be poured out on all flesh and that Israel’s sons and daughters shall prophesy, their old men shall dream dreams, and their young men shall see visions?

**A:** Paul was talking to the Church, so he was particularly referring to prophecy and knowledge in the Gospel Age. In the beginning of the Kingdom, there will be a sudden supernatural manifestation on the Holy Remnant similar to what happened at Pentecost, when the apostles spoke in tongues. The Lord characteristically uses signs and types as a method of teaching.

After the apostles fell asleep in death, tongues died out for the most part because the Word of God became available. The written Word was compiled in the second century and all codified in the third century. Therefore, the need for tongues greatly decreased in the second century. As the Apostle Peter said of the recorded Word, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (2 Pet. 1:19). Tongues will utterly cease in time, for in the Kingdom Age, all will learn a new universal language. However, when the Kingdom is first set up, miraculous manifestations will take place, especially in Israel. “Sons and ... daughters shall prophesy,” almost like speaking in tongues (Acts 2:17).

In verse 8, Paul was emphasizing that tongues will not be needed after the Christian finishes his course. Tongues are only for the present life and will not be needed on the other side of the veil. The Harvest illustrates the principle. The *general* Harvest is over but not the entire Harvest, for a gleaning work is going on. We cannot go above the Word of God, which does not say that tongues had to cease at a specific year such as AD 212, for example.

**Q:** Is there any scriptural proof that Christians in our day will have the gift of tongues, being miraculously able to speak in another language to give a witness?

**A:** With regard to persecution down through the Gospel Age—for example, the Inquisition—Jesus said, “When they deliver you up [to prison], take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you [by the Holy Spirit] in that same hour what ye shall speak” (Matt. 10:19). Christians are to study and meditate on God’s Word during their normal life, but when they are imprisoned, they are not to premeditate what they will say but are to let God do the talking. At the end of the Gospel Age in the near future, in connection with the final witness, the *Lord* will speak *with power* out of the mouth of His people. For that reason, we do not want to say absolutely that tongues ceased in the second century, although from a practical, numerical, or obvious standpoint, they did cease there. God may give the feet members another language in order to have a strong witness at that time. Both in the Dark Ages and at

the end of the age, the Holy Spirit enables faithful Christians to speak with *power*, or “tongues.”

**Comment:** In the Kingdom, God will “turn to the people a pure language” (Zeph. 3:9).

**Reply:** The thought of the “pure language” is that all will know the Lord God, from the least unto the greatest (Jer. 31:34). Originally, all people spoke the same common language, but when the Tower of Babel was built several hundred years after the Flood, God sent a confusion of tongues on the people. That diversity of tongues in the days of Nimrod and Peleg was inherently divisive.

**Q:** What will the one universal language be in the Kingdom?

**A:** It will probably be similar to the language Adam spoke, which was akin to Hebrew or Aramaic. No doubt the language will be very beautiful.

“[Qualified] knowledge ... shall vanish away.” In the Kingdom, all will know God, and “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9). But what knowledge was Paul talking about to the Corinthians? It was the knowledge of what is only partly understood in the present life, as referred to in verses 9-12.

**Comment:** Examples of imperfect knowledge are the differences among brethren today in understanding the details of truth. Some think the image was smitten in 1914; some think the smiting is future. Some think Jesus has begun his reign; some think the reign over the world is future. Some think Satan is being bound; some think the binding is future. The imperfect knowledge in the present life will pass away when “that which is perfect is come” (verse 10).

Imperfect understanding of prophecy, imperfect speaking in tongues, and imperfect knowledge will pass away. Paul did not say *all* prophecies, knowledge, and tongues would fail, for certain prophecies will be fulfilled in the Kingdom Age, for example. Therefore, all of these statements are *qualified*. From the Biblical standpoint, that which is now uncertain and known only in part will be fully understood—the true interpretation will be known.

**1 Cor. 13:9** For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

**1 Cor. 13:10** But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Paul said “in part” with regard to both “knowing” and “prophesying” because not everything had been revealed. As an ecclesia, the Corinthians had only about half of the New Testament. Although the Old Testament had been fully written years earlier, it was not available to them as individuals except through the miraculous remembrance of the text by one of the brethren who had this gift. Therefore, the phrase “in part” applied to the current situation in the Corinthian church. Despite the miraculous gifts, they had only fragmentary information. Of course if they “knew” only in part, they could not prophesy more than “in part.”

“When that which is perfect is come [when the Bible is available in written form], then that which is [now known only] in part shall be done away.” And until the Corinthians had the Bible in a language they could understand, the gift of prophesying in tongues would continue to be available. In other words, there would be a gradual phasing out of the miraculous mechanical gifts as teachers and expounders were able to instruct the Church through the written Word.

**Q:** Will the Bible always exist?

**A:** It will probably always exist as a witness. The Mosaic Law was inscribed on two witness-tables, representing the Old and New Testaments (Exod. 31:18; 34:29). In principle, that Law of God will be exercised forever.

The New Covenant will go into effect at the time of the establishment of the Kingdom, when Christ is reigning, but the implementing of that covenant will be a *process* with Jesus as a Mediator between two estranged parties. The purpose of the New Covenant is to bring the two estranged parties—the world of mankind and God—into perfect harmony and alignment, a work that will require the entire Kingdom Age. When that age ends and all enemies have been brought under Jesus' feet, God will be all in all, the New Covenant having been fulfilled. The human race will live on into the ages of ages being everlastingly “at one” with God. Paul reasoned that if God speaks about the Law Covenant of the past under Moses and is going to make a New Covenant, then the (Old) Law Covenant is aging and will cease, but the New (Law) Covenant will be forever.

**1 Cor. 13:11** When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

When Paul was literally a child, he spoke, understood, and thought as a child, so he now used natural logic to say that the same principle applies in the spirit realm. Spiritually speaking, Paul was a child when first converted. All Christians start as babies and then grow and mature to whatever their final age and status are at the time of death. Paul used a practical illustration to demonstrate what happens with new creatures. They are begotten, are born as an infant, grow to adolescence, and develop (hopefully) to maturity as one of the Little Flock. (Of course other Scriptures show Spirit begetting occupying the whole present life and birth occurring beyond the veil.) Incidentally, the gospel was miraculously imparted to Paul in a short span of time.

**Comment:** The King James margin has “I reasoned as a child” instead of “I thought as a child.”

**Reply:** Yes, a child does not reason deeply.

**Comment:** Verse 11 teaches that the Christian should not stay very long on the milk as a babe but should grow into manhood.

**Reply:** We are to desire the sincere milk of the Word so that we may “*grow thereby*” (1 Pet. 2:2).

When did Paul put away childish things, and what were those childish things? Speaking in tongues was childlike compared to prophecy. However, Paul did not mean that tongues were of no value but was saying that other things became more important to him. A child's teething ring and rattle serve a purpose for that state of development, and they are equally beneficial to another child. In other words, they have a value in their place.

As a child, Paul thought and acted on a child's level, but as he matured, he went from milk to meat. A baby tends to choke on meat and thus needs the milk of the Word, although under certain circumstances, it is necessary to give meat even to a babe. Many confuse milk (such as the doctrine of restitution) with meat, whereas in reality, the drinking and the exercise with regard to milk should help one go on to the next category. The majority of Christians continue to drink milk from the bottle and never mature. Stated another way, the Great Company far outnumber and predominate over the Little Flock. The Great Company are not developed from either a doctrinal or a character standpoint. Paul said, “Therefore leaving [behind] the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection [maturity]; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1,2). The milk doctrines should not be discarded, but the Christian should go on to



further development.

**Q:** Were the gifts of tongues, prophecy, etc., childishness compared to the spirit of love?

**A:** Yes. Faith, hope, and love are considered more mature, for they are *fruits*. Because they are *cultivated*, they are to be more desired than *mechanical* gifts. When Paul ended chapter 12, he said, “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” Since all cannot be apostles or prophets or teachers, he was saying that each Christian should covet the highest and the best gift it is possible for him to have. Back there in Paul’s day, gifts such as healing and tongues were given mechanically and instantaneously, but we are to desire to develop the *spiritual counterpart*. For example, present-day “knowledge” is familiarity with and interpretation of Scripture. Some of the gifts are still available today and are still practiced—but with different garments. However, the fruits of the Spirit are available to all. Every Christian can get the “more excellent way”—faith, hope, and love. The gifts are “childish,” whereas the fruits of faith, hope, and love are most to be desired.

**1 Cor. 13:12** For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly [obscurely].” We see through translucent (not clear) glass, as it were. Through such glass, we can see form but not detail.

**Comment:** A footnote in the *Diaglott* states, “The [Greek word] *esoptrou* is to be understood as some of those transparent substances, which the ancients, in the then imperfect state of the arts, used in their windows; such as, thin plates of horn, transparent stone, ill-prepared glass, and such like; through which they saw, indeed, the objects without, but obscurely.”

**Reply:** Years ago many windows were of isinglass, which discolored and crumbled with age. The *Diaglott* explanation fits the context of the lesson. In Paul’s day, glass was not manufactured as it is today, and all sorts of materials used for windows lacked transparency. The “glass” of verse 12 was not a reflective mirror, for it was *seen through* obscurely.

How interesting that the Word of God is likened to glass! Sometimes we see through the Scriptures as through a microscope or a telescope. At other times, the Scriptures are like a mirror that reflects. Thus God’s Word has a dual function. (1) It is a glass through which the Christian can see, to a reasonable extent, that which is necessary. (2) It has a reflective quality for the Christian to inspect his own life and see whether he is living in conformity to the Word. In the reflective sense, two images are in the Word: (1) Christ and his life, and (2) the individual himself and how he is living up to the image of Christ. The quality of seeing through the “glass,” the Holy Word, as well as its reflective quality, persists to the present day.

Before the four Gospels were available, Jesus’ earthly ministry could not be seen with any completeness, nor could the parables, etc., be understood. Thus “in part” is developmental both in the way the Scriptures became available and in the sense that they became understandable. The Bible has become understandable not only in a *progressive* sense but also in a *progressive dispensational* sense. With the passage of time down through the Gospel Age, hindsight becomes clearer and clearer, especially as the end of the age draws near. Thus the knowing and the prophesying “in part” are true on this side of the veil.

“Now I know in part [with regard to the Word of God].” If the Apostle Paul knew only “in part” with all of his visions, education, and knowledge, where does that put us? He was even “caught up to the third heaven,” the Kingdom Age (2 Cor. 12:2). The first “heaven” was the age before the Flood, the second “heaven” is the present evil world, and the third “heaven” is the next age, which leads into an age without end.

**Comment:** If Paul, who was vastly superior to any Christian then or now, saw only “in part,” then no one should claim that we have all the truth we need through the seventh messenger.

**Reply:** Such a claim is inappropriate.

Paul was speaking low-key when he said he knew “in part.” Although it is true that he knew only in part, his level of understanding was far, far superior to ours. Therefore, he was speaking to the ordinary Christian. Whether we realize it or not, all of us read the Bible through “glass”; that is, the imperfect lens through which we study the true, pure, and perfect Word of God is our own prejudices and limited understanding. We use the Word as both a telescope and a microscope.

**Comment:** “But then [in the future, we will see] face to face.” At that time, the obstruction will be removed, and we will be able to see clearly and perfectly.

“But then shall I know even as also I am known [and recognized by God now].” We know we are new creatures when we have certain evidences, but these evidences do not indicate where we stand with God, that is, if we will ultimately be of the Little Flock, the Great Company, or not get life at all. Not until we go beyond the veil will we know with certainty where we actually stand in God’s grace. In the present life, many think, speak, and act as if they are members of the Little Flock, but when raised from death, they may be in the Great Company. Then they will know in full, even as they were known previously by God. Probably most of the Little Flock will be delighted and surprised to find they have made their calling and election sure.

In verse 12, Paul brought knowledge down to the nitty-gritty of *self* and was not just speaking of prophetic knowledge. In the present life, Christians either overestimate or underestimate themselves, but in the future, on the other side of the veil, knowledge of *self* will be fully understood.

**1 Cor. 13:13** And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Verse 13 is a well-known verse. Faith, hope, and love all abide now, but love alone will never cease. Earlier verses showed that prophecy, tongues, knowledge, etc., will cease, but even with faith, hope, and love, all will cease except love. Faith will be supplanted by sight (reality), and hope will pass away when fulfillment comes—but love is everlasting and can always be developed further.

**Comment:** Those who get spirit life in either the Little Flock or the Great Company will have an ever increasing appreciation for the Heavenly Father and Jesus.

**Reply:** In the present life, we know about God, His character, and His principles only as they are revealed in His Word. For those who are faithful to really know God will take an eternity because His greatness can never be fully apprehended. There will always be room for improvement.

Of the three qualities we most value now, even faith and hope will cease. Faith will be replaced by sight, and hope by the fruition of our desires. Love will continue to grow beyond the veil, for then those who are faithful will see Jesus and learn more about God and love them even more. The objective of love is a *lifetime* study. Whether that love is attained can be seen only in God’s final analysis and His approval or disapproval of each individual Christian. Generally speaking, the concept of love that most of us have is superficial.

People will still need faith in the Kingdom Age in the sense of having trust in God, His character, His memory, and His interest in them as individuals. In the Gospel Age, that type of faith and hope will cease when that which is perfect comes, for then it will be known who are the more-than-overcomers, who are the overcomers, and who failed to get life. In the next age, there will be faith, but sight will take a more leading role, somewhat like in the Jewish Age. When men prophesied mechanically back there, the people could determine the true prophets from the false prophets by whether what was predicted came to pass. The mechanical operation of the Holy Spirit put the Ancient Worthies, the prophets of the Old Testament, on a par with the apostles. The words of both were truth. In contrast, Christians in the Gospel Age have to *reason*, for they do not have the same capability.

Romans 8:24 shows that hope will cease as far as the Christian in the Gospel Age is concerned. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” In the Kingdom Age, the people will have a different kind of hope.

**Q:** With regard to the ceasing of gifts with the death of the apostles, would a mechanical gift ever be given subsequently on an individual basis in a special circumstance?

**A:** Yes, for Paul was speaking of the ceasing of gifts in broad-brush terms.

In summary, fruits are more mature than mechanical gifts, for they are cultivated and developed over time by the Holy Spirit. Today there are counterparts to the mechanical gifts that were imparted in the early Church. The gifts in the early Church were more rudimentary and obvious because they were suddenly and mechanically received. However, by observing the brethren today, we should be able to recognize counterpart developments. And we can *all* develop the *fruits* of faith, hope, and love through the instruction of the Holy Spirit and obedience. The “more excellent way” is available to all Christians (1 Cor. 12:31).

This “charity” is *God’s love, Godlikeness and Christlikeness* in character, in a mature sense. The ideal is for each of us to grow up according to our ability. The more inherent talents a person has, the more he is expected and required to develop. The details of love in this chapter—suffering long, being kind, not vaunting itself, not being puffed up, not being easily provoked, thinking no evil, etc.—are the positive and beneficial qualities that are pleasant to observe. And of course it is more enjoyable to be in the company of those who have this fruitage of the Holy Spirit. Although Paul’s definition of love is by no means a complete description, it was a complete description of the love that the Corinthians needed because their sectarian and argumentative spirit of choosing sides was bringing contention and breaking up the ecclesia. They were especially in need of advice on the quality of love because the pendulum was in the critical position. They were finding fault by saying, “*I am of Christ,*” “*I am of Paul,*” etc. Thus Paul gave advice to counteract the particular situation in Corinth, but if everything had been lovey-dovey in the class, if the brethren had been embracing one another on all issues, then he would have given the other side of love, namely, that which the Christian should hate. In other words, God loves those who have a similar attitude of hatred toward the things He hates. It was said of Jesus, “[Because] Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb. 1:9). The nearest chapter 13 comes to this quality is the softer explanation in verse 6—love does not rejoice in iniquity or evil but rejoices in the truth.

**1 Cor. 14:1** Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Some feel that this verse, which is like a summation, belongs at the end of chapter 13. “Follow after [pursue] charity.” Paul was saying, “The Christian’s main objective, the primary goal, is to attain Godlike love, but now we will discuss a secondary aim, which pertains to spiritual gifts. Since speaking in tongues is the least important gift, it would be better to seek a higher spiritual

gift. The ability to interpret is a step above the mechanical ability to speak in an unknown tongue. If we are pursuing after love, every rung of that ladder toward its attainment is a step of advancement.” Paul was suggesting that the ability to prophesy, or interpret the Word of God, was far more important than the ability to say something in an unknown tongue.

In stating, “*Follow after charity,*” Paul did not expect the Corinthians to have the quality of love at the start of the race, but he did expect them to pursue it as a main objective. They were to “follow after” the instructions that God has given in Scripture with regard to what love is. And that is the advice for us too. We should follow the instructions to that destination because without love, we would sound like a “tinkling cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). Love is the object, the goal, we should strive for in building character. Love is to be *developed*—it is not an instant gift. We are to attain it to the extent of our capability as soon as possible and then stand (Phil. 3:14).

In the previous chapter, Paul gave a definition of love with various characteristics, but we should not think that all we have to do is practice them—long-suffering, patience, kindness, etc.—for the attainment of Godlike love. If attaining love were that easy, the rest of the Word of God would be unnecessary. Having the characteristics, or symptoms, merely shows progress, for the attainment of perfect love is a lifelong study. Not only is love progressive, but it is something *internal*; it is not just externally applied. In studying about love in the Bible, we must make sure that we understand *God’s* concept and that we do not hold onto prejudices and our own misconceptions. The attainment of perfect love requires *obedience*, and God’s Word tells what to do under various circumstances. We learn God’s love by obedience. Jesus said, “If ye love me, [you will] keep [obey] my commandments.... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:15,23). “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, [even] as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The Apostle John said, “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6).

Some who have written beautiful articles on love have included false statements. The following are from one particular article.

1. “Love takes the complexity out of life and reduces duty to one simple primal element of love: to love God and our fellow men. Everything else will take care of itself.” These sentiments sound very good, but they are not enough. We must *learn* to love; we must *grow* in our concept of love.
2. “A person may be very deficient in the knowledge of God’s Word, possessing only so much as is required to make one a Christian, and yet be the possessor of this grace of graces.” This statement is wrong.
3. “Hereby if we have love one to another, we know that we have passed from death to life, and so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” This thought is in God’s Word, but it is wrong to assume that we automatically know what it is to love one another. We must *study* the Word to learn *God’s* definition of love.
4. “Love expresses tenderness or goodness of nature, benevolence. It is gracious, affectionate. Its expressions are gentle. Its *whole* bearing is cordial. Love is *always* good-mannered. Love does not act rudely or discourteously.” The article gives no exceptions. Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and spoke angrily on several occasions. Are God and Jesus always good-tempered? No.
5. The article continues with regard to the statement in the King James Version that love “is not easily provoked” (1 Cor. 13:5). “The word ‘easily’ is not found in the original manuscript. Love is never provoked. It never fails in anything. Had Christ even once failed in manifesting

any of the characteristics of love, had he lost himself and become sinfully angry, had he been incited to rage, he would never have been the Savior or the Deliverer.” These statements have to be modified. Strong, wrong, and dangerous statements are buried in the midst of a smooth-flowing, smooth-sounding article. The reader or hearer must be wary of words like “always” and “never.” One needs to analyze the *substance* of what is being uttered or written, not the spirit or the manner of presentation.

6. “Never, for one moment, in the contest against sin and evil or in his [Jesus’] contact with the most wicked people did he ever display sinful anger or wrath in the shame and the spitting [at the time of the Crucifixion].” When the time came for Jesus to die, he was meek and quiet like a lamb, but he was not meek and quiet during the preceding 3 1/2 years of his ministry. When he knew it was time for him to be crucified, he did not try to defend himself, but earlier he spoke strongly to the scribes and Pharisees and did not allow himself to be walked on like a rug. Otherwise, we would not know the gospel.

7. “The most delicate and sacred of love’s ministry is to the *erring*, and only one who has a very loving heart can deal with the sins of others. Harshness never helps them, censoriousness never heals them, a spirit of judging never uplifts them; but ‘ye which are spiritual, restore such a one that is overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness.’” The Bible does say we should have a spirit of meekness when giving advice, for we are to realize that our character is on the block, as well as that of the erring party, and that if we issue a warning or a condemnation, it will be slanted back to us. However, that realization does not mean we do not give a warning.

In the article containing these false statements, there is not one word about rebuking, warning, or admonishing. The article is 30 pages long, but it gives only *one* side of the coin. As Christians cultivating love, we should recognize the propriety of kindness, gentleness, etc., but love has other facets as well. In their epistles, the apostles Paul and John both spoke strongly about love, expounding the underlying principles of God’s Word and giving advice.

If this article containing false statements on love were delivered in a soft voice as a discourse, probably almost everyone hearing it would rejoice, but some of the thoughts are dangerous. We must not be of the class whose ears are “tickled” because they want to hear smooth things. If we once get the point, we will know how to analyze what we hear and read. Many do not stop to think because they are impressed with certain phrases that are scriptural, but very damaging thoughts may be sandwiched in. Since God is love, a mature Christian possesses Godlike love. Incidentally, when the word “love” is used prolifically in verbal expressions as a panacea—as an ointment, or salve—its meaning is minimized.

Paul added, “Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” Spiritual gifts were to be earnestly desired, but it was better to advance a step higher and prophesy, for that gift imparted understanding. The word “prophesy” is sometimes defined as “to expound publicly,” that is, to explain in understandable language that which is written. This ability was a very desirable gift, for otherwise the speaking was a “mystery.”

A lesson for us is to seek the environment where we can receive instruction. Reading or memorizing Scripture is one level, but *understanding* is more important, for how can we grow in the love God desires us to have unless we understand what His Word says on the subject? We need to be in an environment that will lift us up to higher understanding.

**1 Cor. 14:2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.**

One who had an unknown tongue spoke not to others but only to God; that is, the gift was between God and him. In those days, strangely, the one who spoke in tongues understood the

tongue himself. Thus he knew he was communing with God in that mechanical relationship, but of what value was the tongue if he could not transmit the understanding to anyone else? Feeling he was an instrument of God, the individual spoke to himself.

The basic lesson was that if the tongue did not make sense to others, the individual was to keep quiet. If no one understood what he was saying, he should stop talking—and that was true whether the language was a gift or one's own language. The question to be asked was, Does the language/tongue benefit others? The subject of tongues has multiple nuances, of which we are covering only a few in these studies.

**Comment:** There were different types of tongues. If no one in the class could interpret the tongue, then the individual himself was to pray for the gift of interpretation. That way the message would not go on deaf ears.

Bible studies were conducted according to the language of the locality where they occurred. If the study was in Israel, the language was Hebrew. In Asia Minor, the language was Greek. Both Greek and Latin were spoken in Italy. In addition to the three languages, there were many hard-to-understand dialects. However, the majority attending a study knew the language being spoken. For those brethren who did not know the language, the study had to be translated into their tongue(s).

**Comment:** Verse 2 is not speaking about an incomprehensible language.

**Reply:** That is correct. The tongue was designed to be a blessing, but the only way it could benefit others was if the words being spoken were understood.

“Howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” The person with an “unknown tongue” spoke in “mysteries” because no one understood him. The individual understood himself, but his words were a mystery to others.

Whether the person spoke in his native tongue or in a supernatural tongue, God understood it. Speaking “unto God” was speaking in His presence. Paul was saying, “When you say anything, think twice because God is listening to you. If you teach error, there will be a penalty in one way or another.” An example of speaking “unto God” was in prayer.

Generally speaking, those who could miraculously and mechanically speak in a foreign tongue could measurably understand what they were speaking but not the congregation, or at least not all of the congregation. But if the tongue were interpreted and explained in the language that most of those attending could understand, it was beneficial. Suppose an individual who got up and spoke in an unknown tongue understood what he was saying, but no one else in the ecclesia, or perhaps only one other person, understood. To have that gift and what it would lead to was wonderful. However, if only a few in the ecclesia could understand the tongue, it was necessary for the words to be translated again so that all could understand. The party who had the gift of the tongue would be looking for an audience that would understand the tongue he had received as a gift. His search would lead him in an evangelical path of going out to witness to some who could understand, and he would try to bring them into the truth. Thus there were various reasons why the Lord used this method in the early Church.

Through the Holy Spirit, the individual who could speak in tongues understood what he was saying, but he spoke “mysteries” to those who could not understand. The Adversary has cleverly granted a counterfeit of this ability to speak in tongues where the individual himself *does not understand* what he is saying, and sometimes he unknowingly *mistranslates* the Word of God. From the standpoint of the fallen angels, the individual makes a fool of himself and actually brings a curse on the Christian religion. If people with these counterfeit tongues knew

what they were saying, they would never utter such words.

Paul was giving advice to the Corinthians. Those brethren who had the gift of speaking in tongues were to desire understanding as the second part of that gift. When they got the understanding, they had a truly wonderful gift that was beneficial to others. However, if some today are not living up to Christian standards and do not understand the tongue they are speaking, the Adversary could be using them as a tool. Consider what Satan has done to the nominal Church. Roman Catholic priests are garbed in black, generally speaking, whereas the priests in the Tabernacle arrangement wore white. The Adversary likes darkness and hates the light, for darkness makes his supremacy secure. Not only does Satan have no rivals, but he is far above the other demons because he was originally created as an angel of light, an archangel, in heaven. Now he is the *false* light in earth's atmosphere. Error subtly entered the Church, and one by one, all the props of true Christianity were knocked aside. What remained was a *false* Church. The true Church can only be understood with the Word itself.

Many who speak in tongues today do not know what they are saying. Paul clearly stated that those who spoke in tongues in his day understood the language, and the tongue was known between the individual and God. Of course God understands all languages and dialects and has no trouble interpreting. The individual knew what he was saying but could not transmit it to others without the additional gift of interpretation. Some have a lot of knowledge but cannot convey it to others. The capability of interpretation is also a God-given gift, and Paul said to pray for it. Being able to interpret and explain was another step in advancing toward love.

**1 Cor. 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.**

Gospel Age “prophets” are outstanding individuals because of their teaching ability. In Paul’s day, one could be a prophet in two senses: (1) as a public expounder of truth and (2) as a foreteller of future events. “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men [not only in the Church but also of the public] to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” Those of the early Church were instructed to go out and make disciples; that was their objective.

Verse 3 gives a logical sequence. “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification”; that is, he has the capability of communication, of clarifying the message. If others know what is being said, they are edified. Next comes “exhortation,” which is emphasizing certain points or giving a proper perspective or balance. For example, if we could not understand a difficult passage of Scripture, the one who “prophesieth” would first explain what was being said. Then he would point out the emphasis in that statement and tell why the statement was made. “Comfort” is the fruitage or benefaction received by others from the edification and the exhortation. The comfort may not be according to the flesh. In fact, it may be hard for the flesh, but the new creature would be helped and blessed. To recap, first comes the understanding of the message, then the proper emphasis of that message, and finally the benefaction and blessing to the new creature. The natural sequence is (1) clarification of the message, (2) giving the message a properly balanced emphasis, and (3) fruitage from the message.

The one who prophesies has to go through the three processes himself before he can be a blessing to others. For example, Paul said he would like to give others the scriptural comfort wherewith he himself had previously been comforted by God and His Spirit. Spiritually speaking, “comforting” words are truthful and scriptural; they are not necessarily smooth talk that soothes the flesh. Therefore, we should be sure any comfort we give is *godly* edification.

**Q:** What should be our attitude toward those who speak in tongues today?

**A:** The ones who speak incorrectly in tongues usually do not know what they are saying. What

they think is glorifying God may actually be curses in a foreign tongue they do not understand. If one starts to speak in a tongue, we should stop the individual right away and ask bluntly, “Just exactly what are you saying?” If the person cannot translate, the tongue would surely not be from God. However, if the tongue were translated into English, at least the hearers could judge the words. There is probably an occult influence in 99 percent of the cases today. Since that which is without understanding is dangerous, we should not say “Amen” unless we both understand and agree.

**Comment:** The gift of tongues was commonly given in the early Church as an evidence that an individual’s consecration had been accepted. However, prophecy, a higher and less common gift, really fed the Church, for then a lesson was obtained by all.

**Reply:** The gift of tongues was glorified way out of proportion. Paul was saying that the gifts had a value, but that value was nothing compared to *understanding* God’s Word.

Three thousand Jews were gathered following the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. When they heard uneducated fishermen miraculously speak in multiple languages, they realized the tongues were supernatural and holy, for they made sense. The Jews were quickly converted, and they went away edified.

**1 Cor. 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.**

“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.” However, he could not edify others, that is, the Church. To be able to speak in an unknown tongue *and interpret* put one on the level of prophecy. One who prophesied (or taught) did so in the mother tongue, the *known* tongue, not the unknown tongue. If one who spoke in an unknown tongue could also interpret, then he was up to the level of prophesying. Thus the explaining of a known tongue and the explaining of an unknown tongue were more or less the same in that the whole ecclesia could judge as to credibility and edification.

The primary reason to be able to both speak in a tongue and prophecy was to edify the Church. The secondary value was to be able to go out and publicly expound to those who were in unbelief. Paul was trying to get the brethren in the class not to war against each other, not to be factional, not to show off with their gifts, and not to boast of which leader they followed. In other words, his main purpose was to unify the brethren and to create a good atmosphere for Christian development and growth of the fruitage of the Spirit, let alone for the benefits that would accrue to others through such a ministry.

**1 Cor. 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.**

Paul did not criticize the possession of tongues in his day. In fact, he said, “I would to God that all had this personal, private experience in understanding,” but he wanted the brethren to go further and interpret and be a blessing to others. “Greater is he that prophesieth” was his thought. Evidently, unknown tongues were the most common mechanical gift back there, but they were also a lower gift. However, if one could interpret as well as speak in an unknown tongue, that was a higher step, more or less equivalent to prophecy.

Paul gave a gradation of value, showing that prophecy is more important than speaking in tongues. But if one could speak in a tongue and also interpret it, he was prophesying, that is, teaching. Thus Paul showed the value of interpretation. Prophecy and interpretation are similar, both being the ability to teach—to understand and to let others understand too.



Paul tried to show that God had not given everyone a tongue, anymore than the human body consists of all tongues. God distributed the gifts, and the variety edified the congregation. The purpose of the gifts was to *edify the Church with understanding*.

Why did Paul say, “I would that ye all spake with tongues”? If all of the Corinthians spoke in tongues, they would not be examining one another with such statements as “I can speak in tongues, but you cannot.” The Corinthians might even have prayed that their wife or friend would get this gift, but receiving a gift was *God’s* doing. Paul hoped they could all speak in tongues so that envy and jealousy would not be prevalent in their midst. When an individual consecrated, he got one of the gifts but not necessarily the gift of tongues. However, the brethren misunderstood because more people got tongues than any of the other gifts.

**Q:** The majority received the gift of tongues, yet Paul usually put that gift at the bottom of the list. Was the problem that since the majority had gotten the gift of tongues, they looked on the minority as either questionable or inferior?

**A:** Yes, that was the situation. When many brethren were in a class, the majority got the bottom gift.

**Q:** Did sisters also get gifts or just the brothers?

**A:** Sisters also received gifts, but since a woman is not to teach in the Church, their gifts were not as pronounced. For instance, a woman could speak with a tongue but in a way that was suitable to her position. Women could expound publicly to the unconsecrated, but the parameters were more restricted with the consecrated.

**1 Cor. 14:6** Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

“Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you?” If, say, another person had all of the gifts that Paul had, the temptation would be to show off how many tongues he could speak. To the contrary, Paul’s purpose was to edify, build up, and be constructive to the brethren. He did not use his talents to call attention to himself, for he called attention to *the Word* and its meaning and instruction.

When the brethren came together in a holy environment and atmosphere, they expected that those who had the gift of tongues would be spontaneously moved by the Holy Spirit to speak, much like the prophets in the Old Testament. Of course there were gradations in the gift of tongues. For instance, some spoke with better elocution. However, all of the talking was profitless if it was not understood.

Paul wanted to come to the Corinthians to expound further, for they needed more than a mechanical knowledge. When he came, he would adopt not just tongues but a combination of various other qualities. He would use his capabilities in a rounded-out manner for their *instruction*.

Paul was addressing the brethren, not the public, and to be profitable to them, he would speak by four methods: revelation, knowledge, prophesying, and doctrine. We will consider each method separately in ascending order of development or importance.

1. **Revelation.** Usually “revelation” is the uncovering of a topic of Scripture that is not understood—the uncovering of a mystery or an enigma. For example, when a topic is being

discussed in an ecclesia and someone quotes a very appropriate, right-to-the-point Scripture, a “thus saith the LORD,” that statement is an uncovering, or a revelation, with certainty.

2. Knowledge. A person who has previously studied a particular topic and is personally satisfied and blessed with an understanding can provide an edifying explanation when the subject comes up in a meeting. Having considerable familiarity with Scripture, he is beneficial to the brethren by casting additional light. His explanation has instructional value to the hearers. Therefore, “knowledge” is not necessarily the uncovering of a mystery but is an explanation that provides a depth of understanding of something which might be relatively familiar. For example, Scriptures may be quoted to buttress what is presently being studied, and the individual’s accumulated knowledge is of great value. Thus “knowledge” provides the class with greater depth or fullness of understanding on a particular topic or Scripture they had previously considered.

3. Prophesying. One aspect of prophesying is foretelling future or current events as a seer. Another aspect is the ability to speak or utter *publicly* for the edification of others. Some have the ability to teach in a more private fashion, and others can teach publicly, that is, in a larger capacity. In Paul’s day, speaking publicly, or prophesying, required a strong, powerful, distinct voice in order to be heard by a multitude. The one who taught privately might have had just as much knowledge, but he was not suited for public speaking because of his voice. Thus “prophesying” was the next step of usefulness because it extended the range of blessing beyond revelation and knowledge to a small group. Whether considered from the standpoint of future events, the meaning of current events, or speaking publicly, prophesying is more important in its outreach than either revelation or knowledge. Prophesying is more like a discourse or a continuation of thoughts along the lines of teaching, instruction, and the ability to provide coherent understanding.

4. Doctrine. One who teaches doctrine not only gets his point across but also knows the difference between truth and error. He may have the capability to explain, but he must also be able to detect and reject error, untruth, sophistry, and teachings of the Adversary. Satan often uses coordinated truths to teach error. Therefore, teaching truth is based on *many* Scriptures dealing with a particular point of doctrine. The one with this capability is more pastoral in his influence. He knows the dangers of spending too much time investigating certain lines of thinking. This highest capability is geared for the brotherhood; it is the very marrow of Christian teaching. Those who have this ability to teach *sound* doctrine are a marvelous blessing. They are elders in a higher sense because they give food directly to the elect (rather than to the public).

Revelation is usually thought of as dispensational and as having current value, whereas doctrine is *age-lasting*. For example, the doctrine of the gospel, the teaching of Jesus Christ, has been the same throughout the entire history of the Church. Therefore, doctrine has practical, lasting value that gives strength, encourages, and builds character.

Of course the seven messengers to the Church were even higher. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, they were specially raised up to be “prophets,” that is, not just public speakers but speakers whose message was *international* in influence. Teaching doctrine in this manner includes prophesying but elevates both to a new level that only a certain few individuals have been privileged to do during the Gospel Age. 1 Corinthians 12:28 gives the proper order of importance: apostles, prophets, and teachers.

**1 Cor. 14:7** And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

**1 Cor. 14:8** For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the

**battle?**

Now Paul switched from abilities possessed by humans who, through speech, edified the Church to inanimate objects. He used easy-to-understand illustrations. “Things without life” are inanimate things, such as musical instruments. If a child were to give a blast on a horn, the sound would be meaningless—just a loud noise or mechanical sound without language or content. But if that same musical instrument were to play a meaningful tune, it would convey a message and thus be useful. What is the analogy? When other Christians did not understand the message of an unknown tongue because it was not interpreted, that tongue was just as meaningless as the “uncertain sound” of a musical instrument that had no life. Therefore, Christians were to desire to be a blessing to others.

When a sound is given, that sound must be certain and distinct. Just as a hymn played correctly is more effective than a hymn played with wrong notes, so a Biblical message, utterance, or expression loses much of its effectiveness if it is uncertain because of the immaturity and/or the incapability of the person delivering it.

If a person who is playing a musical instrument hits a few false notes, we may recognize the song, but the person is not adept. The message loses a lot of its effectiveness because of the uncertainty, immaturity, and incapability of the utterance or expression. Therefore, *knowledge* is important—not merely in the sense of giving a message but also in making the message sharp, distinct, and definite. In short, the message then has value for either good or evil. Some are capable in truth, and some are capable in error. One’s effectiveness for good or evil is based not only on the distinction of the sound but also on the definiteness, or certainty, of the sound. As Christians, we want a “thus saith the LORD” for our certainty. A message given with proper scriptural certainty is greatly to be desired.

The “trumpet” refers to the individual speaking through the Word. In the type, the priests blew two silver trumpets, which represent the Old and New Testaments. In other words, the individual should speak in harmony with the teaching of Scripture. Just as a trumpet should speak with certainty, so the individual should speak with a “thus saith the LORD.”

Paul’s main argument seems to be that even if there is a sound, unless it is a meaningful message, of what value is the sound? Something constructive has to come from either the harp or the pipe, the illustration being the importance of a trumpet in warfare to direct the course of a battle. The sound of the trumpet can be vital, for it has an organizing and a timing influence.

A flute is a pipe with various holes, and it makes sound when blown. Even things without life that give sound are confusing unless one is skilled in playing the instrument. By placing fingers on the holes, the flutist can make a melody, mournful or cheerful. The flute is much like the other gifts. Some are given to exhortation, some are evangelists, some are public expounders, etc., but each has a separate melody or theme. Just as with animate beings who by voice help the ecclesia, so musical instruments, which are inanimate but are capable of making a sound, create a mood if they are played correctly. The singing of psalms and hymns edifies the ecclesia. In very few words, Paul gave a deep explanation of the wonderful gifts and/or fruits of the Holy Spirit. They greatly benefit those on the receiving end.

It does not matter whether the musical instrument is a pipe like a flute or a stringed instrument like a harp as long as it gives a distinct sound in the blowing or the plucking. But if there is no distinction of sound, “How shall it be known what is piped or harped?” Paul’s logic was irrefutable.

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” Paul continued to talk about an inanimate object capable of making sounds, but the scenario was

different with the trumpet—it was that of a battle. The Church fights a battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sometimes only the individual himself hears the trumpet saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” To be effective, the trumpet sound has to be given with authority. And other inanimate objects have a value as well: the printing press, tape recorder, telephone, etc.—all can be marvelous channels of blessing to others.

The Christian fights the good fight of faith, and sometimes the battle is within the Church itself. An example is a person who arises with capability but begins to teach strange doctrines. It would be the duty of an elder if one was present—or another brother or even a sister through the question method rather than through statements and explanations—to correct the situation. The Corinthians (and other ecclesias in the early Church) had difficulties with Jewish Christians, who felt that to believe in Christ was not effective unless the individual also obeyed the ordinances of the Law. For instance, they tried to make circumcision mandatory for salvation for the Christian, both Jew and Gentile. Individuals introduced doctrines that were not compatible with the teaching of the gospel of grace and faith in Jesus Christ. The matter had to be confronted and settled doctrinally in order for the Corinthians to grow in the faith.

**Comment:** Paul was still mainly talking about speaking in tongues. If someone spoke in a tongue that no one could understand, it was worthless.

**Reply:** Yes, that was the background theme. The Corinthians thought so highly of the gift of tongues that brethren began to measure themselves against others and be judgmental, yet the possession of tongues was like having a baby’s rattle. A baby will do anything to make a sound and attract attention, and if there is no rattle, he will scream. Unless there was an interpreter, the tongue was just noise and had no value except to the individual himself.

**1 Cor. 14:9** So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

Paul compared the blowing of a trumpet and the strumming of a harp to speaking in an unknown tongue. If the words do not make sense, they should not be spoken. Unless the words are “easy to be understood,” they are spoken “into the air.” It is sometimes said of people who speak without meaning, “Empty barrels make the loudest noises,” or “They are full of hot air.” Such people do a lot of talking, but the talking does not make sense and has about as much substance as wind.

**1 Cor. 14:10** There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

**1 Cor. 14:11** Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

If we go to a foreign land and do not understand the language, there is no communication with the inhabitants. The slogan “It is Greek to me” expresses the thought. In other words, the tongues all had meaning, but if the meaning was not understood by others, the tongues might as well be gibberish.

Both the instructor and the listener should be edified. The instructor is disquieted if he cannot get his point across, and the listener is frustrated if he cannot understand the message. There is dissatisfaction both ways. Paul was saying that the individual should pray for the ability to communicate. The term “barbarian” is not used here in a derogatory sense to say the person is not a Christian. Rather, the term refers to a lack of understanding. From one standpoint, the “barbarian” is the instructor who uses a tongue that is not interpreted. From another standpoint, the “barbarian” is the listener who cannot understand the tongue.

**1 Cor. 14:12** Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

“Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” The Christian is to seek and desire to edify the Church. Those who sincerely desire the office of an elder desire a good work, that is, as long as the desire is based on zeal and not on pride (1 Tim. 3:1). Brethren sometimes mistake one’s zeal for pride, but there is nothing wrong in desiring to be a blessing to others.

**Comment:** We should desire to build one another up in the most holy faith (Jude 20), and to do that, we must be able to communicate.

**Reply:** The desire for spiritual gifts is commendable, but the motive behind that desire is important. The motive should be to edify the Church, not just to make noise.

**1 Cor. 14:13** Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

Every consecrated person back in Paul’s day got at least one gift. If that gift was the ability to speak in a foreign language, the individual was to be zealous and to pray that he would also be able to interpret what he was speaking. It is commendable for the Christian to advance in understanding and truth with the purpose in mind of edifying others as well as self.

Unfortunately, many brethren, whether they realize it or not, are satisfied with the modicum of knowledge already attained. Today we would call that understanding “knowledge of the divine plan.” They neither desire nor see the need for anything deeper. However, Paul said that those who would be of the Little Flock must *progress* in knowledge (Heb. 6:1,2). If we try to develop to the extent of our capability, the Lord will reward that desire.

**Q:** Were speaking in an unknown tongue and being able to interpret that tongue the same as, or equivalent to, prophesying? In verse 5 of this chapter, Paul said, “I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.”

**A:** Not necessarily. For instance, someone might make a statement or quote a Scripture in Greek, and another would interpret, or translate, what was said into the language of those assembled. That translation was simply giving an understanding of the words, not teaching or explaining the meaning of those words. Prophesying was an analysis of what the text signified.

**1 Cor. 14:14** For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful [to others].” Those who could speak in tongues in the early Church knew what they were saying, but the ability to transmit the meaning to others was another matter. The purpose of the gift, the purpose of developing the fruit, was not only to enhance one’s own spirituality but also to benefit others. If a person prayed in the unknown tongue he had received as a gift, the words were acceptable to God as a prayer because the individual understood the foreign language he was using. And even if the words were a jumble, the Holy Spirit interpreted the groaning request (Rom. 8:26). In other words, a Christian undergoing a trial or temptation may bring the matter to the Lord with such anguish that he cannot intelligibly express his desire and need. However, the Holy Spirit understands the problem.

**Comment:** A principle extracted from verse 14 that would be applicable today is the following.

A Polish person, for example, should not be asked to pray before an English congregation that cannot understand the Polish language unless someone interprets the prayer.

**Reply:** Yes, that is a correct principle. If a prayer given in a foreign language is not interpreted, how can the hearers say “Amen”?

**Comment:** At first, verse 14 seems to contradict verse 4, which says that one who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies only himself, since he understands that tongue. Therefore, verse 14 should be understood as explained; namely, if one prays in an unknown tongue, his understanding is unfruitful *to others unless the tongue is interpreted*.

**Reply:** Yes. Others will not reap a benefit if the tongue is not interpreted. The brethren were to desire to prophesy or interpret so that the unknown tongue would edify the Church. In fact, Paul used the word “zealous” in verse 12—we should be zealous in the laudable goal of desiring to edify others.

**Comment:** Some try to use Romans 8:26 to justify speaking in tongues today, but that verse refers to a *private* prayer by one who is emotionally distraught. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Verse 14 clearly says that speaking in an unknown tongue, which the speaker himself understood, was “unfruitful” to others unless someone could interpret what had been said.

**Q:** A lot of charismatic churches teach that when one prays in an unknown tongue, his spirit is praying. Of course the word “unknown” was added by the translators, but charismatics claim that the spirit is taking over and that the same spirit will interpret the tongue to another person who has the gift of interpretation. How would we reply to that reasoning?

**A:** If a person prays in an unknown tongue as the spokesperson for the congregation and the prayer is not understood, it is of no value whatever, but if someone in the same setting explains what the individual is saying, the tongue has some value. The responsibility then rests on the interpreter, for if he falsifies what the prayer is saying, he receives the blame. Based on the interpretation, the congregation says “Amen” to what they see as an acceptable prayer.

Today many speak in unknown tongues, and no one knows what they are saying. Moreover, it has been explained in unusual circumstances by someone who did know the tongue that the individual was actually criticizing God and Jesus and even saying filthy things, but because the people hearing did not understand, they thought the utterance was a miraculous gift and said “Amen.” That which is miraculous and supernatural is not necessarily holy, yet the assumption today is that when spirit beings materialize, their superior nature makes them good. However, their coming out of nowhere to appear in visible form does not mean they are beneficial. We must use discrimination and understand what we endorse with an “Amen.”

**Comment:** Tongues were necessary in the early Church, but they are not necessary now because the written Word is available.

**Reply:** That is true, although under an unusual circumstance, something along this line could still happen, but to be authentic, the speaking would have to be in harmony with Scripture.

Much of the healing that goes on today is also false. Some preachers encourage people to attend or join their church in order to be physically healed. Another motivation is for social purposes—meeting other people, having a good time, and singing hymns. Our motivation bears scrutiny. We should examine ourselves and ask, “What am I looking for?” The proper motive is wanting to understand *God’s* will and praying for greater ability to *obey* so that we

will grow in understanding and spirituality.

**1 Cor. 14:15** What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

**1 Cor. 14:16** Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

**1 Cor. 14:17** For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Paul was commending *holy, praiseworthy* utterances to God in unknown tongues, but they *had to be interpreted*. While the apostles were alive, unholy utterances were not tolerated. The apostles were given a sixth sense, as it were, to know the culpability of individuals. They could see when one was a danger to the Church, and they pronounced it. Today people would also be able to see the danger *if* what was being said in tongues was explained.

“I will pray with the spirit, and ... with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and ... with the understanding also.” When a person sings, others need to understand the words. The singing has to make sense not only to the singer but also to the hearers. The same is true of praying and blessing. Otherwise, the hearers are not edified and cannot say “Amen.”

Paul’s point was, “While the one with the tongue may understand what he is saying, do others understand? If they cannot understand, they will not be able to say ‘Amen’ to the prayer.” The prayer was acceptable if the individual was communicating privately with God, but it was not acceptable as a public prayer.

When one was asked to pray on behalf of a group of brethren who were gathered together, how could they say “Amen” if the prayer was not understood? The prayer was valueless as far as the others were concerned. The implication of verse 16 is that we must be careful what we say “Amen” to, especially if the prayer is wrong. As a Christian matures, he has a little more reserve not only with regard to giving consent but also in matters such as wishing someone Godspeed who may not be the best emissary of truth or whose understanding may even be harmful to others. We must be careful whom we recommend. The Christian experience is lifelong. If faithful unto death, we will instruct others in the Kingdom Age and have great honor and privileges of bestowing help and understanding.

**1 Cor. 14:18** I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

**1 Cor. 14:19** Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

Paul thanked God that he spoke with more tongues than the others for several reasons. (1) The others could not glory in their own gift of tongues. (2) They could not think Paul was downgrading them when he said he would rather speak five words of understanding than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue that was not understood by others. (3) Paul’s advice became more meaningful and his perspective more credible.

Incidentally, the two epistles to the Corinthians give more insight into the Apostle Paul than any of his other epistles. How interesting to know that he spoke with more tongues than anyone else! He was very blessed.

Paul used this boasting in a *constructive* sense to show that he would rather speak five words of understanding than to show off all his tongues. To the contrary, some who could speak with

only one tongue were looking for the opportunity to show what they could do. However, if the tongue was of no benefit to others because it could not be understood, it was better to speak just a few words of common sense.

A principle is to not cast pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). This is frequently done unconsciously when some of the most sacred, intimate thoughts are revealed to strangers. Of course an unconsecrated person who is teachable and humble is a lot different from swine that turn and rend the one who feeds them. In other words, some use intimate understanding or knowledge to their own detriment. Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). We are to look for those we can converse with and witness to in a somewhat agreeable manner.

Paul's background theme was to belittle the importance of speaking in tongues lest that gift get out of hand and be used as a judgmental tool. Thus he would rather speak five words with understanding that would benefit others than 10,000 words of no benefit.

**1 Cor. 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.**

Paul was saying, "Be children in harboring evil thoughts and desires—for example, malice—but be mature in understanding." Malice is an ill feeling of injury or harm toward others. Earlier Paul told the Corinthians to keep "the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" and not with the leaven of malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8).

Paul's advice to "be not children in understanding" is pertinent today with regard to speaking in tongues, for those who are speaking may be cursing and blaspheming God and no one knows it. For tongues to be legitimate, they must be understood. Paul was also showing the need to progress further and to mature in understanding.

It is commendable not to be too developed in some things, but we should spend considerable time and energy to know other things. With regard to speaking in tongues, those in the early Church tended to glory in the mechanical aspect and not so much in the content of what they were saying. Paul advised, "Be desirous of saying something profitable and edifying to others. Do not be children in this matter. Rather, you should exercise mature judgment and be men."

**Comment:** Paul accused the Corinthians of being children in using tongues, and a characteristic of a child is to play excessively with a new toy.

**Reply:** Yes, the immature used tongues like a toy. Being impressed with the novelty, they gloried in the tongues instead of desiring to edify others.

The Christian is to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may *grow* thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). Growth is the motivation. As one grows, he prospers in the direction of maturity. Christians are to be children in malice and men (mature) in understanding.

**Q:** What is the meaning of Jesus' words in the following Scriptures? "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18). Were these two texts only for the 12 apostles?

**A:** That is primarily true. The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles is the foundation of the Church. However, in a secondary sense based on circumstance, binding and loosing can be done by a congregation of believers. For that reason, when a class votes on different matters in decision making, we should abide by the ruling, even if it is different from



our own understanding—if no principle is involved that would violate our conscience. It is possible that one brother could be in the right and the rest of the ecclesia in the wrong. Therefore, the Church has some influence, but it can be fallible depending on the spirituality of the membership. Each circumstance should be carefully scrutinized.

Jesus addressed Matthew 16:18,19 to the Apostle Peter. In regard to the “keys of the kingdom of heaven,” Peter was the first leading speaker to address the Jews on the Day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit came on the disciples, and he also spoke to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. The apostles loosed the binding of the Law on the Jew and in the council at Jerusalem recommended certain requirements that would be temporarily binding (Acts 15:1-29).

**1 Cor. 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.**

“With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people [the nation of Israel]” is a reference to Isaiah 28:11,12, “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.” The “law” in this context is a broad term that refers to the Old Testament, not to just the Pentateuch and the Law of Moses. God used prophets to speak to the people of Israel with admonitions, warnings, and instructions, but what the prophets said did not penetrate their hard hearts and thus had little or no effect.

Isaiah 28 mentions two principles of why God speaks in a “stammering” tongue. Paul referred to only the aspect that is profitable to the Church. Because God did not speak plainly in the Scriptures but used the method of line upon line, here a little and there a little, the undesirables are weeded out, whereas diligent and sincere Christians try to harmonize the Word. By even making the Word seem foolish in places, God provided opportunity for the worldly-wise to look for faults and flaws. The Scriptures become a stumbling block to such. Only the diligent and sincere are blessed with understanding and edification. The same method blesses this class and is a stumbling block to those who refuse to listen.

Paul applied the principle a little differently. “With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people [to Israel in the type and to the unlearned and unbelievers in the Gospel Age]; yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord [because of hard hearts, blindness, and a willing ignorance]” (2 Pet. 3:5). For those who will not repent and consecrate in this age, the truth can actually be damaging because understanding brings responsibility. Deep understanding is given to individuals who inquire, hunger, and seek.

The prophecy of Isaiah 28:11,12 was intentionally worded so that it can be interpreted in two ways. First, instruction is given to those who need to be warned because of sin, and for that reason, the Holy Spirit is not acceptable to certain people. Jesus said, “And when he [it, that is, the Holy Spirit] is come, he [the Holy Spirit] will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11). The bottom line is that the public in the future will have no excuse for not knowing God. All can observe nature, and the Bible is available in almost all languages. Therefore, when the human race comes forth from the grave in the Kingdom, no one will be able to say, “Why didn’t you tell me?” The people had neither the desire nor the hunger to know the Lord, but nevertheless, certain statements had to be made to the public in order to find the hearing ear. We pay more attention to those with a hearing ear because that is the principle on which information is given, but if we said nothing and kept everything to ourselves, we would not find the hearing ear.

Isaiah gave many prophecies to the Israelites, and what happened? How did he die? They

sawed him in half. That act shows how his ministry was received, yet he was a most outstanding prophet in that he told not only about trouble and judgments to come but also about some of the most beautiful promises of the Kingdom. The same exact message is like babble to the one class and has the opposite effect on those who are searching. Therefore, God used the principle that Isaiah's prophecies were mutterings, or stammerings, to those without a hearing ear and tidbits of valuable information to those with a hearing ear.

**Comment:** Paul stated the same principle, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16).

Before proceeding, we will take a moment to consider the context of the Isaiah Scripture. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isa. 28:9-13). Speaking as the mouthpiece of God, Isaiah gave much counsel to the Israelites during his ministry, but the nation did not view him as a true prophet and preferred instead to hear the false prophets. Thus their minds were locked as far as understanding what he said. They were not familiar with the line of reasoning God used through the mouth of Isaiah. However, to those who had a receptive mind, many of the prophet's statements were wonderful prophecies of Israel's restoration to favor after a coming period of judgment and punishment.

Isaiah stated that the Old Testament is recorded in scattered bits and pieces, with here a little and there a little, line upon line and precept upon precept. One has to wholeheartedly believe and be interested in God's counsel in order to put the bits and pieces together. Thus the stumbling block was the Israelites' unbelief in Isaiah as a true prophet. Consequently, they ignored his advice.

In referring to Isaiah's words, Paul said, "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord." Isaiah purposely spoke in plain Hebrew so that the Israelites could have understood if they had not had hearts of unbelief. Satan, the god of this world, has blinded people not only in the Jewish Age but also during the Gospel Age (2 Cor. 4:4). A prerequisite for understanding the Scriptures is a belief and faith in God. Paul's words remind us of Matthew 13:10,11. When the disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables, he replied, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." If others had had the right inclination of heart and mind, they would have understood what Jesus was saying, and they would have asked for a further explanation. The lack of following through and thirsting for understanding blocked their minds and hearts.

**1 Cor. 14:22** Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Paul continued the subject of speaking in tongues. The Moffatt translation reads, "Thus 'tongues' are intended as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; whereas prophesying is meant for believers, not for unbelievers."

**Comment:** Again prophesying was shown to be far above tongues in order of priority.

**Reply:** Paul was showing the importance of *prophesying*—of teaching, of giving understanding. Consider the principle Isaiah used. In addressing the Jews, he spoke in the Hebrew language. They all knew Hebrew and thus knew what he was saying, but only those with a hearing ear could understand his message. To those who did not want to hear, Hebrew became an unknown tongue because they closed their ears and hardened their hearts.

The Bible is, in effect, an unknown tongue because it is so little understood. In the future, the world will not be able to say, “No one ever told me,” because the Bible was there and they did not want to hear it. The Bible is a sign, a miracle. Of all the books, it contains the best history; it has science, biology, botany, and the creation of the world; it tells about the future and about the past. No other book is even remotely like the Bible. When we consider its magnitude, the hymn comes to mind: “The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell.” Even though the Bible is put on a shelf and remains there, it is speaking, for its very presence is telling that those in the house are unworthy of God’s grace. When those individuals come forth from the grave, they will have no right to criticize God. Many find fault with Him in their calamities, but it is difficult to rationalize or reason properly with those who are emotional.

If a stranger entered the room where brethren were meeting, they should not judge him as willingly ignorant, for God might be calling him. The hope would be that the unbeliever might become interested. Therefore, Paul was urging *discretion* with regard to the use of a tongue. For example, if a Greek came into the meeting, Hebrew should not be spoken to him. And even if the tongue of the stranger was used, the message should be explained in a way that he could understand it. If a stranger entered the room who was of a different nationality than the language being spoken at the time, the brethren had two choices. (1) What was being said could be switched into the language of the newcomer, or (2) the same language could continue to be used but then be interpreted for his benefit. In other words, if one spoke in a tongue but did not have the ability to interpret, another had to interpret for the benefit of the stranger coming in. The point was not to make the topic of discussion subservient to the public but to make it sufficiently understandable so that if the unbeliever had a hearing ear, he would be attracted to the truth. Nevertheless, the main thrust of the message was for the *believer*, not for the unbeliever.

The following scenario could have occurred in the early Church. A mixed group of brethren were meeting together but had no Bible. A certain topic was being considered, and someone quoted material pertinent to that topic in a particular tongue. Since not all who were present would understand that tongue, it was the duty of another brother or sister to interpret what had just been said if the individual himself could not do so. The most desirable situation was that the speaker could both speak in a tongue and interpret the message. Then there would be no need for a second party to interpret. Therefore, Paul said that the one who spoke in tongues should desire also the gift of interpretation so that the brethren would receive a *profitable* message with *understandable* content. When compared to interpreting, “prophesying” had the finer meaning of not just speaking in a tongue that could be understood but of conveying, or explaining, the message—a far more valuable gift. Paul urged that those who spoke in a tongue also be able to *interpret* and then go a step further and *prophesy*, and if they were good enough, they would *publicly prophesy*, not merely speak in the small local gathering.

**Comment:** In Acts 2:9-11, the multitude said, “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” It is true that we can listen to someone speaking another language and have a general idea of what they are saying, but Paul was talking about having a *definite* understanding, which is very different from today’s emotional experience of speaking in tongues.

**Reply:** Yes, some speak in tongues that they themselves do not understand, whereas in the early Church, the individual speaking in the tongue understood it. But the tongue also had to be interpreted and then explained (prophesied) to be of benefit to the ecclesia as a message, so that the brethren could truly say it was the “wonderful works of God.” If the congregation did not receive some understanding, Paul said it was better for the one with the unknown tongue to be quiet. In other words, the tongue had to be accompanied with understanding in order to be a real gift to the whole congregation.

**1 Cor. 14:23** If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

If all brethren in the congregation were speaking in tongues with no explanation, a stranger coming in would think the group was indeed a cult. The effect would be a literal “Babylon”—a babbling on. However, if the brethren were speaking in tongues *with understanding* through the power of the Holy Spirit, not only would the stranger be convinced that the tongues were from God, but also he would see that continued fellowship would incur responsibility and, in time, a commitment and sacrifice. The calling of the Little Flock class out of the world is the main theme or purpose of the gospel during the present age. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). Thus Paul was saying, “When you get together as a group of God’s people and speak in tongues but have no explanation, not only is it madness to unbelievers, but it is not even profitable to the congregation of believers.”

Paul was also trying to cover the subject of speaking in tongues from the perspective that it would not be good for all to have the same gift. Someone with tongues was needed, as well as someone to interpret, someone to understand, someone to teach, and someone to inspire with music, song, prayer, or exhortation. All of these gifts were needed, for to become fossilized in one strata of learning or teaching would be very limiting. Earlier Paul warned that no one should feel deprived if he did not have a tongue, and to the contrary, no one should glory if he had a tongue.

**Comment:** When the Holy Spirit came immediately after Pentecost, the apostles began to speak in many different tongues. The people listening were amazed, but some who were not in the right heart attitude mocked, saying, “These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13).

**Reply:** Similarly, as has been said, Paul’s reasoning can be taken two ways, and much depends on the heart attitude. Those hearing the tongues on the day of Pentecost should not have made a snap judgment, the principle being that a fool cannot hear the wisdom of seven wise men (Prov. 26:16). One can also be a fool from the perspective that “he that answereth [judges] a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Prov. 18:13). Those who mocked on the day of Pentecost made a judgment without analyzing the matter. When they heard the tongues, if they had just paused and looked, they would have seen that a certain segment understood each of the tongues, and they would have realized that the words made sense even if they did not understand them. Instead they made a hasty and incorrect judgment. The point is that we should *weigh* matters lest we stumble through hasty judgments.

Today, as seen on television, a lot of speaking in tongues and healing is being done in so-called Christian circles, but no one explains the tongues. Therefore, the fallen angels could be speaking through the individuals and cursing God or expressing their depraved sense of humor. The people who are present say “Amen” to that which they do not understand. We should have nothing to do with such confusion. What is improperly served on the Lord’s table is called “vomit” (Isa. 28:8). The tongues distract and subtly take the people away from the main purpose of the gospel. One does not consecrate to benefit the flesh.

**1 Cor. 14:24** But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

**1 Cor. 14:25** And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

“If all prophesy [that is, interpret the tongues or simply speak in a straightforward language that all know], and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all.” If the stranger could see that the brethren understood and made sense of the words, the truth made more inroads with him. He would say, “God must be revealing very important information from His Word.” If in the right heart condition, he would “report that God is in you of a truth,” for he would recognize that he was witnessing something supernatural. A humble and receptive heart attitude was essential.

If unbelievers came into a meeting and what was being said was not explained, none of them would get a blessing. To the contrary, if the message was explained and one of the unbelievers had a hearing ear and responded, he would receive a blessing. And if an unbeliever did not have a hearing ear, at least he understood the message up to a certain point. Then when he rejected the message, that was his responsibility.

“Thus are the secrets of his [the unbeliever’s] heart made manifest [by whether he becomes a believer or not].” When an unbeliever came to the meetings, he had to make a decision. The objective was that he would become interested and respond to truth. However, most people are insipid and lacking character, and thus are not benefited by the truth.

**Comment:** If an unbeliever with a burden on his heart attends a meeting, the brother giving the talk may say something, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that directly addresses the burden. Then the unbeliever falls down figuratively and worships God.

If we use our talent(s) faithfully, perhaps the Lord will open the door to other opportunities for enlargement of the talent(s). The bottom line of all gifts and talents is *edification*. If an individual edifies others, he himself is edified. The edification is reciprocal and mutual, like coals of fire warming each other.

**Comment:** An example is visiting an infirm brother or sister. Even if we cannot communicate very well, we usually come away feeling edified, and so does the brother or sister.

**Comment:** When healing is done today, the recipients fall *backward*, but Paul said the *godly* individual would fall “on his face”—that is, *forward*—and worship God (verse 25).

**Reply:** Yes, and the whole congregation gets emotionally involved. In one case, the preacher waved his hand and the choir collapsed. The chaos in religious circles is one of the signs that we are in the last days. Also, we are reminded of Eli, who fell backward and died (1 Sam. 4:15-18).

**1 Cor. 14:26** How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

**1 Cor. 14:27** If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

**1 Cor. 14:28** But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

Paul was repetitive in this chapter, for by going over the subject enough times, he would get his point across. In slightly different words, he had already expressed the sense of verses 26-28.

It was commendable for brethren to speak in a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, or an interpretation, but there needed to be a chairman so that everything would be done decently, orderly, and not too quickly. That way the greatest benefit would be extracted from the gifts instead of confusion. For example, if an individual expressed a psalm verbatim and with emotion, and another person immediately afterwards talked on another subject, the psalm would not be edifying because a little time was needed for the effect of the psalm to be felt. When something important is read, we should stop and listen so that the words will sink in. As Jesus said, “Let the words that I speak sink down into your ears and hearts” (Luke 9:44 paraphrase). If the gifts were used too quickly, the benefit was lost. All of the gifts were good, but the brethren were to be patient to extract the value. When a tongue was spoken, time was required for an interpretation and an explanation before another individual spoke in a tongue.

Not only did the Corinthians want to prattle and show off with their tongues, but two or three spoke at the same time. There was no profit or instruction in that type of meeting. In addition to having order—that is, taking turns—no more than three brethren were to speak in tongues, and even then, if no interpreter was present, they were to keep quiet. The limitation allowed the meeting to be rounded out with other gifts. Edification came from a *variety* of gifts. Today the principle would apply if a brother monopolized a meeting with a lot of words and little or no content. It is one thing to have comments of instructional value and another thing to have prattling. Certainly such individuals should not lead the meetings, for edification is needed. The very fact Paul said, “If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence,” shows that the meetings were to be edifying.

An example today of the principle of variety would be not to study just the Sermon on the Mount or the Book of Revelation or 1 Corinthians 13 on love. We are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Paul was saying that when brethren were gathered together for edification, the meetings should be more general and not warped in only one direction. Along another line, evangelists tend to press their particular interest with the emphasis continually being “To the work, to the work, to the work.” As a result, the message is often shallow, even though it is good. Paul said we are to study to show ourselves “approved unto God” (2 Tim. 2:15). Before going out to teach others, we have to be taught ourselves. Therefore, Paul admonished the Corinthians not to become too specialized in one gift. The danger was in becoming so enamored of a miraculous gift that other aspects of Christian life were neglected. The whole Word is needed for edification.

If the individual with the gift of tongues was in tune with Paul’s instruction, he remained silent unless there was an interpreter. However, if the individual did not have enough sense to realize he should keep quiet, the chairman was to establish order for the benefit of the others.

“Let him speak to himself, and to God.” The individual with the gift of tongues was to remain silent at the meeting if no interpreter was present. However, when he got home—that is, when he was outside the meeting—he could speak for his own edifying and to God.

**1 Cor. 14:29** Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

“Let the prophets speak two or three [in a meeting].” Paul was referring to a teaching capacity, either public teaching or being a study leader. The one who prophesied helped to *explain* and thus edify. However, the number of prophets was limited to two or three. The principle of no more than two or three speaking in tongues at one meeting also applied to prophets, and again they were to speak one at a time.

Prophesying could include the interpretation of tongues, but true teaching—*explaining*—was deeper and is the real thought here. This principle helps to weed out those who speak in tongues today because there is no explanation and hence no edification.

There were several reasons for Paul's counsel of limitation. (1) Not everyone should think of himself as a prophet or feel he had to say something. (2) The meetings were to have variety. (3) The other brethren could "judge" what was said, making sure that the teaching harmonized with the Word. The brethren were to weigh the words of each prophet. Incidentally, with two or three speaking in tongues and two or three prophesying, the implication is that this gathering was a rather large group of brethren.

**Comment:** The Amplified reads, "Let ... the rest pay attention and weigh and discern what is said."

**Reply:** The Bereans listened to Paul readily with an open mind, and then they went home to search the Scriptures to see whether what they had been taught was true (Acts 17:11).

**1 Cor. 14:30** If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

**1 Cor. 14:31** For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

Two principles were operating here. Why did Paul say, "Let the first hold his peace"? Suppose a prophet was explaining a subject at length, and the Holy Spirit quite noticeably moved another brother to make a comment that either contradicted or confirmed what was being said. It would be as though the Lord wanted to move someone else to interrupt the one speaking. Rather than to suppress the comment or utterance of the Holy Spirit, the prophet was to graciously stop for a moment and allow the other brother to speak, for the proper time to speak is when the particular point is being treated. The utterance might be a needed clarification. Of course the brother who is moved to speak should not take over the meeting, but he should express his comment. The principle is, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). What common-sense instruction Paul gave! He was chosen by God for this purpose.

The Holy Spirit operated in one of two ways: either mechanically or in the nature of a comment, as expressed in Galatians 6:6, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." Verse 29 expressed the principle of letting the prophet speak and the hearers judge his words. The "judging" could be done either silently or verbally. Each individual was to exercise discrimination in examining and weighing what was said. Nevertheless, as verse 31 states, others should have an opportunity to comment and express their thought. The prophet should allow such interchange of thought. The implication is that a chairman decided when a particular gift had operated long enough in a meeting and it was time for a different gift.

Paul was counteracting an anarchy-like atmosphere where several spoke at the same time (verse 26). All were moved and happy, but the group was not being edified. The brethren were to "prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and ... be comforted." This principle applied to all kinds of meetings: testimony, study, discourse, speaking in tongues, etc. Evidently, the gifts of the Holy Spirit operated spontaneously in the early Church, that is, as each of the brethren was moved with perhaps, first, a testimony, then a tongue, an explanation of a Scripture, another testimony, etc. But they were to speak one at a time, not simultaneously, in decent order. In contrast, our meetings are segmented. For example, 45 minutes might be allotted to a testimony meeting and an hour to a Bible study.

The brethren probably had great respect for each other's gifts once they learned to appreciate

order. Having traveled under long, difficult, and dangerous conditions to meet, they wanted to hear what each one had to contribute. Such respect knit them together as a spiritual family. The object of prophesying one by one was “that all may learn, and all may be comforted.”

**Comment:** At times, we are so moved by a particular remark that we want to say “Amen” out loud. To some, this expression might seem out of order, but an “Amen” properly used and not overdone should be spoken.

Suppose a brother was speaking and had reasonable time to express himself. Meanwhile, someone else was almost exploding while waiting to speak. In observing this desire, the first party should sum up his thoughts. Thus not only was the chairman to create order, but the one doing the teaching should desire order.

“Let the first hold his peace”; that is, the one doing the prophesying should willingly cut short his own remarks as long as he had had reasonable time for expression. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and ... be comforted.” Through this procedure, those who have something to contribute will at least feel they did their little bit.

Paul was also saying, “Do not monopolize the meeting, for it is meant to be communal.” Since the brethren back there had no Bible to gather around, they had to listen to each other to get the lesson for the day.

**1 Cor. 14:32** And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

**1 Cor. 14:33** For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

“The spirits of the prophets are [made] subject to the prophets.” While Paul was criticizing the order in the meeting, he was not criticizing the content. When the brethren came together, one might have a psalm, another a doctrine, another a tongue, someone else a revelation, and still another an interpretation. A “psalm” could be a hymn, an emotional poetic outburst, or a Scripture—something spontaneous and appropriate for the occasion. A “doctrine” was a teaching. One with this gift was moved to bring out an instruction that was needed. A “revelation” was either a prediction of a future event or enlightenment on a difficult text. An example would be where brethren were struggling to understand a Scripture, and suddenly an explanation came to a brother. “Interpretation” was an explanation of a comment. All of these things were good, but they were to be done in order and for edification.

Prophesying (teaching) required more time than some of the other gifts such as a psalm or a revelation. The “spirits” of the prophets were the message(s) to be conveyed. The way the prophets were moved to exhort, interpret, and explain was to be given expression and not suppressed or interrupted at length. “Let the spirit of the prophet be *under the control* of the prophet” is the thought. In other words, the teaching was important, and the prophet was not to be interrupted in a way that would make him lose his thought. Each of the brethren could contribute, but the one teaching was to be granted more opportunity of expression. He was to be allowed to speak as the Lord moved him. It is more important to *study* God’s Word than merely to have emotional outbursts. For example, some like to dominate the service by singing. We see this “entertainment” on religious television programs, where the remarks of the speaker are quite limited and are subordinate to the singing. However, the main thrust of the whole service should be *comfort and edification*. Other facets play a part, but teaching should be under the control of the one doing the teaching. He should be given enough time.

“Prophets” are those who publicly expound either to the congregation or to the public. The *Diaglott* interlinear reads, “And spirits of prophets to prophets are subject.” Since those who



teach incur responsibility, they should give serious thought to what they are instructing. Teachers should be slow to speak unless they are sure from a scriptural standpoint that their instruction is solid, for no one can speak in the Lord's name without incurring responsibility. As the Apostle James said, "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). Those who are faithful in teaching will get a greater reward, but the question would be, Is the responsibility worth it?

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." God desires peace and order in the meetings. Why did Paul add "as in all churches of the saints"? A number of translations put a period after "peace," so that the next verse reads, "As in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches...." The early manuscripts lacked punctuation, so the translators have this liberty, which seems to be the correct thought. Women's liberation crept into the church at Corinth.

**Comment:** The anointing of the Holy Spirit, the enlightenment, might come simultaneously to several brethren, but they had to take turns lest there be confusion in the meeting. The prophets were to speak one by one, and each was responsible for how he used his gift.

**Reply:** When a prophet in Old Testament times was instructed by the Lord to make a certain proclamation, his responsibility was not to add to or subtract from that message. Mechanically given, the message was to be spoken as received. Then the prophet stopped speaking, for an addendum might defeat the purpose of the Word of God, which is like silver purified seven times (Psa. 12:6). God spoke through the prophet in humble terms that the people could understand. On certain occasions, false prophets contradicted the true prophet of the Lord.

Not only did the Old Testament prophets receive the word mechanically, but the people could discern when the prophets were speaking mechanically, for there was a change in their mode of talking. On one occasion when Jeremiah was giving a message from the Lord about various nations, he warned particularly about Babylon—what God's judgment would be both on the Jews in exile and on Babylon itself. Subsequently, the false prophet Hananiah, motivated by an unholy spirit, contradicted Jeremiah by taking the wooden yoke around his neck, smashing it, and claiming that God had spoken to him (Jer. 28:1-11). His supposed "thus saith the LORD" contradicted Jeremiah's true "thus saith the LORD." Hananiah said that Jeremiah's utterance was not true and that two years hence the king of Babylon would be defeated by the Israelites and Jeconiah would be released from captivity and brought to Jerusalem. God then told Jeremiah to go out and deliver another message. Jeremiah was to say, "Thinking the Lord's wrath will be appeased is a false message. Now, instead of a wooden yoke, the yoke will be iron." Moreover, he prophesied that the false prophet Hananiah would die before the end of the year, and he did (Jer. 28:16,17). The false prophets were culpable for their utterances.

**1 Cor. 14:34** Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

**1 Cor. 14:35** And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak." Verse 34 needs to be analyzed because there are two extremes today. It is important to realize that Paul wrote this advice at the time the various gifts were being given to the Church. Moreover, we know that the Corinthian women could speak because chapter 11 of this same epistle tells that their heads were to be covered when they prayed or prophesied. However, praying and prophesying are different from *teaching*. In the early Church, praying and the mechanical prophesying of a future event, such as saying, "A famine will occur three years from now in Samaria," were not teaching. Prophesying was a mechanical prophetic utterance

that the Holy Spirit moved some of the brethren to do.

Under the symbol of a woman, Jesus pointed out the prohibition of teaching: “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel [the false church system], which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach” (Rev. 2:20). Papacy, a religious government, is likened to the man of sin, and the Church of Rome, an ecclesiastical body, is likened to a harlot (2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 17:5). The symbolism of the harlot, a woman, is based on the principle that a literal woman should not teach in the Church: “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11,12).

One aspect, then, is that women are not to teach. A second aspect is that women are to “keep silence” and to “ask their husbands at home.” A logical question is, What if a woman did not have a husband? The point is that the women were allowed to ask questions, but they were not to *persistently* question and thus interrupt and disturb the meeting. They were not to needle when their questions were not satisfied, nor were they to continually advance questions on an issue. Instead they were to ask their husbands at home. The Scriptures do say, “Let him [both male and female] that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Gal. 6:6). Thus questions between the teacher and those who are taught are permissible and desirable, but women are not to take an aggressive role and teach with their questions. For instance, “I do not agree. What about this, and what about that?” Sisters must exercise care in the ecclesia arrangement and keep in mind the balance of liberty and restraint.

**Comment:** Today verses 34 and 35 are often dismissed with the statement “Well, that was back in Paul’s day,” yet his words are strong here. For example, “It is a shame [it is shameful—RSV] for women to speak in the church.”

**Reply:** The point is that women should not dominate the class, and sometimes they practically take over. Some women justify their aggressiveness by saying they are asking questions, but they are monopolizing the attention and, in effect, teaching. Even if a sister has the right thought, she should be subordinate and not take a dominant role. Women can be well versed in Scripture and still be subordinate by realizing the role they play, and thus they have checks and balances with regard to what they can and cannot do. If a persistent woman has a consecrated husband or father, she should ask him at home. If the question is important enough, he will bring it back to the class.

Women “are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.” The ceremonial Law showed that women should be subordinate. In the type in the Tabernacle arrangement, the bonneted underpriests represent the woman, and the high priest, who did the teaching, pictures the man. In addition, other requirements under the Law show how men and women were to deal with each other. A good study would be to analyze how different issues were settled and why the Law was stated one way for the man and another way for the woman.

Paul was telling the Corinthians that out of deference, the consecrated wife should let the consecrated husband do the speaking. The advice did not mean she could not counsel on the side, whisper into his ear, or discuss the matter either before or after the meeting. Rather, Paul was saying the woman should not assume a teaching role in the Church. Women in the church today do not have to be silent, but when they speak, they, like the ones who teach, should consider the responsibility of what they say. Women can participate in a meeting in two ways: (1) They can ask a question with a desire to obtain information and learn. (2) They can ask a leading or instructive question that might open the door to further consideration of the topic as to whether it is being taught correctly or whether it can be supplemented in a constructive sense. Sisters can also quote Scriptures that bear on the subject. Therefore, the “silence” of verse 34 does not mean utter silence but that a sister should give deference to her husband or that she should speak in a way that is not teaching. If a sister is further advanced than the one

doing the instructing, she can effectively ask questions. Speaking for 15 or 20 seconds is usually just a comment, whereas speaking for three or four minutes can get into the role of teaching.

In Paul's day, women were in a secondary role. Had permissiveness been allowed to get out of hand, the unconsecrated might have considered the Christian religion dangerous. The principle is shown in the account of Vashti with King Ahasuerus (Esther 1:9-12). Similarly, Paul said that the slavery issue should not be brought up in the Church, for the instruction should be about the Scriptures and godliness, not about political issues.

**Comment:** Part of the curse on Eve was that her husband would rule over her (Gen. 3:16).

What does Paul's statement "I suffer not a woman to teach" mean today? A woman was not to teach in Old Testament times or in Paul's day, but what about today? Depending on the circumstance and the environment, a woman can teach. Even in Old Testament times, females such as Deborah were prophetesses (Judg. 4:4). And so we find there are exceptions to the general rule. Unfortunately, what often happens today is that people reading the Bible make the exception the general rule and vice versa. Sunday school is certainly an example of where a woman can teach, and teaching is frequently done in private fellowship. The point is that a woman should not usurp authority over the man either in the ecclesia or in the home.

Certain customs in Corinth in Paul's day are no longer followed to quite the same extent, but there is a tendency for some of them to creep back in today. For example, since the women in Corinth were among the educated, it was not seen as wrong for a woman to teach. Stated another way, when a woman who was accustomed to teach became a convert to Christianity, it was natural for her to think she could continue to teach in this new arrangement. Thus secular customs were brought into the ecclesia. Another custom in Corinth was looseness with the opposite sex. Because of that custom, such immorality was not seen as anything too bad. The same is true today with lesbians and homosexuals even among the clergy in some denominations. Another problem occurred when men with several wives became Christians. For that reason, a qualification for elder is being the husband of one wife. All of these problems started with the early Church, but they died out. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul ingeniously addressed these issues in a remarkable manner.

**Comment:** Women are allowed to speak because even in the early Church, they could pray and prophesy as long as the head was covered.

**Reply:** Yes. For a woman to comment during a Bible study is different from leading a meeting.

While certain liberties are allowed, some women do not realize they are abusing the liberty and are actually dominating the class. Some classes have come under the influence of a woman, especially when the elder is weak.

**Comment:** A good arrangement is to have a question box at a convention for anonymously submitting questions on the discourses. That method avoids the issue of whether a brother or a sister is asking the question.

**Reply:** Yes, a question box is a discreet way to ask questions.

**1 Cor. 14:36** What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

**Comment:** The RSV reads, "What! Did the word of God originate with you [in Corinth], or are you the only ones it has reached?" Paul was saying, "Do you sisters think the Word of God is only for you?"

**Reply:** Paul's questions were sharp because evidently, in the church in Corinth, there was an emphasis on the equality of men and women. Also, women took the liberty of introducing innovations. Thus we can understand the strength with which he opposed their attitude, for the women had gotten out of hand. Not only were they taking a prominent role spiritually, but from a physical standpoint, they excessively adorned their heads and bodies. Incidentally, Paul spoke strongly, yet *he had love*. He was emphatic where necessary. Being the recipient of his words would have hurt, even if said delicately, but the words had to hurt enough to get the lesson across. When words wrapped in honey and butter will not be effective, a rebuke has to be caustic and penetrating in order to be lasting.

Paul talked about the need for women to be under subjection, but some of the men were heady too, thinking they were apostles equal or superior to the Apostle Paul. Teaching in a leadership capacity was a real problem in the class at Corinth with both male and female.

With regard to the questions in verse 36, Paul was the one whom the Lord used to enlighten the Corinthians about the gospel of Jesus. He founded the class, yet some later wanted to push him aside. The "democratic" spirit kept them from recognizing God's providence. Today, especially with those who attended college, there is a tendency for everyone to want to be a teacher, and that spirit must be fought against. Higher education can lead to pride.

**Q:** If no consecrated brother is present, is it permissible for a sister to lead the meeting?

**A:** It is better to have a consecrated sister act as chairperson than to have an unconsecrated male lead the meeting. Moreover, sisters can meet privately as long as their meeting does not conflict with the regular meeting.

**1 Cor. 14:37** If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

**1 Cor. 14:38** But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that his instruction, as an apostle, was superior to that which was practiced in the class. To make themselves equal to Paul, or even superior, some in the ecclesia had criticized him, calling attention to supposed shortcomings. Therefore, Paul was saying, "Any who are spiritual in the class will have to agree with what I am writing, for these are *commandments of the Lord*."

**Comment:** Again Paul spoke strongly, "If you think you are spiritual, you will understand and agree with what I am saying. Otherwise, you are ignorant and will remain ignorant."

**Q:** Since Paul said, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," would even his advice be considered a commandment?

**A:** Anything he spoke was a commandment with the exception of three places, where he said he was giving advice and not a commandment. "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment" (1 Cor. 7:6). "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (1 Cor. 7:25). "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love" (2 Cor. 8:8).

**Comment:** Paul was used so mightily of the Lord that it would be wise for us nobodies to heed his advice.

**Reply:** Paul answered all kinds of questions, first on a scriptural basis and then on a common-

sense basis.

“But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” In other words, “Do not promote those individuals who are making themselves apostles. Do not encourage them in a wrong direction through fellowship or recognition.” The brethren were not to wish them Godspeed. And if those who were putting themselves forth as elders got too aggressive, the class had to act.

**1 Cor. 14:39** Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

What is the distinction between prophecy and tongues? Because so many Corinthians had the gift of tongues, the entire meeting was predominately characterized by that gift. Paul’s general instruction to them was, “Forbid not to speak with tongues.” However, they were to forbid more than one to speak at the same time or more than three to speak at the same meeting. Therefore, verse 39 has to be considered and harmonized with what Paul had said previously. His point here was not to disdain tongues and forbid them altogether, for childish things (toys) are important in their place. However, tongues were not to dominate.

**Q:** What did Paul mean by the statement “covet to prophesy”?

**A:** Paul was saying, “Covet to have [be zealous for] the ability to teach, explain, and/or interpret, for these capabilities are far superior to speaking in tongues.” “Prophesying” includes interpreting, explaining principles, instructing, teaching, mechanically forecasting a future event, and explaining Bible prophecies. The desire to have a sufficient understanding of Scripture in order to enlighten others is a good thing. For example, the greater the degree of familiarity with Scripture, the more qualified one is to witness.

The two epistles to the Corinthians are a masterpiece of instruction in personal, practical Christian living and how to meet the problems of life. All of the epistles and books of the New Testament have a special and important main theme or message that is not repetitious. For example, Romans brilliantly shows the relationship of faith and works. Hebrews tells how to deal with the Jews and make them see that Jesus is their Messiah. Ephesians tells of the predestination of the Church class as viewed by God and their great future with Christ. Only the Gospels are repetitious, but the purpose is to show that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

**1 Cor. 14:40** Let all things be done decently and in order.

In the last few verses, Paul was saying, “Is not the advice I am giving you in harmony with Scripture? Won’t someone among you confirm that I am speaking truth to you? Doesn’t my advice make sense?” Then, after saying that the brethren were to consider speaking in tongues in a secondary sense, he added, “Do not misunderstand me. In giving all this advice on speaking in tongues, I am not trying to downplay their value but to put that gift in its proper place so that it will not be unduly magnified. If you can speak in tongues, pray to God that you will also be able to prophesy, or interpret, for tongues have to be explained to be of value. Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Today, at the end of the Gospel Age, we are in a gleaning period, and a danger is in wanting to be teachers instead of true Bible students seeking to sincerely know the Word of God. Moreover, the very blessing of head knowledge can be misunderstood and given too much value, whereas what is needed is experimental Christianity, the making of the truth relevant to the lifestyle of our character.

**1 Cor. 15:1** Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

Paul now entered a new field of inquiry based on a question that had arisen in the class, but he would first lay a foundation before bringing the question to the forefront. The subject matter would be the resurrection.

**Comment:** The brethren were familiar with Paul's preaching, so obviously something had occurred to pollute those teachings.

**Reply:** The false doctrine, or thinking, that had polluted the class was no doubt a minority opinion, but action had to be taken quickly.

There were probably more different doctrines and problems in the class at Corinth than in any of the other ecclesias. Therefore, Paul's two epistles providentially cover the issues in all of the classes. And the fact that these questions came up and Paul addressed them worked out favorably for the entire Church down through the Gospel Age, for his two epistles have been profitable and faith-strengthening to Christians subsequent to his time. Today we continue to benefit by reading Paul's counsel on these issues.

Notice that Paul prominently used the pronoun "I" in verses 1-3. Why did he start the chapter this way? There was a precedent earlier in the epistle where he addressed the church at Corinth in connection with the role he had played. Now it was needful for Paul to again remind the Corinthian brethren that he had been like a father to them, that he had begotten them, because some were presuming to be not only equal in authority but even superior to him. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul had also said, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1). In a special sense, Paul was used by God to establish the church at Corinth. He was not just a brother or a teacher but an *apostle*.

**1 Cor. 15:2** By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Why did Paul say, "I declare unto you the gospel ... by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you"? What was the danger?

**Comment:** Verses 1 and 2 show a sequence or progression. Paul preached the gospel to the Corinthians, they received it, they were standing in it, and they would be saved if they continued to be faithful.

**Reply:** Yes. With regard to "if ye keep in memory," the King James margin says, "if ye hold fast," for it is easy to forget instructions. The implication is that there were divisions in the class at Corinth. Some followed Apollos, some followed Cephas, etc., but at the most Paul, Peter, and others were stewards of the mysteries of God, not lords. Those who felt aloof from the others and considered themselves more Christlike said, "I am of Christ," implying that others were not of Christ. Instead the emphasis should have been, "We are of Christ." The sectarian spirit was wrong.

**Comment:** Verse 2 is an excellent proof text for refuting the concept of "once in grace, always in grace." Being saved and going to heaven are contingent upon an "if" clause. We are saved *if* we remain faithful to God's truth.

**Reply:** Yes, the gospel the Corinthians had received from Paul by God's providence resulted in their being "saved" as long as they continued in the faith.

**1 Cor. 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;**

**1 Cor. 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**

The purpose of verses 3 and 4 was to emphasize *Christ*, not Paul or any other individual. Paul continued to draw attention away from the sectarian “I” attitude and to stress “you,” “ye,” and “our.” In verses 1-3, he used plural pronouns repeatedly: “I declare unto *you* the gospel which I preached unto *you*, which ... *ye* have received, and wherein *ye* stand”; “By which also *ye* are saved, if *ye* keep in memory ... , unless *ye* have believed in vain”; “I delivered unto *you* ... how that Christ died for *our* sins.”

Paul identified himself with the brethren in the ecclesia as being a recipient, like them, of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As an emissary or apostle of Christ, he had preached faithfully to them “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” The basis of being recognized as brethren is making a personal commitment to follow Christ until death. Christians acknowledge that they are sinners and that Christ died for their sins. Certainly the Corinthians had no problem believing Christ had died, so the problem was along another line.

Earlier in this epistle, Paul asked, “Were you baptized in *my* name? Did *I* die for you?” (1 Cor. 1:13 paraphrase). No, Paul was raising the thinking of the Corinthians to a higher level, showing that their dependency was on Christ, the ever-living Savior (and also, of course, on God and His Word). No matter what trials or sorrows they experienced in their Christian walk, the stabilizing influence was that their faith was not dependent upon any man.

Verses 3 and 4 both include the phrase “according to the scriptures.” Christ died according to the Scriptures, and he rose according to the Scriptures. Even if a Christian loses his closest companion in the Lord through death, he has the *living* God, the *living* Word, and the *living* Christ. The fact that Christ arose from the dead gives hope of a future resurrection.

Jesus “rose again the third day”; that is, he was in the tomb parts of three days. Had he been dead for three whole days, he would have arisen on the fourth day. He died on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m. and was raised early Sunday morning.

**1 Cor. 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:**

**1 Cor. 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.**

**1 Cor. 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.**

**1 Cor. 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.**

Paul continued his rebuttal to those in Corinth who felt that they knew Jesus but that Paul had never seen him or heard him preach. However, his primary motive in verses 5-8 was to prove that Jesus had risen from the dead. As proof, Paul used a forceful argument, namely, that Jesus was seen by Peter, who was the chief apostle in the estimation of the Corinthians. Then Paul listed group evidence—Jesus was seen of all the apostles and also of more than 500 brethren.

Although these verses list a sequence of the appearances of the risen Lord to different individuals, none of the women who saw Jesus after his resurrection are mentioned. According to the custom of the day, listing just the male witnesses was a more legal way of presenting the issue. And this listing was not merely a male representation but an *apostolic* witnessing of the

resurrection, both singly and in company.

We will consider some of the appearances in the sequential listing:

1. Jesus appeared personally and privately to Peter as a reassurance of his acceptance. This appearance was necessary because Peter had previously denied the Master three times. Either the other apostles were not aware of this appearance, or they did not attach great importance to it, for only Paul mentions it (Luke 24:34). Also, Cephas is listed first, yet Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the resurrected Jesus, and she ran to tell the others. Incidentally, when this epistle was written, Peter was probably recognized as the chief apostle, for time was required for brethren to realize that Paul had a deeper understanding of the Scriptures.

2. The question might be asked, Who are “the twelve,” since Judas deceased before Jesus was resurrected? Either for the sake of accommodation, Matthias was included as the twelfth apostle, or the term could have been used loosely as a title (Acts 1:26). Jesus was seen of “the twelve” on two occasions, but on the first occasion, Thomas was not there.

3. Next Jesus was “seen of above five hundred brethren at once.” An angel told the women, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen.” Then he added, “Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you” (Matt. 28:5-7). The Gospels refer to this gathering but do not give the number who were present. Paul now supplied the number as being about 500. Thus the net effect of Christ’s ministry produced a nucleus of approximately 500 consecrated believers, plus perhaps 200 others who could not get to Galilee because of certain obligations. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead and told the brethren to meet him in Galilee indicates that those who lived in the area, as well as in Judea, dropped everything and hastened to Galilee.

“The greater part [of the 500] remain unto this present [time], but some are fallen asleep”; that is, most of the 500 believers were still alive when Paul wrote this epistle around AD 59 or 60. During the intervening 26 or 27 years since Christ’s death and resurrection, some of the Lord’s people had died. Notice that they did not go to heaven but were “fallen asleep” in death. Sometimes the term “soul sleepers” is sarcastically used for those who present the scriptural teaching on this matter.

4. Jesus was seen privately by the Apostle James Zebedee. Peter, James, and John were the apostles most favored of the original twelve. Jesus appeared personally to James because he was the first apostle to die, as far as we know. The Master may have wanted to encourage James with some hint of the relative nearness of his demise, although it took some years.

5. Jesus appeared again to all of the apostles.

Jesus first appealed to the natural logic, the physical sense, of the apostles to reason with them. Then, during the same appearance, he showed the unreasonableness of their now thinking of him as a man. The *Second Volume* discusses the manner of Jesus’ appearances to his disciples and how he treated them gently from the standpoint that they were still natural men at that time, not having received the Holy Spirit. After appealing to them along natural lines such as eating a meal, he showed that he was now different by appearing in various bodies, going through doors, and coming and going as the wind. No man could do these miraculous things—only a spirit being. He gradually introduced them to the use of the higher, more important reasoning that pertained to the spiritual senses.

6. “Last of all he [Christ] was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” It was as if Paul were born prematurely, and even then, he saw only a measure of Jesus’ glory. John said, “We



do not know what we shall be like, but we do know that when Jesus appears, we shall see him because we will have the same nature” (1 John 3:2 paraphrase). When the 144,000 are glorified in the first resurrection, they will be able to see Jesus as he *truly* is, not as he appeared to others. When angels appeared to men, their glory was diminished. Sometimes they looked so much like a human being, even eating with them, that they were not recognized as spirit beings until something miraculous happened. For example, the angel who told Manoah and his wife they would have a son disappeared in the flame of the fire (Judg. 13:9-21). On other occasions, the appearance of an angel was so powerful that it knocked people down. When Gabriel appeared, Daniel fell as one who was dead (Dan. 10:5-9). In either case, however, the spirit being was not in his usual form, for only a spirit being can see a spirit being in his normal habitat and likeness. Therefore, Paul was given a premature glimpse of Christ in his glory, but even that was too much for the flesh, as proven by Paul’s damaged eyesight.

As an illustration, we cannot look at the sun at noontime and retain our sight, but we might get a glimpse. Paul saw merely the reflective glory of Jesus, not his shape or features, and just the glory of that outer light was so blinding that it seared his eyes so that he had to be led by the hand.

Paul saw Jesus as a *semi-glorified* being because no man can see God (or any divine being) and live. Consider Gabriel, who appeared to Daniel in different forms. In one case, he could reason with the prophet, and on another occasion, his appearance caused Daniel to fall flat on his face, almost knocking him out. When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb, his reply was, “Touch [embrace] me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). He thus showed a reserve. Also, he disappeared—vaporized—after he had a meal with the disciples (Luke 24:42,43,51). All of the manifestations in which he revealed his presence indicated that he would not appear again in the flesh. At the Last Supper, he said, “The world seeth me no more [in that manner]” (John 14:19). At his Second Presence, he would appear only in a revealing or personalized sense as when we came into the truth and realized the doctrine of the *parousia*—that his presence is secret at first and then later, in the Kingdom, all the world will know he is reigning through signs and wonders of various kinds.

**Comment:** The phrase “as of one born out of due time” comes from a Greek word that means “abortion.” Apparently, the usage means something that terminates the term of a normal pregnancy, hence an untimely birth. Thus a death is not necessarily involved.

**Reply:** Paul used a simile in likening himself to one born out of due time, one prematurely born. He did not mean that he was actually born out of due time but that he had a temporary glimpse of Jesus’ glory. Abortion is usually thought of as the killing of a fetus, but any untimely birth, where the fetus comes out in advance of the normal time, is premature.

When the women are included, Jesus appeared about 11 times after his resurrection. He *first* appeared to a group of women who were coming to the tomb to anoint his body with spices that they had purchased quickly before the sabbath began. However, because of the sabbath, they did not return to the tomb until the morning of the resurrection when Jesus met and saluted them, “All hail” (Matt. 28:9). Recognizing his voice and perhaps also his appearance, they held him by the feet and worshipped him. He purposely appeared in various forms such as a gardener and a stranger to show he was no longer human but a different being.

Jesus’ *second* appearance was to Mary, who evidently went to the tomb and was there sorrowing when she saw a “gardener” (John 20:12-17). Therefore, when Paul mentioned Cephas first, it was actually Jesus’ *third* appearance, or manifestation of the reality that he had indeed risen from the dead the third day *as he had predicted*. Incidentally, although Jesus did not appear privately to John at this time, the apostle was given a favorable appearance much later with regard to the visions in the Book of Revelation.

The Pastor used excellent reasoning in the *Second Volume* on the subject of “The Manner of Our Lord’s Return and Appearing.” Because Jesus had to appeal to those who were not yet Spirit-begotten, he appeared in a manner that showed it was really he who was raised, yet he was not quite the same as before. Therefore, the disciples now began to think of him more as a *spirit being* who was appearing in a human likeness. He appeared in different forms to show that he had a capability humans did not have.

Those of the 500 who had witnessed Jesus’ resurrection as a group and were still alive would be cognizant of Paul’s background before becoming a Christian (verse 8). Thus they could verify his testimony. Now Paul was talking to brethren in a foreign country many years later, and the testimony of these others would be a corroboration of his apostleship. Paul spoke with confidence because his testimony could be backed up if necessary.

Not only did Paul have the credentials to be an apostle, but he was preaching to the brethren so emphatically because Jesus had laid a charge upon him. He was to testify to the Gentiles, to kings as well as commoners, that he had seen the risen Lord and that Jesus had been raised from the dead (Acts 9:15).

**1 Cor. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.**

Although Paul was the last of the apostles to see Jesus, the appearance occurred in an even more wonderful way. However, he felt that from the standpoint of his prior deeds of persecuting Christians before becoming a disciple, he was the least worthy of the apostles. He quickly showed that the reason for Jesus’ appearance to him in this miraculous form was not any inherent greatness on his part but because of God’s grace in granting that privilege.

**Q:** When Paul spoke later about the individuals in the class at Corinth who were putting themselves forward and belittling his apostleship, he said, “For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5). How would we harmonize that statement with verse 9, where Paul said, “I am the least of the apostles”?

**A:** Some of the Corinthians thought of Paul as inferior because he came along later and was not one of the original 12 apostles. In other words, he was not seen during Jesus’ ministry, and his place was occupied at that time by Judas Iscariot. Those who wanted to assume the authority of an apostle were trying to lower Paul in the estimation of the others. Some pointed to the fact that he had persecuted the saints prior to his conversion. Here in verse 9, Paul was admitting that according to natural standards, he was “the least of the apostles ... [and] not meet to be called an apostle” because he had persecuted Christians. However, later he introduced factors that neutralized this argument and built up strong reasoning as to why he was actually superior to the other apostles. Although the others had a point about the persecutions, they should have remembered that God forgave Paul and blessed him. Such remembrance would have nullified their objection to his role as an apostle.

Paul had just written a chapter showing that love is humble and kind, but he did not follow that advice with regard to the subject of his apostleship. Thus there are exceptions, where principles are involved, when love must speak sternly. Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, yet he was the epitome of love. His words were ultimately doing them a kindness, although onlookers would not regard them as such. If rightly taken, the rebuke of a wise man is beautiful. It is kindness to speak strongly in cases where gentle words might encourage an individual in a wrong course.

**1 Cor. 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon**

**me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**

“I laboured more abundantly than they all.” In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul told of his many “labours” for the Lord (2 Cor. 11:23-27). “I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Paul spent one whole day and night in the water. Imagine floating around in the water for such a long time! Because of the circumstances, it was right for Paul to call attention to his sufferings for Christ. It was needful for him to defend his apostleship.

**Comment:** Paul said that everything he accomplished was by “the grace of God which was with me.” He had to explain that he was an apostle, yet he had the humility to know that he was not suffering these things in his own strength but by the grace of God.

**Reply:** Even though Paul disclosed his sufferings, spoke bluntly, and attributed his faithfulness to the grace of God, the divisions continued to exist. Some of the Corinthians did benefit from his reasoning, which helped to confirm them in the faith. However, others (the majority of whom were probably the teachers, the “false apostles”) remained opinionated despite Paul’s logic (2 Cor. 11:13).

**Comment:** The clause “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” is commendable, for the natural man tends to sit back and think about what he (or she) has accomplished.

**Reply:** Paul bluntly stated his motivation in 1 Corinthians 4:6, “These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; *that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.*” In other words, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were all just servants or stewards of God, for the real founder of the Church was God, and Christ is the agency of redemption.

**Comment:** Paul defined humility: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31).

**Reply:** Humility is control; it is not emotional. Those who judge by conduct and appearance can be deceived, for people can disobey God yet have a pleasing appearance and be gentle and soft-spoken. Humility is putting our own mind below that of God and using *His Word* and *His thinking* and doing *His will*, not man’s. The sad part is that very few benefit from the Bible, but the ones God is really dealing with are helped marvelously by this instruction. His instruction is not for the majority; throughout history, it has been for the minority.

Paul was saying, “Not only did I preach this gospel to you, but I preached in such a convincing manner with personal conviction that you believed me. I spoke with conviction because I am the least of all who should be honored as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ—and because I am the least, I have willingly suffered many trials.” How many of us, after being stoned to death for preaching the truth and then being revived, would have persevered over and over again as Paul did? He continued, “The driving force behind my ministry, the reason I speak with such sincerity and conviction, is that Jesus was so merciful to me. Before my conversion, I persecuted other Christians, and now I am preaching to you. You know my reputation as a Christian and what has happened to me in other places. Did I stop preaching? No! I am driven to be faithful as a mouthpiece of Jesus because his resurrection is a reality. The doctrine of no resurrection is not only false but also dangerous. If harbored, it will destroy your faith.”

When the Corinthians read Paul's letter, they surely thought about this little man who had preached to them. They knew he was a human dynamo, for they had seen the power of this one, who seemed to others to be a nobody. And they had received his message. Paul was now trying to stir up their memories by recounting his experiences.

**1 Cor. 15:11** Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

“Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach.” Paul was saying, “Whether it was I who brought you the gospel or one of the other apostles or all of them is relatively immaterial, but what is preached is important—and we preach that which is proper to preach.” The instruction was in harmony with the teaching of the gospel.

Verses 1-11 are introductory. Starting with verse 12, Paul began to discuss the main issue of this chapter: the resurrection.

**1 Cor. 15:12** Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

The subject matter of verses 12-23 is the resurrection of the dead, a doctrine that is critical to Christianity. Paul took the standpoint that if the view of those who believed there is no resurrection of the dead were correct, then the sacrificing, testimony, and witness efforts of the Church would be of no avail. A dead Christ could not be the Redeemer. Therefore, Jesus is a *living* Savior—not a little baby and not an adult nailed to the Cross but a Savior who is alive and well. Moreover, he was using Paul as a mouthpiece for those who had hope in an afterlife.

In the Corinthian church, some did not believe there would be a resurrection, especially those with a Jewish Sadducee or heathen philosophy background. On Paul's initial visit to Corinth, he first went to the synagogue to preach Christ. When he was chased out, several prominent Jews left with him and became converts to Christianity. Then Paul preached to the Gentiles. As a result, the Corinthians were a mixed group of some Jews and a large number of Gentiles.

As time went on and the zeal of the Jewish Christians with a Sadducee background started to wane, their former environment, teaching, and culture began to creep into the current thinking and imaginations of others in the class who felt that the Kingdom had already started and thus there was no need to be raised from death. To understand more fully how these “no resurrection” views got started, we will examine other Scriptures.

1 Timothy 1:19,20 reads, “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Two Christians, Alexander and Hymenaeus, were delivered over to the Adversary in the hope that they would learn not to blaspheme and thus ultimately be of the Great Company. They had made shipwreck of their faith in the resurrection and thought only of the present life. Much that the Christian does is predicated on God's promises of what will happen after death. If one ceases to have a hope for the future, his faith is destroyed.

2 Timothy 2:16-18 states, “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” Hymenaeus was named in both epistles to Timothy. Here we learn that he and Philetus had been teaching that the resurrection was in the past. When Paul broached the subject of the resurrection, he reasoned against the extreme view of no resurrection. It was one thing to say the resurrection is past, and it was another thing to say

there is no resurrection. The doctrine of the resurrection being in the past percolated. First, some believed the resurrection had already occurred, but that thinking led others to go a step further and say that there is no resurrection at all and that the present life is the only life. In this chapter, Paul addressed the extreme view because in refuting the doctrine of no resurrection, he was, in effect, refuting the earlier error too.

Matthew 27:51-53 reads, “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*” Under “Spurious Passages,” the *Berean Manual* indicates that the words “and the graves were opened” in verse 52 and “and went” in verse 53 (shown above in italics) are missing in the Sinaitic manuscript but that the verses appear in entirety in the Vatican manuscript. However, even if the words listed as spurious are deleted, the thought in the text does not change at all, and the passage is in the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and the Sinaitic manuscripts. Moreover, the words listed as spurious—“and the graves were opened” and “and went”—should be in the main text because written in the margin of the Sinaitic manuscript, in the same hand as that of the original copyist, is a note indicating that he made an error. In other words, since the mistake could not be corrected, the copyist put the missing words in the margin. Thus the words are an obvious unintentional omission. Perhaps 80 percent of the time, a marginal reference is a gloss or an injurious interpolation but not in this case. Therefore, nothing in verses 51-53 is spurious.

Under Matthew 27:52 in the “Biblical Comments” section of the *Berean Manual*, Clayton Woodworth wrote: “There are serious reasons for doubting the genuineness of this verse and the verse following. If it was the earthquake at the time of our Lord’s death that opened the graves, why should these saints have waited several days, until after his resurrection, before they came out? These holy ones could not have been the Ancient Worthies, for Paul said years later that they are not yet made perfect.”

However, *Reprint* No. 2811 gives comments of the Pastor that are quite different. The question was asked, “Who were those ‘saints,’ mentioned in Matt. 27:52,53, who arose and came into the holy city after the Lord’s resurrection?” A three-part answer was given.

“(1) The persons mentioned could not have been the ancient worthies, perfected; because of those the Apostle declares that ‘they without us [the Gospel church] shall not be made perfect.’ In other words, their resurrection will not be due to take place until after the first resurrection of the church has been completed.—Heb. 11:39,40. [We agree that the ‘saints’ could not be the Ancient Worthies.]

“(2) The class mentioned cannot have been saints of the Gospel church, because the church had not been selected—even the beginning of its acceptance with God had not yet taken place, and did not occur until the day of Pentecost, nearly fifty days later. [It is true that Pentecost was 50 days later and that the Church was not officially recognized in a technical sense until then, yet such recognition is not mandatory for the term ‘saints’ to be used here. However, since these individuals were awakened from death and lived past Pentecost and were written about later in the Gospel of Matthew, which referred to a *past* event, this second point is not a serious objection because the passage is in the ancient manuscripts. Moreover, the term ‘saint’ was applied before the gospel Church, for Aaron is called ‘the saint of the LORD’ in Psalm 106:16.]

“(3) The record seems to imply that the earthquake which occurred at the time of our Lord’s death opened these graves—produced the awakening mentioned; but that the awakened ones tarried and did not manifest themselves in the city of Jerusalem until after our Lord’s resurrection.

“At the very most it was an awakening similar to that which Lazarus experienced, and the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain, to die again, later on. We may be sure of this because the express declaration of 1 Cor. 15:20 is: ‘Christ is the first-fruits of them that slept’—the first one *resurrected to perfection of being*—the first one *lifted completely out of death to perfection of life*. The persons mentioned could have been no more than merely aroused from the slumber of death temporarily, and for some purpose of which we have no knowledge. We were at first inclined to doubt the genuineness of the passage, but find that a portion of it at least appears in the oldest Greek MSS, yet discovered.” [This last sentence is at variance with Clayton Woodworth’s comment. The Pastor admits that at least a portion of Matthew 27:52,53 is in the oldest manuscripts, and that portion is enough to prove the awakening.]

**Comment:** By resuscitating these individuals, the Lord was giving them an opportunity to run the race for the high calling, that is, to be “saints.”

**Reply:** There was a typical reason as well, for their being raised shows that *after* the “earthquake” (the death of The Christ, Head and body), the general resurrection of mankind from the tomb will take place.

With a punctuation change, Matthew 27:52,53 should be rendered as follows: “And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves. After his resurrection [parts of three days later], they went into the holy city and appeared unto many.” See the *Diaglott*—there is no “and” before the word “went.” The pronoun “they” can be inserted because it is implied in the Greek verb.

John 21:18-23 reads, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee [Peter], When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he [Jesus], signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God. And when he [Jesus] had spoken this, he saith unto him [Peter], Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple [John] whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his [Jesus’] breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple [John] should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him [Peter], He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” After his resurrection, Jesus spoke about Peter’s future experiences, and then Peter inquired about John’s experiences. Notice that there was a misunderstanding about Jesus’ statement that John would tarry. Based on that statement, some of the brethren built up the theory that John did not have to die but would tarry until the resurrection was a past event. This theory was dangerous because it destroyed faith with regard to the future. Jesus was referring to the feet members, not to John personally.

We will read two passages in 1 Thessalonians. The first is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” The second text is 1 Thessalonians 5:10,11. “[Jesus Christ] Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

The two epistles to the Thessalonians were written five or six years before the Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15. Since the letters to the Thessalonians were written earlier, the brethren could have referred to them for the correct thought, but unfortunately, some of the Thessalonians did not search into the matter and had faulty memories. They remembered that when the Lord would come, the dead in Christ would be raised first. But then they got the idea that those who remained at a later date would not die and would be caught up in the air to meet Jesus, yet they would reign down here. In other words, they got delusions that it would not be necessary for them to die. Some felt that the Apostle John would not die, that the resurrection was past, and that those who were asleep in Christ had been raised. The point is that the brethren got wrong ideas because they did not go back and reread Paul's epistles.

In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit [doctrine], nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (2 Thess. 2:1,2). Having misunderstood the first letter, the Thessalonians thought that the day of Christ had already come. (The phrase "at hand" means "here," "already present.") They used the first letter to justify the theory that Christ was here and that they were living at the time of the Second Advent, when the sleeping saints had already been raised.

Therefore, Paul said that the word of Hymenaeus and Philetus ate like a "canker" (gangrene). The influence of the wrong doctrine that the resurrection was past or, worse yet, that there was no resurrection ate like a canker, adversely affecting many brethren. Paul effectively answered both wrong views by discussing and refuting the extreme view that there was no resurrection.

**1 Cor. 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:**

**1 Cor. 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.**

**1 Cor. 15:15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.**

**1 Cor. 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:**

**1 Cor. 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.**

In verses 12-16, Paul reasoned from a practical standpoint; in verse 17, he reasoned from a theoretical standpoint. If Christ was not raised, then the Church was yet in their sins because his resurrection would be the evidence, or proof, that his sacrifice had been accepted by God. If the antitypical High Priest died and was not raised so that he could go into the Most Holy, his blood could not be applied on the Mercy Seat for justification and forgiveness of sins (Rom. 4:24,25).

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Why would the Corinthians (and all Christians) still be in their sins? Jesus died in Adam's stead, and the merit of his sacrifice had to be presented to God, to Justice, in order to be effectual. If he had remained in the tomb and not been raised as one possessing the right to human life, he could not redeem the human race. Jesus was raised a spirit being, but he still had the right to human life. Not only did he die, but the human race in his loins also died. Therefore, he possessed the right to human life to give to others in addition to the life he now had as a spirit being. He presented the right to human life to the Father on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after his ascension. The human race needed not just one who died for their sin but a *living* Savior, who could present that life and

merit and be a Priest and a King to uplift them in due time.

Paul wrote forcefully. In reading the epistle, the Corinthians would have almost felt they could hear him speaking, especially because they knew his actions. Paul was scolding them for harboring such a wrong doctrine. He was saying, “Yea, and if God had not raised up Jesus, we would be found false witnesses of God because we have testified that God raised him.” This negative reasoning gave added emphasis, vitality, clarity, and power to Paul’s words when he spoke on the positive side.

**1 Cor. 15:18** Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then there is no hope for Christians who have died.

**1 Cor. 15:19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Christians would be fools to sacrifice the pleasures of this life if there is no future resurrection. Paul was saying, “If in *this life* only, we have hope in Christ, we are more pitiable than all other men because we give up what little enjoyment and advantage we might have, hoping to be with Christ in the resurrection.”

**1 Cor. 15:20** But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Now Paul took the positive side of the question. At the time he wrote this letter, only Jesus the Head had been resurrected, not any of the body members. Incidentally, according to the *Diaglott*, the word is “firstfruit” (singular) here and in verse 23. Here the word refers to Jesus only, whereas the Church is included in verse 23. “Fruit” is like the word “sheep”—it is either singular or plural in meaning depending on context and reason. By saying Christ is the firstfruit of “them that *slept*,” Paul was reasoning that the others were still sleeping in death at the time of the epistle.

When the Corinthians read this verse, they would have pictured Paul uttering these words with all the power of his being. Knowing Paul and his manner of speaking, they realized that these words were climactic and powerful. They could *feel* the power, and so can we, to a certain extent, if we put ourselves in their position. “A dead Christ would be in vain for us, but now Christ *is risen* from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

**1 Cor. 15:21** For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

The word “resurrection” is the Greek *anastasis*, which means resurrection in the full sense. This verse reminds us of Paul’s epistle to the Romans, which deals with the subject of justification and the resulting grace. Paul followed an analytical logic: the one man, Jesus Christ, was a corresponding price for the one man, Adam. Jesus will give his life rights to Adam’s race.

**Comment:** Verse 21 is the Ransom in a nutshell, showing that Jesus had to be a human being.

**Reply:** Yes. A *perfect* man’s obedience was needed in order to offset the penalty of death for a *perfect* man’s disobedience. No one down here on earth could be a corresponding price, or ransom, for Adam. “None of them [the people] can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psa. 49:7). Therefore, someone would have to come to the planet from an outside source and take on the actual human nature, not just the semblance of man. He would have to be made flesh to be a perfect sin offering (1 John 4:2).

All death stems from the one sin of Adam—the penalty came on the whole human race



because of his disobedience. While some people appear to be more wicked than others, all have the death penalty on them because of the sins inherited from Father Adam. Stated another way, the death penalty on the race is genetic. Because the condemnation came through *one* man, *one* perfect man could die for the entire race. Otherwise, to satisfy God's justice, a separate Redeemer would be needed for every human soul who has ever lived. One man sinned, and all who came out of his loins inherited the penalty. They never had the right to life in the first place. Therefore, not only would the corresponding price have to come from a perfect man, but that perfect man would have to abstain from producing any progeny. Jesus died for Adam without marrying and having children because the seed that was in his loins had to offset the seed in Adam's loins when the death penalty was paid. Thus the corresponding price was very comprehensive. Most people, with simplicity by faith, have just believed that Jesus died for their sins, and of course that belief was sufficient for most of the Gospel Age.

**1 Cor. 15:22** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

It is not necessary to change the order of the wording as the Pastor suggests, for all in Adam do die, and only those who are "in Christ" at the end of the Kingdom will be made alive in the full sense. However, if one is thinking merely of the awakening from the grave during the Kingdom Age, rather than being made alive in the full sense, then the order could be changed; namely, "For as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive." The wicked will not be "in Christ" when they come forth from the grave and hence will not get life unless they come "in[to]" him. To be "in Christ," to get life in the full sense of the word, would mean awakening from the grave, being tutored during the Kingdom Age, and getting life by passing the test in the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom. Stated another way, the awakening from the tomb is only the beginning of a process that could be aborted. All will have an opportunity to be "in Christ" either in the present life or in the future (next) life. Romans 5:17 is a similar Scripture: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

If we consider the most incorrigible sinners who lived before Christ's First Advent—individuals so wicked it would be impossible for them to repent and turn to righteousness—wouldn't verse 22 indicate that Jesus tasted death for every man, no matter what his state in the past? Even if a person was incorrigible, nevertheless, since he had never heard the name of Christ in the sense of being able to believe into him, he is guaranteed at least an awakening from the tomb in the Kingdom Age. However, things changed once Christ came, for from that time forward, a person became proportionately responsible depending on his degree of knowledge about Jesus and the Bible. Even those who are incorrigible in China or Africa, for example, who have never heard the name of Christ must be afforded an opportunity to at least hear. How they then react with their free moral agency will determine their destiny.

**Comment:** Not only will they hear in Christ's Kingdom, but they will hear in an unobstructed or unpolluted manner. No Adversary or doctrinal errors will becloud the truth.

**Reply:** That is true. However, the truth they hear will only have to be simple knowledge—simple but clear and true.

Jesus tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Those who have acted upon that knowledge in the present Gospel Age, in advance of the world, will get a greater reward, a better resurrection, for faithfulness, even if they are not one of the very elect.

**1 Cor. 15:23** But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Verse 23 shows a sequence of resurrection: “But every man [will be made alive] in his own order: [The] Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are [shall become] Christ’s at his coming [during his presence in the Kingdom].” There are stages of honor and glory in the resurrection. One stage pertains to the spirit realm; the other, to the terrestrial realm down here. Those of the world of mankind who are obedient and pass the test at the end of the Kingdom Age will get everlasting human life, whereas the called of this age who respond and are faithful will get spirit life. The term “Christ the firstfruits” includes Jesus, his body members, and the Great Company, for the Great Company, along with the Little Flock, are partakers of the “church of the firstborn”—an expression related to the Passover picture (Heb. 12:23).

“Afterward they that are Christ’s at [during] his coming [presence, Greek *parousia*]” refers to the general resurrection of mankind. The Ancient Worthies will be first in the order of the general resurrection. Paul used common sense, logic, and nature in his reasoning. With regard to the resurrection, he said that a seed must be buried in the ground and die before it can grow and bring forth fruit.

In his Gospel, the Apostle John viewed even everlasting life with such esteem that he used expressions to show that Christians who are faithful, but not necessarily as more-than-overcomers, will get everlasting life as a reward and be sons of God on the spirit plane. However, the Apostle Paul kept the sights extremely high, emphasizing that Christians should run with the hope of obtaining the prize of the high calling, the chief reward. This higher emphasis seems to pervade the tenor of both John’s and Paul’s epistles. Paul’s thrust was to keep striving to make our calling and election sure, for if we aim for the Great Company and then fail a little, we may not get life at all. But if we try to serve Christ with the desire and zeal of attaining the Little Flock, we will be faithful to the level of either the Little Flock or the Great Company.

**Comment:** Verse 23 is comprehensive, for it includes all who will get a resurrection, human or spiritual.

**Reply:** Yes, God so loved the world that He gave His Son to the end that all who believe into Christ will have everlasting life (John 3:16). Life is a prize whether down here or in the spirit realm. After the “firstfruits,” the Ancient Worthies are first in line for an earthly resurrection.

The Great Company are of the firstborn class, for they are part of the church of the firstborn. However, they are *not* partakers of the first resurrection. Only the Little Flock will be in the first resurrection and receive immortality. The Great Company will be raised to spirit nature just before the marriage supper (Rev. 19:9). Thus they will not attend the marriage during the half hour of silence but will be invited to the marriage supper afterwards (Rev. 8:1; Psa. 45:14). For all to attend the marriage would distract from the honor of the Little Flock. Also, during the Kingdom Age and beyond, the Great Company will be inferior in rank to the Ancient Worthies. Therefore, verse 23 refers to the order of resurrection, not rank.

The reign over the world, the kingly and queenly prerogatives of the Kingdom, will not be exercised until after the marriage. There are two aspects to the reign: (1) the exercise of power in stilling the nations and (2) the peaceful submission of all subjects underneath that rule.

There are two aspects to the coming Time of Trouble. The fallen angels materializing in Noah’s day produced a time of trouble and violence that got increasingly worse until the Flood. The Scriptures indicate that a large factor in the great Time of Trouble yet future will again be the materialization of fallen angels, who will create havoc. Therefore, just as materialized fallen angels produced violence in the earth at the time of the Flood, so the en masse materialization of fallen angels will be a factor in the great Time of Trouble after Babylon is destroyed and Satan is bound. God will then *permit* the fallen angels to come in like a flood (Isa. 59:19). The

second aspect of the Time of Trouble will occur when God intervenes with *great* judgments to save the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble and still the violence. Thus there are two aspects: (1) the Time of Trouble on the nations and (2) God's putting down His fist of authority with great judgments.

Satan and perhaps a few other fallen angels will be loosed as individuals earlier, when the feet members are still here. Materializations are taking place in the earth right now, but they are rare exceptions that are allowed under certain circumstances. When all manner of lying signs and delusions take place to deceive everyone but the very elect, that will not be the loosing of all the fallen angels. The lying delusions will have a lot to do with Satan's liberty—it will be *his* hour of triumph. Satan will be bound just a little before the general loosing of all the fallen angels, which will cause wicked and awful acts in the earth. The fallen angels will then immediately operate openly, with no pretension or masking of their true character.

**1 Cor. 15:24** Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

When read as a unit, verses 24-28 show that the earth will be cleansed from all sin before Jesus hands the Kingdom over to the Father. Those of mankind who are living at that time will be a perfect and tried race. "Then cometh the end" of the Kingdom Age and Christ's reign, when he will deliver up the Kingdom to his Father. At that time, Christ will have put down all insubordination—all enemies and antagonistic power. He will have terminated all rule and authority that are in opposition to God in any sense of the word.

When Jesus hands the Kingdom over to the Father, it will be the eighth day from the standpoint that seven seven-thousand-year days will have expired. Stated another way, it will be the end of 49,000 (7 x 7,000) years, the end of the Seven Creative Days. The 49,000 years began with the First Creative Day, when the earth was without form and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and God's Spirit began to move upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2). The eighth day starts the "world without end" (Isa. 45:17). From one perspective, the eighth day follows the Seven Creative Days, and from another perspective, it is the eighth day from the creation of Adam. (Adam fell at the beginning of the Seventh Creative Day, which was 7,000 years long.) The interesting point is that both eras close at the same time.

The purpose of the Seventh Creative Day is to cleanse the earth from sin and opposition. Just like the previous Six Creative Days, the Seventh Creative Day began with an evening of darkness and will end with a morning of fulfillment. The Seventh Creative Day started with Adam's fall, a *dark* period. When God said, "Let there be light," at the beginning of the First Creative Day, there was darkness, for it took 7,000 years for the light to come to a sufficient brightness on planet Earth to fulfill God's purpose (Gen. 1:3).

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5). The weeping is still going on—the "darkness" continues. "Morning" is considered from two standpoints: the dawning of the morning and the completion of the day. In addition to the Creative Days, other days are spoken of as evening and morning. Thus the 24-hour day is divided into two parts, which we call night and day, each being approximately 12 hours long.

**1 Cor. 15:25** For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

**1 Cor. 15:26** The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

The reign will last until Christ has "put *all* enemies under his [own] feet," the last enemy being death. In other words, Satan and the incorrigible fallen angels will be destroyed before death itself. Paul said that death will be "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). Verse 25 is restating

the thought from verse 24 that Jesus will put down all opposing rule, authority, and power.

Luke 20:34-36 reads: “The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world [the age beyond the Millennium], and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the [holy] angels [who did not sin when tested severely]; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” During the Millennial Age, both the just and the unjust of mankind will be raised from the tomb—resuscitated—so Jesus was talking about the age beyond the Millennium, when there will be no marriage or death. Those who are accounted worthy to enter that age are likened to being resurrected. All of these characteristics will subsist in the age beyond the Millennium. The people will be counted worthy, they will be reckoned as raised from death, they will neither marry nor already be given in marriage, and they will not die anymore. Hence those of mankind who are obedient and gain life will be like the holy angels and equal unto them. While the angels may have a higher form of life, where one stands in his relationship to the Father is what matters. In God’s sight, therefore, a faithful, proven, perfect man who lives into the age beyond the Millennium will be accounted equal to a holy angel; the individual will be as much a son of God as an angel. In summary, those who get life and enter that age will be called “children of God,” “children of the resurrection.” In other words, there will be no more death in the age beyond the Millennium, and conversely, there will be death during the Millennium, especially at the end (Rev. 21:4; 20:7-9).

Death for humanity on earth will be destroyed at the *end* of the Millennium. Disobedient men, angels, and Satan will be destroyed in Second Death *prior to* the very end of the Millennium. To say that the last enemy to be destroyed is death but that Satan will be loosed subsequently and many other deaths will occur brings confusion into the picture.

**Comment:** “The wages of sin is death,” so as long as there is the possibility of sin, there must be death (Rom. 6:23).

**Reply:** Some insert the word “Adamic” in verse 26: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Adamic death,” but the addition is not necessary. For all practical purposes, there will be no more death after the Little Season. If the angels who did not sin cannot “die anymore,” doesn’t that mean they will live forever? Those of earth who enter the ages beyond the Millennium will also live forever, but that does not mean others cannot die in other places. Jesus was talking about humanity and the tried classes. From that standpoint, “Death is swallowed up in victory”; it will occur no more (1 Cor. 15:54). The fact humans will still be mortal means that technically they could still die, but death will be neither a probability nor a reality.

The divine nature is different, for the Little Flock will have life within themselves. Not only will they have immortal life, not needing sustenance (food, sleep, etc.), but they will be in a position to give life to other beings. Only the Church will be raised to incorruption, a condition in which corruption is impossible morally, chemically, or any other way. Corruption is the reason one dies. Immortality means that one cannot die; one has *inherent* life, life within. Mortality means that one can die, for it is a *sustained* life. Angels, as well as men, are mortal beings. Dark Age doctrines have confused this subject.

Throughout eternity, in the billions and billions of years in the future, isn’t it possible that one of the human race could *accidentally* die? However, such an individual would be revitalized, resurrected, immediately. Since mankind will not have guardian angels for eternity, an occasional accident may result inadvertently in death. Surely angels will not be watching over those of mankind who are tried, proven, and perfect to make sure nothing falls on them, for example. The angels will have a lot of other works to do. The promise “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [Kingdom]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the

LORD, as the waters cover the sea” is speaking in overall terms (Isa. 11:9). It is not saying that it is impossible for anyone to ever die in the billions of years to come.

**Comment:** If death were not a theoretical possibility for the mortal creation, then God would not have the power over death.

**Reply:** Yes, there are several reasons. As a principle, God will always have the power of Second Death, the prerogative of destroying both body and soul permanently, with the one exception of Jesus and the Little Flock. In the ages to come, it will not be necessary to use that prerogative on the tried, proven, and faithful of the human race on earth, but when God creates beings on other planets, He might have to exercise that prerogative.

The following is an illustration of the death sentence. A prisoner who is released because he has served his sentence could still have death in him, not as regards the sentence but as regards his habits and other factors that have left their scars on him. The merit of Christ’s sacrifice must be applied prior to the resurrection. The after-atonement, or subsequent, sacrifices of the people follow the application of the national atonement sin offering.

The end of Revelation 11:15, pertaining to the reign of God and of Christ, reads, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord [God], and of his Christ [God’s Anointed, that is, The Christ, Head and body]; and he [God] shall reign for ever and ever [after the Millennial Age].” The sounding of the seventh trump throughout the thousand years of the Millennium is like the Creative Days. When God said, “Let there be,” the objective was realized only at the *conclusion* of each day. At the start of each Creative Day, there was a definite beginning followed by progress and development until the objective was reached at the end of the day. And so, the completion of the sounding of the seventh trump will occur at the end of the Millennium, when God will reign forever and ever.

**Comment:** Revelation 11:17, two verses later, proves Jehovah will be involved in the Millennial reign, for the 24 elders will say, “We give thee thanks, *O Lord God Almighty*, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.”

Psalms 2:2 contains similar wording: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [Jehovah], and against his anointed [The Christ].” The Second Psalm emphasizes the beginning of the reign, whereas Revelation chapter 11 emphasizes the conclusion.

Revelation 11:18 describes activity during the Millennium: “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.” The Christ will reign over the earth as kings and priests for the thousand years. Beyond the thousand years, Jesus and the Church will reign in another sense. They will reign eternally from one standpoint and in a more specific sense over earth during the Millennium, when they will exercise an authoritarian rule to correct and uplift mankind. After that reign is accomplished, their reign will be more liberal, that is, without the need to keep inspecting individuals. God will always be Emperor of the universe, and Jesus will never be supplanted as Prime Minister.

Lest there be a misunderstanding, we will consider Psalm 2:2 again. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [Jehovah], and against his anointed [The Christ].” The reign of God and Christ occurs during the Millennial Age, but beyond the Millennium, Jesus will continue to have the prerogative of kingship, although it will not be exercised in the same way. Thus the Millennial reign, which will start in the near future, will continue forever and ever, but the first part of the reign will be of a different nature,

requiring special inspection.

God and Jesus will both reign forever but in a different respect, as illustrated by Joseph and the Pharaoh of Egypt, who said, “Only in the throne will I be greater than thou” (Gen. 41:40). The people of Egypt were told that every knee must bow to Joseph, the prime minister, and in every matter, Joseph had the same authority as the Pharaoh except in the throne. Therefore, in one sense, they both ruled forever, but their reigns were on two different levels of authority.

Let us look again at verse 26: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” This verse does not refer to Adamic death, nor should it be analyzed as Second Death, for God will always have the prerogative of Second Death. Luke 20:36 should be considered with this verse in order to get the proper slant. All those of mankind who are thoroughly tried and tested in the Kingdom and found to be obedient will get everlasting life, and hence, for all practical purposes, to them death will be destroyed. In paying the Ransom price, Jesus in effect destroyed Adamic death. During the Kingdom, the human race will be on trial for life, and for all who are obedient through the Little Season, there will be no more (permanent) death, although occasional accidents may occur, from which one would have to be immediately resurrected.

**Q:** How do we harmonize verse 25, where *Jesus* puts all enemies under his feet, with Psalm 110:1, where *God* makes *Jesus’* enemies his footstool? “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

**A:** God will give Jesus that authority and power. Jesus has to await the Father’s time, and then the Father will say, “All right, go ahead.” By giving Jesus the divine nature, God endues Jesus with a sufficiency of power to put down even Satan. Verse 25 tells that Jesus will put down all enemy rule, which includes all of the incorrigible, spirit and human—Satan, the fallen angels, and human beings. After that, Jesus will destroy death, the last enemy. Verse 26 is really saying the same thing from another standpoint, for Satan has the power of death. Therefore, when he is eliminated, a major force will be removed. The people who remain will live forever and be like the angels. The thought is not that they will be immortal but that they will not be inclined to death. Once perfected and tried to the utmost, they will live forever and no longer need a rod-of-iron rule. Anyone who sins, or disobeys, beyond the Kingdom Age—no matter what period of time—will immediately go into Second Death, for never again will evil be tolerated. God has allowed the permission of evil for a limited time on planet Earth for educational purposes, namely, to show mankind they need a Savior and instruction in righteousness to keep them from falling away a second time. Without experience, Adam and Eve did not know the Adversary was using the serpent to create doubt in her mind so that she would then, in turn, cause Adam to sin. When the Deceiver is removed and all of the people are healthy and have had experience with sin and death, they will not sin anymore. They will then know that anything done in opposition to God will immediately bring death. Since Second Death will never be destroyed as a prerogative, we can say that Jesus destroys Adamic death.

Of course Jesus could never put all enemies under his feet unless God gave him that power. In one sense, therefore, the Kingdom Age is the Kingdom of God, and in another sense, it is the Kingdom of Christ. And in one sense, God does not do any of the judging because He has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). There will be modifications, but Christ will be the age-lasting Father, the mighty God of the Kingdom Age. When that work is complete, he will become subject to the Father.

The Scriptures intimate that some of the fallen angels will be rescued during the Kingdom Age (1 Cor. 6:3). Those who fall in line with the Kingdom arrangement will be treated just like fallen mankind. To the contrary, Satan has already incurred the sin unto Second Death. He will be destroyed in due time, and Adamic death will be lifted by the conclusion of the Kingdom Age. Anyone who enters the age beyond the Kingdom Age will get everlasting life.

**Q:** Does Genesis 3:15 indicate that The Christ will destroy Satan? “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

**A:** Jesus and the Church will be involved in the destruction. Just as The Christ is composed of the Head authority, Jesus, and body members, so the Antichrist (from one standpoint) is composed of Satan as the head and the fallen angels as the body. In due time, the Antichrist will be destroyed, both head and body. If our thinking is correct, Jesus will take care of Satan personally, and the body members will take care of Satan’s body members in the spirit realm, as well as those who are deceived by him down here in the Little Season.

**1 Cor. 15:27** For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

**1 Cor. 15:28** And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

“For he [God] hath put all things under his [Jesus’] feet. But when he [God] saith all things are put under him [Jesus], it is manifest that he [God] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Jesus].” The next verse is repetition so that the one who reads the Word of God can have complete assurance that a time is coming when sin will be totally expunged from the human family. To obey God in the future will be relatively easy, but it is not easy now because of weaknesses of the flesh, a corrupting environment, the Adversary, and influences of the world. In short, the Christian lives under hostile conditions.

“When all things shall be subdued unto him [Jesus], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [God] that put all things under him [Jesus], that God may be all in all.” God will put all things under Jesus at the beginning of the exercise of the Millennial reign. In quoting from Psalm 110, Paul was showing that God will back up Jesus’ reign. Then, at the end of the Millennium, after Jesus finishes his reign, he will turn the Kingdom over to the Father and become subservient to Him so that God will be “*all in all*.” God will be given top honor and priority with regard to the gift of life. If the Little Season were to occur after the reign and after Jesus gave the Kingdom to the Father, would God be all in all? No! Therefore, the Little Season must occur *before* the end of the Millennium and *during* the reign (Rev. 20:3). The terminal date of the reign and the terminal date of the 49,000 years of the Seven Creative Days are the same. Satan and death must be destroyed before that date.

God will be *everything* in *everyone* who is accounted worthy to enter the age beyond the Millennium. He will be completely in every individual who survives the Little Season. Stated another way, He will be *wholly* in the *entire* living population. Christ will turn a tried and proven Kingdom over to the Father. There will be no more iniquity.

**Q:** How is Revelation 20:3 harmonized with the thought that the Little Season occurs before the end of the Millennium. “And [Jesus] cast him [Satan] into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, *till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*”

**A:** That is the only Scripture which would seem to contradict, but the end of the verse is translated incorrectly. The thought in the Sinaitic is “toward the close of the thousand years”; that is, it shows progress *toward* a termination, not following the termination. The Alexandrian manuscript is also helpful, for it contains the article “the.” And the Book of Revelation is missing in the Vatican manuscript. As the thousand years *are expiring* [closing], Satan will be loosed for a Little Season. Of course the Scriptures do not say how long the “close” will be. It

could be a year or perhaps a month, but the terminal portion of the Millennial Age—of whatever length—is the period of the Adversary’s loosing. This understanding harmonizes the chronology, the Seven Creative Days, and the Millennium with a distinct point of time rather than an overlapping and/or two conflicting thousand-year periods. The Day of Christ, the *parousia*, is a thousand years long. To make the mediatorial reign also a full thousand years would mean either that Jesus’ reign over the world began at the same time or that the Day of Christ is longer than a thousand years. Neither premise is correct.

**Q:** Psalm 110:2 reads, “The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” Was Jehovah telling Jesus to rule in the midst of his enemies?

**A:** Yes. God will put all things under Jesus at the beginning of the exercise of the Millennial reign, throughout the reign, and to the end of the reign over earth. At the start of the reign, God will give Jesus the authority to put down insubordination. With the inclusion of Revelation 11:17, which says that God will take unto Himself His great power and reign, we can see that the reign of God and the reign of Christ are synonymous, and so are the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ. Nevertheless, God’s authority is stronger than that of Jesus, for God will empower Jesus to reign. Therefore, if Jesus is reigning now, then so is God, which makes no sense with all the evil and the fact that Satan is still the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4).

The reign over the world, which is a feature of the Second Presence, cannot be divided into different phases. In other words, it is incorrect to say that in one period of time, only Christ reigns and that later Christ and the Church will reign. There are different phases of the presence, but the reign has only one (singular) phase. The reign will be *authoritative*. Jesus will mean business!

**Comment:** It is demeaning to say that Jesus’ reign has begun when we realize that it is God’s reign too. Almighty God has *authority and power*.

**Reply:** When the reign occurs, the people will know it. The Time of Trouble with evil powers (evil men and angels) is one thing, but God’s intervention with judgments, comparable to the Flood, will be the reign. When Jesus was in the boat on the Sea of Galilee in the storm, the angry waves pictured the earlier trouble, not the reign. The beginning of the reign occurred when the waves were stilled: “Peace, be still” (Mark 4:39). The raging elements pictured the evil activity of Satan and his host. Stated another way, the great Time of Trouble is the Day of God’s Wrath. The reign will be preceded by the wrath of men and angels—retribution. The manifestation of God’s displeasure in defeating Gog and host and in delivering the Holy Remnant at the time of Jacob’s Trouble will be the start of the reign.

God is the great Emperor of the universe. His will is being done in heaven but not down here on earth at the present time in a direct sense. It is true that everything is under His control, but He will not exercise His will on earth until He takes to Himself His great power and reigns. God has the prerogative, but He is not yet bringing evil men into line.

During the permission of evil, God has been exercising His great power of the universe with the one exception of planet Earth, where His power is exercised only within certain limits. For example, not one of the consecrated can die before it is his or her time. With regard to the public at large, God’s will is not recognized as being done on earth, yet He is aware of all that happens. When He reigns forever and ever, the exercise of His will on earth will be recognized.

**Comment:** Verses 27 and 28 refute the Trinity by showing two personalities.

**Reply:** And it is clearly stated that at the end of his reign, Jesus will become subservient to the Father. Certainly there will not be equal authority under a Triune Godhead! As a result of the



dispute between Arius and Athanasius about the Divinity of God, the birth of the Trinity was spawned by the Council of Nicaea, with Constantine presiding. The enemies of the truth were victorious, and Athanasius was temporarily rewarded with honors.

Jesus will reign until Adamic death ceases and either real life or extinction comes to each individual depending on obedience. Several Scriptures indicate that many will not obey in the Kingdom Age.

**Comment:** The death that ceases will have to be “Adamic,” for Second Death will always be a possibility.

**Reply:** Yes. A billion years from now, with all of the people who will be created and placed on other planets in other solar systems, it would not be reasonable to think that every single person who ever lives after the Kingdom Age will be faithful, that there will not be even one failure. Any individual who disobeys will immediately bring extinction upon himself because all will be acquainted with the history of earth and the permission of evil. All will know the fruits of both obedience and disobedience, so there will be no excuse for disobedience. Second Death will always be viable to any individual who disobeys after the Kingdom Age. Only the Little Flock, having immortality, will never be liable to death.

The Sinaitic manuscript dates back to the fourth century, that is, to sometime during the 300s. The Sinaitic was one of 50 copies that Emperor Constantine ordered to be made under his authority. The name “Sinaitic” was later attached to the manuscript because of those 50 copies, the one that lasted was found in the 1800s in St. Catherine’s Monastery at Mount Sinai. At the time it was discovered, about a third of the manuscript was in the wastebasket. A Greek scholar named Tischendorf happened to be visiting the monastery to examine manuscripts. While sitting at the table, he noticed a number of rolls in the wastebasket. When he pulled out the manuscript, he could see, to his astonishment, that the Greek capital letters indicated it had been penned sometime prior to the Byzantine period. Realizing the manuscript’s antiquity, he immediately put aside his other work and translated it. He found that it contained the Scriptures. What a unique and providential happening! The one manuscript that still exists today but was written at the time of Constantine was recognized by Tischendorf as of such importance that he sent it back to the emperor of Russia in Petrograd. When, in subsequent years, the Russian Czar fell on hard times financially, the British Museum offered to buy that manuscript, and Russia accepted. Therefore, one of the original 50 copies of the Sinaitic manuscript is in the British Museum today.

Christ will be made a king and a priest “for ever [Greek *aion*, that is, for the Kingdom Age] after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:6). Since a priest helps the weak and the sick to repent and reform, the priestly aspect of Jesus will cease at the end of the Kingdom.

**1 Cor. 15:29** Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

**1 Cor. 15:30** And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

An understanding of present truth is needed to get the full import of verses 29 and 30. “Else what shall they [the believers] do which are baptized for the [world of mankind, who are] dead [in trespasses and sin]?” Verse 29 is a good verse to prove the Church’s share in the sin offering. Notice that Paul did not say, “Else why are we baptized unto death?” but “Why are we baptized for the dead ones [*plural*—that is, for others]?” Baptism, full immersion in water, is a symbol of doing God’s will unto death, but that is not what Paul said here. He was making the point that baptism is *on behalf of others*, as well as on behalf of ourselves. Therefore, the Church’s dying on behalf of others is their participation in the sin offering for the world.

In the Tabernacle arrangement, the goat was treated as follows: “Then shall he [Aaron] kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for [on behalf of] the *people*, and bring his [the goat’s] blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat” (Lev. 16:15). The goat did not die for its own sins but for the sins of the people; that is, it died on behalf of others. Jesus died for the Church and the world, and the Church dies for the sins of the people. Jesus’ blood is first applied to the Church. Therefore, Leviticus chapters 9 and 16 show a sequential application of the blood: (1) the bullock justifies the goat, and (2) the justified goat is sacrificed on behalf of the people.

In verses 29 and 30, Paul was asking, “Why should we teach the subject of the Church’s share in the sin offering if there is not to be a cancellation of sin and a resurrection of mankind in the future? What is the point of our being baptized and dying on behalf of others to redeem them from death if they will not be raised from death? Why should we suffer if mankind will not come out of the grave?” To go through all the self-denial and cross bearing for Christ as a part of the sin offering would be foolish if there were no resurrection.

There are two baptisms for the Christian: (1) the death of the human will as shown by water immersion and (2) actual death. The actual death is the sin offering. Paul was saying, “I wrote this whole fifteenth chapter to prove there is a resurrection, a revitalization of a dead race. The baptism referred to here is not water immersion but a baptism for resurrection life on behalf of those who are dead.” Paul carried the subject of baptism to a higher plane of thinking. The Little Flock have been baptized for others. As part of their reward, they will be instrumental in lifting up humankind. This thought harmonizes with the prophecy of Rebekah, “Be thou the mother of thousands of millions” (Gen. 24:60). In the Kingdom Age, Jesus will be the Life-giver, and the Church will nurture and mother the human race. Just as a human father and mother each have a role in raising a child, so it will be with Jesus and the Church. For that reason, Paul said, “If there were no resurrection of the dead, then all this symbolism and sacrifice would be null and void.” The underlying theme of this chapter is the *resurrection* of various classes—“every man in his own order” (verse 23).

“Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?” The Christian does so because of the hope of a future life and helping mankind—the sick, the infirm—up the highway of holiness, plus the personal reward of being with Jesus as a spirit being and getting the divine nature. All of these hopes would be meaningless if there were no resurrection of the dead.

**1 Cor. 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.**

Paul protested strongly with regard to the Corinthians’ rejoicing over their false doctrines and reasonings. They were rejoicing, and he was dying. Paul did not speak mildly and reason softly with them, for these doctrines were damaging. He frequently brought himself into the picture with the repeated use of the pronoun “I” in order to emphasize that they should listen to an apostle and not to the false teachers. The Corinthian brethren should have noticed that Paul’s behavior comported with his doctrine. No matter how fluently the others spoke, they were teaching false doctrines and were not apostles. In fact, Paul said, “Evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” (verse 33). Thus it was proper for him to call attention to himself.

Paul had heard about the conduct of the Corinthians, as well as their confidence in their standing with the Lord, but their rejoicing was based on wrong principles. For example, today some televangelists teach that those who obey God will prosper in temporal matters. In other words, it is claimed that God rewards Christians with the pleasures of this life and prosperity. But the Christian has rounded-out, mixed experiences of sunshine and rain, summer and winter, the south wind and the north wind, to help develop character (Song 4:16). The Christian is rewarded *spiritually*. Sometimes an individual is aware of a spiritual reward, but for the most

part, there is no cognizance in the present life, for treasures are being laid up in heaven to be disclosed to the Little Flock later by the Father (Matt. 6:20).

The false teaching negated suffering, but Paul said, “I die daily.” With the damaging doctrine that the dead are not raised, some of the brethren relaxed and thought they did not have to suffer with Christ. Others felt that the resurrection was past and that they were living in the Kingdom and might not have to die. There was quite a conglomeration of error.

In saying, “I die daily,” Paul was referring to the death of the human will. If dying for the Christian is daily, then so is baptism. Baptism is more than just the act of consecration or the performance of the symbol. Jesus said in Luke 12:50, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” Baptism is both progressive and terminating. Verse 31 was part of Paul’s rebuttal to those who declared there is no resurrection of the dead.

The belief that there is no resurrection left the door open for a looser lifestyle. In addition, the hopes of brethren who held this doctrine were not spiritual. Scriptures such as “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” lost their thrust (Rev. 2:10). Paul was telling the Corinthians, “If what you are saying is true about the resurrection, then all of my preaching that originally led you to accept Christ and consecrate has no meaning. If you are correct, my life is in vain, for I should be living according to the flesh and getting as much pleasure as possible before I die. Don’t you realize that your objective should be the hope of a future life with Christ?”

The King James translators, who realized the spiritual hope, felt that Paul was protesting the doctrine of no resurrection and the fact that it was being put forth in a bold manner by those who proclaimed it. Not only were the false teachers boasting, but some of them felt they were equal or even superior to Paul in honor and stature. However, Paul said that persecution and suffering are proofs that a Christian is being recognized by the Father. Persecution and opposition discipline and develop one as a new creature to be bold and strong in the truth. The purpose of persecution is to ultimately give rest and reward beyond the veil.

Not believing in a resurrection led to laxity and thinking that persecution was not necessary. Brethren who held this false doctrine were beginning to view matters from exactly the wrong standpoint. In short, Paul was protesting with regard to their rejoicing. In spite of the literal Greek, the King James translators seem to have hit on the theme more correctly than the *Diaglott*. Paul was upset with the boasting of the false teachers and their lack of persecution. Elsewhere in his epistles, he mentioned how other churches were suffering for the truth’s sake, and he commended the brethren accordingly, especially those of Thessalonica. This doctrine of the dead not rising was not only injurious but also unscriptural.

The Scriptures show that death is necessary for a spirit resurrection, for a change to spirit nature. “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50). “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die” (1 Cor. 15:36). Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). What is brought forth is not the same as what went into the ground. The kernel of wheat is changed in form to something radically different: a sheaf bearing fruit and many seeds that can later multiply.

Another Scripture is 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” The word “spirit” is in the dative case, which means “to” or “for.” In other words, Jesus was put to death in the flesh but was raised to spirit life. He was not raised to immortality or the divine nature when he first came forth from the grave, for he had not yet ascended to

heaven. He remained here, appearing on and off to the apostles for 40 days. For only a small fraction of the 40 days did he commingle with the disciples to prove that he was indeed alive but was different. He could now go through locked doors, change his appearance and clothes at will, come and go as the wind, and disappear. The purpose of the variety of manifestations was to teach that it was he but that he was now in a superior form. He could not be a divine being at the time, for he had not yet been glorified. He had simply been raised from death in the flesh to life as a spirit being. If he were a divine being at this time, no human being could have seen him, for no man can see God and live (John 1:18; 5:37). The most that humanity has “seen” of God is to hear His voice, as when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:17). Jesus was raised spirit, and then, when he ascended on high, he was glorified and given an honor far above the other angels (Phil. 2:9). In this fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, not only was Paul teaching that the hope of the Christian is a new life beyond the grave with a new body in a new clime in the spirit realm, but also little nuances of truth were conveyed in his explanations that help us understand a tiny bit more about life after death, especially for the Christian.

**Comment:** When Jesus appeared after his resurrection, he taught the disciples to recognize him not by the way he looked but according to his character and mannerisms.

**Reply:** Yes, he showed that it was really *he*. They could recognize him if they listened to his words, for he still reasoned the same way.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus depended on spirit beings to assist him in doing certain works when he spoke with authority. For instance, when Jesus walked on the water, an ice road was formed underneath—the water was congealed into a hardness that enabled him to walk on the surface. Also, when he produced the coin from the mouth of a fish to pay the tax, we can be sure that angels in heaven assisted in the miracle. However, when Jesus was raised to spirit nature after his resurrection, he could then do astounding things himself.

Paul’s dying daily was the mark and proof of his apostleship. He knew more than any of the others, he had more visions, and he talked more with the Lord, but commensurate with these qualifications, he endured more suffering—beatings, persecutions, and difficult experiences. Just as these were the evidences for Paul, so it is with the Christian. We should note and follow the example of those who suffer for the truth and do not compromise, for such are truly living the gospel of truth. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution [of some kind]” (2 Tim. 3:12).

**Q:** How did Paul die daily?

**A:** Consider the Lord’s goat that was slain. Its being tied to the pillar of the Holy represented the submission, or death, of the will. Subsequently, the flesh was destroyed: choice organs were burned on the altar, and the hide and dung were burned outside the camp. The sum total was that time was required to consume the flesh, whereas the will, or mind, was already dead to all effects. If, mentally speaking, we are dead in Christ as humans, beheaded for his testimony, then the process of going into the tomb takes a little time. The flesh is being melted away by fire on the altar in the Court and in the particular place outside the camp where the remains of the animal were burned. Thus the animal was wholly consumed but not instantly. Jesus buried his will at Jordan, having no more human aspirations. Now he lived only as a new creature. His old creature submitted and was put under. He sacrificed sleep and endured sufferings and weariness from the standpoint of the old man. At the same time, he was given compensatory blessings so that he grew more and more as a new creature. Thus there is a contradiction. By putting to death the flesh, the Christian makes the spirit alive more and more. If one dies faithfully, he is completely a new creature in reality—he is a spirit being.

**1 Cor. 15:32** If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what

**advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink: for tomorrow we die.**

Paul fought with figurative beasts at Ephesus, that is, with individuals who differed with him doctrinally. These men of repute strenuously differed with Paul and his teaching, and the apostle was persecuted as a result. He had to battle with these advocates of error in the figurative arena of gladiatorial combat, or fighting with lions. Satan, who was behind the opposition, is likened to a lion (1 Pet. 5:8).

The following are some examples of Paul's fighting with "beasts":

1. "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:8).
2. "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of *two years*; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:8-10). For three months, Paul disputed in the synagogue in Ephesus. Then he departed and had weekday meetings in the nature of debates in the school of Tyrannus for two years, perhaps facing several individuals consecutively. With little or no visible success, he offered rebuttals time after time. Meanwhile, some on the sidelines benefited because they became Christians at a later date. Paul would have been physically exhausted. He was truly dying daily and suffering for Christ. He stayed in Ephesus for such a long time because the opposition was so persistent that he wanted to make sure Christians in that area were relatively established before he left them. Satan must have been quite strong in Ephesus, one proof being carved footprints that led to the house of prostitution.
3. "So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way" (Acts 19:22,23). Paul had some vicious infighting with the sword of the Spirit.
4. "Alexander the coppersmith did me [Paul] much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14).

After taking all the opposition and persecution, if when Paul died, there was no resurrection, he would be "of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). Consider how much he suffered—he was stoned, beaten, shipwrecked, imprisoned, persecuted, etc. (2 Cor. 11:23-28). When he and Silas were put in prison following a severe beating, they sang hymns with their backs still bleeding. An observation of Paul's manner of life—his faithfulness and steadfastness of purpose in his experiences and sufferings—showed that he was 100 percent convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that the Hebrew Scriptures are the true Word of God.

The Grecian philosophy at that time was, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Being fatalists, they felt that if there is no hope, why not live for pleasure?

Persecution down through the Gospel Age has taken various forms: verbal opposition, boycott, physical suffering, disfellowship on improper grounds, banishment, financial loss, etc. Thus far there has been little physical persecution in the Laodicean period. To date, persecution has been more along the lines of lack of recognition and evil speaking, but of course in the not-too-distant future, the persecution will be quite different.

**1 Cor. 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.**

Paul showed earlier, from a character standpoint, that the Christian cannot dabble in immoral practices without getting corrupted. Now he was saying that the same principle applies to the teaching aspect. Thus a little leaven can leaven the whole lump from either standpoint (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9).

Here in verse 33, the thrust was against false teachers, for “evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct].” One must beware of inculcating serious error in doctrine. Surely to teach that there is no resurrection of the dead is a major doctrine. For example, it was not necessary for the Church to see all down the Gospel Age that they will have a share in the sin offering, but it was necessary to have the hope of a resurrection.

If an individual remains in an atmosphere where the teaching is corrupt, he will be adversely affected, even if he opposes the teaching in the beginning. A person can be corrupted by false teaching, by the false conduct of a group, or even by a best friend who is likable but corrupt. Leaven can pertain to either doctrine or conduct.

Paul knew that the controversy in the class about there being no resurrection could have a deleterious effect on the congregation as a whole, not only because of the difference of opinion but also because of undercutting the gospel principle of “no cross, no crown.” To answer the situation, Paul first called attention to his own experiences in connection with preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. As he went from country to country preaching in various places, he usually received persecution for his teachings. Moreover, he was saying that if this doctrine of no resurrection was harbored, if it was given equal recognition, it would undercut the faith of the brethren. It would be better to get out of that atmosphere than to allow or tolerate the doctrine. Paul was advising the brethren to either remove the false teachers or leave the class.

**1 Cor. 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.**

Paul said, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not.” Having a hope for the future should have awakened the Corinthians from their lethargy. Not believing in a resurrection had a damaging effect that could lead to fatalist reasoning; namely, “Let us enjoy the pleasures of sin because there is no resurrection.”

Imagine how Paul would have delivered this admonition in person had opportunity afforded! He would have spoken as loudly and forcefully as he could. With verse 34 being part of his letter, we should try to discern the emphasis. He was saying, “Get out of this stupor, and sin not. Do not harbor such thinking.” Paul likened the doctrine of no resurrection to *sinning* in thought because it contradicted Scripture. “For some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” Clearly, he was rebuking those who taught this false doctrine.

**1 Cor. 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?**

Those who did not believe in a resurrection asked sarcastically, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” Instead of suffering persecution and dying daily, they felt that the present body and living for pleasure were adequate.

The Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection, posed an insincere question to Jesus, thinking he could not answer it: “If a woman had seven successive husbands, who will be her husband in the resurrection?” (Luke 20:27-33). Similarly, the false teaching element in Corinth asked insincere questions in an attempt to undercut Paul’s thinking and philosophy. They knew that the body decomposes when a person dies, and they mistakenly thought Paul was teaching

that the same body would be resurrected. To them, therefore, the destruction of the body meant the destruction of all future hope. Not only did they lack faith in the power of God—for He could reassemble the atoms if that were His plan—but they were being hypercritical and using their *natural* senses and analyses rather than scriptural thinking. Besides, a new body will be given in the resurrection, as Paul showed.

**1 Cor. 15:36** **Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:**

Notice how strongly Paul answered the false teaching element, who raised these questions: “Thou fool!” Jesus said, “Whosoever shall say [to his brother], Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire [judgment]” (Matt. 5:22). However, the implication is that these words can be said if a strong warning is necessary. Some people are so kind, delicate, and genteel in their thinking that they feel love is never unkind or blunt. Instead of the quality of being “slow to anger,” they feel the Christian should not get angry at all, but that is not the case (James 1:19). Here Paul correctly told the false teachers (plural), not an individual, that their reasoning was foolish.

Incidentally, we must not judge one’s final destiny, or our own standing will be in jeopardy. It is one thing to call a person a fool when he takes a stand that blatantly contradicts God’s Word—for example, a fool says in his heart there is no God—but a person is in jeopardy if he condemns a person to Second Death. A serious charge has to be seriously considered, but a Christian should be willing to risk his life to defend the faith.

A person making such a charge can be in danger of judgment *if he is wrong* but not if he is right. Speaking harshly should not be done carelessly, however. When speaking strongly against someone, we must be sure we are absolutely right. For instance, the Scriptures say to *warn* the unruly. Sometimes the warning has to be stern in order to be grasped by the individual. Both Jesus and Paul issued strong warnings. Jesus said to the two walking to Emmaus, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25).

As Christians, we have to know we are right in speaking out strongly, for otherwise we would be jeopardizing ourselves. On the one hand, if we love a person, we should be willing to lay down our life for him. On the other hand, if we speak idle words and are too quick with the tongue with strong statements, we will be held accountable. If we wrongly call a person a fool, we will go into Second Death. (Although the phrase “without a cause” in Matthew 5:22 is spurious, the thought is implied and correct.)

The problem with speaking softly when a stern warning is required is that the hearer(s) will simply say, “We differ on that point,” but evil communications that corrupt good conduct are dangerous. In fact, an erroneous point of great importance could undermine the character structure of the hopes of the Christian.

Matthew 5:23,24 reads, “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Jesus was speaking about a case where a brother had a *justifiable* argument that an injustice had been done to him. Many brethren are offended without a cause when they are rebuked, and sometimes they should even be ashamed. More credence and consideration are often given to the wrongdoer than to the one who is wronged. In this text, the guilty party should go to the innocent one.

**Q:** Can brethren be mesmerized to their own condition? How can they be so well controlled that no emotion of anger is left in their members?

**A:** That is one extreme, for the Scriptures say, “Be ye angry, and sin not” (Eph. 4:26). In other words, the emotion of anger is proper in its proper place.

**Comment:** When a principle is violated, strong words are sometimes needed, and then the stand and/or reserve must be maintained—even for a long time if necessary—unless the matter is remedied.

“That which thou sowest is not quickened [made alive], except it die.” Those who felt the dead are not raised up were going by the natural senses. Paul warned that their reasoning was foolish and then proceeded to show that even their own “astute” reasoning was weak. He answered their argument with their own reasoning: “The body decomposes, and the wind blows the gases away. Or perhaps a lion eats the body, and the parts come out as excrement. Doesn’t a seed that is planted (sown, buried) die and then grow forth in a completely different form? And so the body dies in the present life, but the individual comes forth in the resurrection in an entirely different body.”

There is another aspect to Paul’s saying, “That which you sow is not quickened unless it dies.” Not only does the bare grain disintegrate and no longer resemble what it was before it went into the ground, but the grain is not made alive unless it is put in the ground and dies. The outer encasement, or shell, of the seed dies, and then the germ, or kernel of life, begins to grow. Therefore, the process of dying daily must precede life. Those whose philosophy does not follow this reasoning are not looking for suffering and persecution.

Doctrines refer to teaching; practices refer to conduct. Good doctrines and good practices bring good results. Bad doctrines and bad practices bring bad results.

The expression “*Thou fool*, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die” reminds us of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5:22, “Whosoever shall say [to his brother], *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire.” How are the two statements reconciled? Paul was speaking to a company of brethren, not to one individual. He was not singling out and addressing a brother by name but was hypothetically saying that those who espoused this doctrine were foolish, for they were sinning against themselves. It is different when we speak to someone personally in that manner. Jesus collectively called the scribes and Pharisees a “generation of vipers,” “whited sepulchres,” etc. Thus the circumstances and the manner are the determining factors.

**1 Cor. 15:37** And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

**1 Cor. 15:38** But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

Paul continued to use common-sense logic. Bare grain is sown, but it comes forth in a new, beautiful, and different form—wheat, rye, barley, or something else. What powerful reasoning! Paul said, “You sow not the body that shall be, but bare grain. The seed may come forth as wheat or some other grain, for God will give a new body as it pleases Him.” The bare grain that is sown comes forth in resurrection with a different body.

With regard to not believing in the resurrection, Paul was saying, “You fool. You have not considered something that is right in front of your eyes, for as farmers, you plant seed.” He was combating the Jewish Sadducee influence in the class at Corinth.

**Q:** Is the bare grain the soul?

**A:** Yes, the bare grain, the kernel, is inside the outer shell. Verses 37 and 38 are another proof that the soul does not consist of the body and the breath of life. The soul is an entity unto itself, but it has to be in a body and have breath in order to be a *living* soul. Without the body and the breath, it is a soul in death.



Some seeds are so similar in appearance that we do not know what kind they are until they germinate and plants come forth out of the ground. This statement is particularly true of wheat seed versus tare seed.

Verse 38 is more properly stated in the present tense: “God giveth it [the soul, the entity] a body as it pleaseth him, and to every seed his own body.” The Little Flock will be given the divine nature. The Great Company will get a spirit body but not immortality. Mankind will be raised as human beings. This fifteenth chapter particularly focuses on the spiritual seed, but the same principle applies to the earthly seed.

Even though God is the highest being who exists, Jesus described Him as “spirit,” but He is a spirit being on the highest plane possible—He is not just on the plane of the divine nature but at the top of the scale of the divine nature. “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24 RSV). Thus there are gradations of honor, or glory, in the spirit realm. Both the Little Flock and the Great Company will be raised “spirit,” but they will be on different levels.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

**Reply:** The Pastor defined those “many mansions” as spirit planes of existence. We would add that they are residences on those various planes of existence. A proof is that above the King’s Chamber in the Great Pyramid are Construction Chambers. The top level, which is peaked and shaped like a pyramid, being a complete unit in itself, represents the divine nature, the highest form of life possessing the spirit nature. The Scriptures seem to indicate five spirit planes of existence.

With regard to the “it” of verse 38 being a soul, God has a soul, all spirit beings have souls, humans have souls, and even all beasts have souls, but they are different categories. The soul is not the body. We usually give the simple definition that the breath plus the body equals the soul, but that is not correct. When the body dies, the soul goes back to its Maker, to God, who giveth it. The breath, or air, that one expires with does not go back to the Creator. Rather, the soul returns to Him. He keeps track of all souls. The Pastor used arguments to combat the idea that the soul is immortal, but he did not explain what the soul itself is. The soul is a separate entity, but a soul cannot live without a body. A soul must have a body of some kind in order to express itself; otherwise, it is dormant. The soul is like a live tape that is recorded. When the tape is removed from the recorder and put in its carrying case and stored, it is like a dead soul—a soul that exists but is not operating. The soul has to be put into a “machine” and played in order to hear, record, and speak.

Spirit beings have bodies in semblance but not in substance like humans. “The sons of God [in heaven, that is, the angels] saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Gen. 6:2). The resemblance is strikingly similar between angels and humans in that both have one head, two arms, two legs, etc. Moreover, just as man was created in the mental image of God and thus can reason and think and has a conscience and feelings, so that is true of spirit beings also. Human beings are very, very small in size and stature in comparison to spirit beings, but their shapes are the same.

Humans cannot see spirit beings as spirit beings because the flesh cannot see the invisible spirit. For a human being to see a spirit being, the latter would have to come down here and materialize, that is, assume a human form. The ability of angels to appear or disappear indicates they are superior to humans. There are multiple accounts in the Old Testament where angels appeared to man looking like human beings. For example, three angels appeared to

Abraham (Gen. 18:1,2). Not until he noticed their behavior after a while did he begin to realize the three were superior beings. On other occasions, angels appeared as glorious beings with either a shining face or an illuminated body to overawe man. Gabriel appeared to Daniel with a sufficiency of glory to knock the prophet to the ground so that he had to be assisted up on his feet (Dan. 8:16-18).

The “daughters of men” were a new and different creation in that they were *female*. In the Scriptures, angels were always seen as *males*, and were called the “sons of God.” Not only was the creation of Eve unusual, but she and her progeny of daughters were so beautiful that as time went on, some of the angels in heaven were overcome with their attractiveness. As a result, they materialized and took unto themselves wives of the daughters of men whomsoever they chose. This intermarriage gave rise to mythology. Therefore, what has come down through history as mythology is a distortion of reality.

Wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that the God who created the earth with plants, animals, flowers, trees, and humans created similarities up in heaven? Wouldn't there be houses—“mansions” as Jesus called them—up in heaven? And there would be trees, flowers, beautiful scenery, etc. The Pastor introduced this subject in the *First Volume* in the chapter entitled “Natures Separate and Distinct,” opening up a whole avenue of thought.

**1 Cor. 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.**

**1 Cor. 15:40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.**

There are different kinds of flesh: man, beasts, fish, and birds. And there are different celestial bodies: sun, moon, and stars. Of course the stars are bigger than our sun and moon, but from our perspective, the sun looms very large and far outshines the stars. Therefore, Paul was not speaking of their actual value but of their value as it appears to man. From that standpoint, the sun is at the top of the list, the moon is a lesser light, and the stars are even lesser lights. The same is true with regard to the different kinds of flesh. Man is at the top of the list, followed in order by beasts, fish, and birds. Fish are ranked ahead of birds because of the size and intelligence of the larger ones such as dolphins.

Paul was comparing heavenly things and earthly things and pointing out the variety. Just as different kinds of flesh beings are on earth, so different kinds of spirit beings are in the celestial realm—with distinctions of nature and kind. Reason tells us that as there are animals, trees, flowers, rivers, etc., on earth, so they exist in the spirit world too. The terrestrial is an image of the celestial. In other words, heaven and earth have similarities of beauty, but they are different realms.

The one thing in common with the four examples Paul gave—men, beasts, fish, and birds—is flesh. Incidentally, Paul mentioned the “flesh” of fish, yet for many years, the Roman Catholic Church forbid the eating of meat on Friday and allowed the eating of fish. Here is an example of the lack of familiarity with the Word in the nominal Church.

The statement in verse 40, “There are also celestial bodies,” immediately indicates that there is some similarity to flesh beings but on a different scale. Although made of a different substance, there is a similarity of different gradations of spirit life just as there are four illustrations of flesh life down here on earth. In heaven, then, there can be a spiritual counterpart with male beings, animals, fish, and an environment with water, trees, etc. The Apostle Paul opened up a subject that is foreign to normal thinking because from time immemorial, almost all mankind who are not familiar with Scripture imagine that one who dies and goes to heaven still has a body of

flesh. They do not realize that one must be comparable to the environment in which he lives. If one is living in a spirit world, everything is of spirit—very real but not of flesh substance.

Thus verses 39 and 40 open up an instructional realm of thought. In verse 40, Paul indicated not only similarities in the celestial realm to what is down here but also differences in glory. The words he used in contradistinction are “celestial” and “terrestrial,” and celestial “glory” and terrestrial “glory,” yet there are also similarities on the different planes of being.

**1 Cor. 15:41** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

**Comment:** The end of verse 41 is a key Scripture to show gradations of honor in heaven. “For one star differeth from another star in glory.”

**Reply:** Yes. The Parables of the Talents and the Pounds also show differences of honor in glory in connection with stewardship. The Parable of the Sower is another proof, for some will bring forth “an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Matt. 13:8).

When Paul mentioned that there is “one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars,” what perspective was he taking to try to get us on the same wavelength of thought? The sun is the most important celestial body. Even though our sun is insignificant compared to other stars in the heavens, Paul was reasoning from our standpoint—from the standpoint of one who is down here looking up at the heavens. The biggest star we see is our own sun. The next largest celestial body is the moon, followed by the stars, which are pinpoints at night. However, there are differences of glory because of differences in intensity of light: “one star differeth from another star in glory.” The stars are scaled with the brightest being characterized by the number 1. As the numbers go up the scale, the stars diminish in brightness from the human standpoint. The sun usually remains the same in brightness, and a full moon does not vary unless, of course, clouds come in between. Therefore, Paul used the stars, rather than the sun and the moon, to depict differences of glory and to show there is quite a variety. Paul used practical reasoning, going from the known to the unknown.

Jesus used the same type of reasoning in likening the sun to a greater glory and giving it a spiritual meaning. Collectively with Jesus, when all are glorified together, those who make their calling and election sure will be as the sun shining in the firmament. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43). Incidentally, the Ancient Worthies are represented by the stars: “And they [the Little Flock] that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they [the Ancient Worthies] that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

Paul had to adapt his reasoning not to the reality of the size of the stars, the moon, and the sun but to what our little minds down here can perceive. For thousands of years, man thought that the sun was larger than the stars and that the earth was flat. All kinds of weird notions prevailed. Therefore, Paul used the little understanding in our brain to try to introduce a large, new, elevated plane of thinking.

**1 Cor. 15:42** So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

**1 Cor. 15:43** It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

**1 Cor. 15:44** It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

“So also is *the* resurrection of the dead.” In verses 42-44, Paul was applying the resurrection to Christians, to the dead in Christ, not to the world of mankind, for only those who are more than overcomers will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power. Not even the Great Company will be raised in glory in the fullest sense of the word. Paul was exhorting Christians to be sure they believed in a resurrection of the dead. Incidentally, ministers often improperly quote these verses in regard to an unconsecrated individual.

“It [the soul, the being, the individual, not his flesh or breath] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It [the soul] is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it [the soul] is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It [the soul] is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” Some of these promises are a *process* that terminates with a condition because the divine nature has not yet been given to the raised saints. How high one eventually goes and how much glory he receives are determined by God’s judgment of the individual. Since 1878, one who makes his calling and election sure is raised instantly at death—but to spirit nature in earth’s atmosphere. Jesus, too, was first raised a spirit being. Then 40 days later he ascended to his Father in heaven.

**Comment:** Similarly, the Ancient Worthies will first be raised as human beings, and then, at the end of the Kingdom Age, they will receive spirit nature.

**Reply:** Yes, there are stages of raising.

With regard to the soul, the Pastor concentrated his efforts on disproving the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—the thought that everyone has a spark of immortality in him. However, abundant evidence shows that the soul is something specific, an entity unto itself, which goes to God. The souls of all humans, consecrated or unconsecrated, go to God at death and are put into His “bank,” to be determined later what body each will receive in the resurrection.

**Comment:** The illustration of the soul being like a tape that is put into a recorder has been helpful.

**Reply:** Yes, but of course the tape is material, and the soul is spirit. The Lord’s Word is so deep that the most anyone can do is scratch the surface. Consider the demons who said, “My name is Legion: for we are *many*.” More than a thousand reduced beings were in just one Gadarene (Mark 5:1-13). Spirit beings can expand to their normal size, and they can contract to a minute size if they so desire. Human beings can contract to only a very limited degree, for example, squeezing an open hand into a fist, whereas spirit beings have unusual powers. However, the extraordinary thing is that the mind of a human can be equal to that of a spirit being—and even superior through the power of the Holy Spirit. Size has nothing to do with one’s standing with God. How miraculous it is that man has the ability to reason just like an angel!

In some Scriptures, the sun pictures The Christ. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament [the sun]” (Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43). And the stars can picture the spiritual resurrection of the Ancient Worthies at the end of the Kingdom: “They that turn [or lead] many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). However, these pictures do not apply here in verses 41-44. Context is very important for understanding symbolism. Here Paul used the sun to picture Jesus as the Head of the Church, the moon to symbolize the apostles, and the stars to represent the rest of the Little Flock, among whom there will be gradations of glory. The seven messengers to the Church will have the highest positions of glory among the stars.

The primary thrust of this fifteenth chapter is directed to the Little Flock. The body to be

received by the Great Company class, who will get life and a better resurrection than the world of mankind, would not be considered incorruptible or glorious. The sleeping saints, who have been raised but are not yet in the Father's presence, are in earth's atmosphere, where they await the completion of the final members of the body of Christ, so that the 144,000 will be presented as a whole assembly before the Father.

**Comment:** Philippians 3:20,21 is an appropriate cross-reference for the Little Flock: "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body [into a spirit being], that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

**Reply:** This passage is characteristic of Paul's thinking, for he pointed the consecrated to the highest goal that can be attained. The Apostle John was broader in the promises he gave, for he had a high estimate of even eternal life, let alone immortality.

**Comment:** How strange! Many churches have taught that Jesus had a *bodily* resurrection, when verse 44 says his body members are sowing a *spiritual* body.

**Reply:** Yes, according to their reasoning, the Church will have a higher body than Jesus. They believe not only that Jesus will return with wounds in his hands but that every eye will literally see him, whereas a spirit being cannot be seen by human beings unless he miraculously assumes a natural form. Also, a "glorious" body would not have wounds in the hands, feet, and chest area with blood showing. So much of the theology that is taught today is not scriptural. People will fabricate a whole theme on just one single text and not compare other Scriptures that touch on the same subject.

Two skeletons were found at Masada. Presumably one skeleton was from the individual who committed suicide after killing the other Jews when it became obvious that the Romans would eventually get on top of the mount and torture them to death because of their rebellious nature in not submitting. Vessels of grain (seed) were also found at Masada, and the grain was in such good condition that it could be planted. The point is that just as grain has life, so we, as Christians, have real life, but that life can be lost if we are not faithful. When we accept Christ and his merit covers our sins, we are new creatures—we have a new life within us—but the strange thing is that the vessel, our body, which has this new life and hope in it, has to die.

Another remarkable phenomenon takes place. When a seed is put in the ground, it dies. In that seed is a tiny germ of life, but the rest of the small seed (about 98 percent of it) is material, or food. The germ in that seed cannot spring to life because it cannot digest the hard food that is stored as a seed. Thus a dormant life is inside a seed, but the seed itself underneath the shell—all the body material—decays and degenerates into such a fine-quality food that now the germ of life in the seed can feed on that material inside the shell. It feeds and grows just like a fetus grows in the womb of a woman. As the germ of life grows, it bursts the shell, and out comes the life in a completely different form. With wheat, for instance, a kernel, or bare grain, goes into the ground, and it comes forth not only as a stalk with sheaves but with kernels (many grains) of wheat.

Our Lord used the seed as a phenomenon. The seed is a miniature picture of the fetus in the womb of a woman, and the Scriptures frequently use that illustration. When the body dies, the new creature escapes into a resurrected life. Down through the Gospel Age, that was a delayed reaction, for people slept in the grave, but since 1878, the dead who have made their calling and election sure are raised in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

**Q:** With regard to the soul being sown in "dishonour," is the dishonor a result of the fall?

**A:** Yes. In addition, the dishonor can come from persecution for righteousness' sake and faithfulness to the truth.

The end of verse 44, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body," is like a climax to all that was stated previously in chapter 15. Paul now made this profound but simple statement as an axiom, as a statement of truth. Earlier verses were an explanation leading up to this statement.

**1 Cor. 15:45** And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

For the end of 1 Peter 3:18, the *Diaglott* interlinear has, "Being put to death indeed in [the] flesh, being made alive but in [the] spirit."

"The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Notice the difference in this comparison, the thrust of Paul's emphasis. When the first Adam was made, he could beget natural children, but he needed Eve to be the mother. (The name Eve means "mother of living," "mother of life.") And so, the last or Second Adam being made a quickening spirit means that the resurrected and glorified Jesus, a *spirit* being, can beget *spiritual* children. Today we have the advantage of being able to discuss these verses in more detail. Just as there are a natural body and a spirit body, so Adam could have natural children and the risen Jesus can have spiritual children. Jesus first raises the Little Flock members to spirit life, to the spirit plane in earth's atmosphere, and then later the Father will raise them to the divine nature. In other words, we do not believe that any saint who has made his calling and election sure and was raised in 1878 or subsequently has the divine nature yet.

**Comment:** The Father not only grants the divine nature and immortality to the Little Flock but also decides who gets life and who goes into Second Death.

**Reply:** Yes, and He decides the honors. When James and John Zebedee wanted to sit on the right and left side of Jesus in the Kingdom, the Master replied, "That decision is my Father's."

Although not Paul's emphasis here, another difference between the first Adam and the Second Adam is the following. The first Adam *was given* life; the Second Adam *is able to give* life. Even though Adam had children, those children were born with the death sentence in them. The first Adam was a father, or life-giver, to the human race. Jesus replaced Adam, and so the Second Adam from heaven is also a Life-giver. The first, as the recipient of life, was passive. The second, having the capability to give life, is active.

In addition to being the last or Second Adam, Jesus called himself "the Son of [the] man." In other words, all of the other sons of Adam were fallen, but "*the* [perfect] Son of [*the* perfect] man [Adam]" was the promised Ransom (or corresponding) price to cancel Adam's sin.

**Q:** Will Jesus give life on both the earthly and the spirit plane?

**A:** Yes, he makes alive the Church, raising them to spirit nature. John 6:39,40 states, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:54 corroborates this thought: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." And Philippians 3:21, which was quoted earlier, reads, "[The Lord Jesus Christ] Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body [that is, into a glorious likeness of his own body], according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Adam was made a living soul, but instead of just saying that Jesus, the Second Adam, was made a living spirit, Paul stated the matter in a more active sense. Not only was Jesus made a living spirit, but he was made a spirit with the capability of quickening life in others. Had Adam not sinned, he could have been the father of a living race on the earthly plane. However, Jesus was made a quickening spirit capable of giving life to others on both natural and spiritual planes. Moreover, in the future, Jesus and the Church will have the capability of populating other planets with physical beings.

While the comparison of the natural and the spiritual is not evident at first, it is actually mentioned here in referring to “the first man Adam” as natural. “The last [or second] Adam,” a spiritual being who is to be the Father of the human race as Adam was originally, will nurture, or restore, the fallen human race from the tomb. Verse 45, among other texts, shows that even Jesus was not raised immediately to the divine nature. When raised from the tomb and during the 40 days before his ascension, he appeared like an angel in different kinds of human form—a gardener, a stranger on the road to Emmaus, etc. This method of appearing was evidence to Jesus’ disciples that he who was dead was indeed now alive.

**1 Cor. 15:46** Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

Adam was a natural being placed in the Garden of Eden. When God breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of this form of a human, Adam “became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). Afterward came Jesus, “that which is spiritual.” God’s creation of Adam pertained to natural beings. After that came a spiritual order of beings, the New Creation.

**1 Cor. 15:47** The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

Verse 47 repeats the last part of verse 46 but from a slightly different perspective. The Second Adam in this illustration is not the Son of man down here but the heavenly Lord, who was raised as a spirit being and will come in his glory.

“The *first* man is of the earth, earthy: the *second* man is the Lord from heaven.” The words “first” and “second” show a time period. At the First Advent, the name of the “second man” was Michael, the Logos. He was not known as “the Lord from heaven” at that time, yet he frequently likened himself to being the Son of Adam by saying he was “the Son of [the] man.” The Jews knew that the promised Messiah was to be born of a woman, so they were looking for a marvelous human being who would lead them to victory and salvation. Thus, by using the expression “the Son of man,” Jesus identified himself, in a way, as the Second Adam. When Paul came on the scene, he used the terminology “the last [or second] Adam.” Just as there was a first Adam (and a first Eve), so there will be a second Adam (and a second Eve, the Church). Therefore, the term “the Lord from heaven” evidently refers to Jesus’ appearance during the Kingdom Age as the life-giving Father. Just as Adam was the *original* father of the human race, so Jesus will be the Father of the *regenerated* human race. As the Second Adam, he will resuscitate the same beings, awakening them from death.

Another picture that shows this principle is Noah in the new “world” after the Flood. Except for eight human beings—Noah, his three sons, and the four wives—the entire race was destroyed at the time of the Flood. Thus Noah is a picture of Jesus in the Kingdom. From this standpoint, Noah was a type of the Second Adam.

**1 Cor. 15:48** As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

Those who did not believe in a resurrection thought the afterlife was too ethereal and nebulous to be practical. The physical, which they could see and which had an appearance, form, matter, and substance, was real to them, whereas the afterlife was unreal. But Paul reasoned that that which is spiritual is like what we think is so real down here. Beings who occupy the spiritual realm have a form and likeness, just as there is a form and likeness to human beings. Paul was trying to come down to a level that the Corinthians could appreciate. The spiritual is very much like the “earthy,” only of different substance. There is appearance, form, shape, and reality to that which is spiritual. Paul was saying, “As is the earthy, so also is the heavenly.”

Paul pursued natural logic to reason from the known to the unknown. He took the earthly illustration of the component parts of God’s creation to reason on the heavenly realm. As is the earth—man, animals, trees, plants, houses, etc.—so is the spirit realm, having the same component parts, even if we cannot see them. Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). Paul was leading the Corinthians (and us) step by step as though they were little children in need of counsel. He provided line upon line of natural logic to reason on the spiritual.

**1 Cor. 15:49** And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

The spiritual is a *reality*; it *will follow*. Paul was reaffirming the distinction between that which is natural and that which is to come, the spiritual. There are likenesses in both realms. Stated another way, verse 49 contains a slight suggestion that spirit beings are similar to human beings, but they are heavenly, or spiritual, instead of earthy.

**1 Cor. 15:50** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

The reign, the Kingdom, the life, is not on this side of the veil. All of the Church class must pass through the portal of death, for “flesh and blood [the human nature] cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Paul was talking about the Little Flock. In addressing the consecrated who did not believe in a resurrection, he was trying to show that all of the Spirit-begotten who will comprise the Little Flock have to die before receiving their inheritance.

The Church class, the Gospel Age saints, are the “kingdom of God.” Restitution is merely an aspect of the future age in which the Kingdom class will help raise up humanity to life on the earthly plane. “The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High” (Dan. 7:27). Jesus said of John the Baptist, “He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11). Mankind will not inherit the Kingdom but will be subjects under the Kingdom. The ruling membership is the Little Flock.

The Kingdom of God will have an established order, or government, and within that order will be individuals of various ranks of authority. What the order will be beyond the Millennial Age, we do not know. The 12 apostles will sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel during the Kingdom, but that order will probably not extend into the illimitable future (Matt. 19:28). In other words, the relationship is likely to change in later generations. Just because the apostles lived at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry does not necessarily mean they are the 12 greatest and highest of the 144,000, for other members of the Little Flock may be superior character-wise to some of the apostles. Hence after the Millennium, there may be changes in honor within the arrangement. The Twelve were selected because they were on the scene at the time, but in the ages of ages, it is possible that some others of the 144,000 will be given a higher rank.

In no sense of the word can the Church be complete on this side of the veil at any time, even if



the door is shut and the feet members will make their calling and election sure. While the sealing in the forehead can be a fact, the reign will not take place until all of the 144,000 are beyond the veil (Rev. 7:4). There will be a sealing in the forehead on this side of the veil, but only God will know who is sealed until all of the 144,000 have died. Stated another way, there will come a point in time when God will not call anyone else because He knows who the feet members are on this side of the veil and their number will complete the 144,000. From the perspective of the consecrated still in the flesh, the principle is, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off" (1 Kings 20:11). However, at the moment of death, the feet members will probably know—as Jesus did when he said, "It is finished"—that they have made their calling and election sure (John 19:30). Paul said at the end of his life, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:8). He had a sensation that he would be faithful and that he had won a crown. Prior to that time, he said, "I count not myself to have apprehended" (Phil. 3:13). Therefore, just before their death, the last members may have the confidence that they have the Lord's approval. The complete and glorified Church—the stone cut out and set up—will smite the image on its feet (Dan. 2:34).

When Paul said, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," he was going back to verse 36, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." Intervening verses explain the difference between the natural and the spiritual.

**1 Cor. 15:51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

Paul declared his intention to speak about a "mystery." And what is that mystery? "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Paul got the information about this mystery and could speak about all not sleeping but being changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump because he had been "caught up to the third heaven" in a private revelation and vision (2 Cor. 12:2). He saw what would happen not only down here at the end of the age but also in the spirit realm (the "third heaven"). Paul also talked about this subject in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which was written earlier. In his understanding, he saw the resurrection of the sleeping saints in 1878. Thus he saw that some of the dead would be raised first, and later those who were alive and remained to the end of the age would be caught up. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

"We [the Little Flock] shall not all sleep [in death], but we shall all be changed [in resurrection]." All of the saints who died from Pentecost up until 1878 slept in death, and in 1878, they were awakened. Subsequent to that time, any who are of the Little Flock are changed instantly at death. In a moment, they go from death to life. Even if death is like the twinkling of an eye, the extinction of the present life still has to occur. Nothing is said about the Great Company in this context, for they will not be raised from death until the Little Flock is complete. Only the Little Flock have part in the first resurrection. Jesus is the first of the firstfruits, and the Little Flock are partakers of the first resurrection, not only from the standpoint of priority and importance but also from the standpoint of time. The order of resurrection is Jesus, Little Flock, Great Company, Ancient Worthies, and the world of mankind. Thus any of the Great Company who die now are sleeping in death.

What examples of “sleeping” in death are mentioned in the New Testament? (1) Lazarus slept in death. “These things said he [Jesus]: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*; but I go, that I may awake him out of *sleep*” (John 11:11). (2) When Stephen was stoned to death subsequent to Pentecost, he was said to be “asleep.” “And they stoned Stephen.... And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell *asleep*” (Acts 7:59,60). The Scriptures do not say Stephen went to heaven.

Paul was saying that toward the end of the Gospel Age, there would come a particular date at which the dead in Christ, who had been asleep in death since Pentecost, would be raised. Moreover, those who died as individuals after that mysterious future date would not sleep in the grave for any duration of time but would receive their change instantly. They would have to die, but their raising would be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

**Comment:** Matthew 27:52 is another corroboration of sleeping in death: “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which *slept* arose.”

**Reply:** Yes, and that incident also occurred before Pentecost. Those “saints” either made a commitment to follow Jesus during his earthly ministry or would have made a commitment had time permitted, but they died before the Crucifixion. Their resuscitation gave them an opportunity to run the race for the prize of the high calling.

**Comment:** 2 Peter 3:3,4 is another New Testament reference to sleeping in death. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell *asleep*, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

**Reply:** The identity of the “scoffers” becomes a critical point—whether they are consecrated or merely nominal Christians.

What did Paul mean by saying, “We shall all be changed”? At death, there would be a radical change from human to spirit nature, from earthly to spirit conditions. The word “all” includes those who have died in Christ subsequent to 1878 and those who will yet die in Christ up to the collective change of the feet members in the invisible rapture at the very end of the age.

An additional thought is suggested by the word “changed.” 1 Corinthians 15 is styled the “resurrection chapter.” Earlier Paul said that some of the Corinthians thought the dead would not rise—that there is no resurrection. Therefore, Paul also used the expression “We shall all be changed” to indicate the resurrection change is the ultimate destiny of true Christians.

There will come a period of time at the end of the Gospel Age that is the *real end* of the age. At a particular date in God’s timetable, not only will the door to the high calling be closed, but the feet members will collectively receive their change in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Jesus saw that three circumstances needed a further explanation. (1) There would come a point in time, 1878, when the dead in Christ down through the Gospel Age would be raised as a group to meet the Lord in the air, in earth’s atmosphere (1 Thess. 4:15,16). However, Christians who were alive at that time remained in the flesh to live out their consecrations. (2) At the real end of the Gospel Age, another group of saints, the feet members of the body of Christ, will be changed suddenly (1 Thess. 4:17). At that final yet future unknown date, at which the door will definitely be closed, they will be invisibly raptured as a group to meet the Lord in the air. (3) But what happens to those saints who die between 1878 and this future unknown date? As individuals, they have an instantaneous resurrection change to spirit nature to meet the Lord and the other raised saints in the air. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth [from 1878 until the invisible rapture at the end of the age]” (Rev. 14:13).

The heel members (plural) are to be bruised (Gen. 3:15). When the future unknown date comes for the Church to be complete, all saints who are still down here must, of necessity, be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as a *group*. For there to be one last member of the body of Christ would distract from the Head, Jesus Christ. The same principle applied to the high priest in the type, who could not have the anomaly of a sixth finger or toe (Lev. 21:17-21). The body of Christ is to be definite and complete as a body. Elijah's being taken up into the heavens by a whirlwind pictures a *class* (2 Kings 2:11). The wise virgins went in to the marriage *together* (Matt. 25:10). The marriage will be one event, not piecemeal, at some date in the near future. As a group, the entire Church—all 144,000—will be presented before the Father. The wedding ceremony of the Lamb and the Bride follows.

The saints who have received their change are gathered with Jesus in earth's atmosphere. When the Church is complete, they will go as a group with Jesus to God's heaven. Meanwhile, the risen saints are being instructed and are receiving orientation with regard to which members of the human race each will be judging in the future and what the parameters of authority—both jurisdiction and duties—will be for each. An indoctrination period is in progress. The saints need to understand the life patterns of those they will be judging, and time is required for that understanding. The life pattern of *every member* of Adam's race has been and is being recorded so that judgment can be rendered. For those of the Little Flock, whose judgment is rendered in advance of the world of mankind, it will be seen that God's choice is valid. His justice, mercy, patience, and kindness will be proven. Conversely, it will be seen that those who go into Second Death merit that judgment. God will be thoroughly justified in issuing all judgments, approving or disapproving, good or evil.

The same word translated "mystery" here in verse 51 is used three times in the Gospels (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). In each of the three cases, a different apostle narrated the same incident. Jesus said to the disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (Mark 4:11). In the Book of Revelation, which is a book of symbols, the word "mystery" is used four times (Rev. 1:20; 10:7; 17:5,7). The Apostle Paul used the word 20 times, and it is one of the unique expressions that help to identify his manner of speech.

**1 Cor. 15:52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

**Comment:** Combining parts of verses 51 and 52, the *Diaglott* reads, "We shall be changed ... in [during] the last trumpet [that is, during part of this time period]."

**Reply:** Yes, the word "at" in the King James is incorrect.

The "last trump," also called the seventh trumpet and the trump of God, is a period of time in which a message is being broadcast (1 Thess. 4:16). "The dead shall be raised incorruptible." Eventually all of the dead will be raised, but Paul was speaking here of only the Little Flock. Incidentally, the false teachers in Corinth all thought they were of the Little Flock, yet they said there is no resurrection.

**Q:** Is the last trump, the seventh trumpet, the same as the Jubilee trumpet?

**A:** No. In the type, the seventh trumpet was blown on the first day of the seventh (or last) month of the religious calendar. The Feast of Passover occurred in the first month, the Feast of Pentecost was 50 days later, and the Feast of Ingathering took place in the seventh month. The account is silent with regard to the remaining five months of the year, for they were not part of the religious calendar. Thus the first seven months were a picture within the year of what has

happened in history. In antitype, the Passover pertains to Jesus, Pentecost involves the Church, and the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month is for the world of mankind. At the beginning of the seventh month, the last of seven trumpets was blown. In fact, the seventh month was called the Feast of Trumpets for that reason.

The Jubilee trumpet should not be confused with the seventh trumpet. The Jubilee trumpet, which was separate, was blown on the tenth day of the seventh month. At that time, everyone was made aware of the blowing. When the antitypical Jubilee trumpet is blown, all of earth's inhabitants will know it. The antitypical seventh trump has already sounded, but the Jubilee trumpet is yet future.

A trumpet was blown on the first day of each of the first seven months. These seven trumpets picture the seven stages of the gospel Church. In addition, the Jubilee trumpet was blown on the tenth day of the seventh month. All of the people were made aware of this trumpet but not of the one blown on the first day of that month. The seventh trumpet introduced the seventh month, during which both the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Ingathering (or Tabernacles) occurred, as well as the blowing of the Jubilee trumpet. In antitype, therefore, all things will occur: the Kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, etc.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” Verses 51 and 52 indicate not only a time frame but also that the majority of faithful Christians did sleep down through the Gospel Age. However, there would come an exception to this general rule. The faithful prior to the Harvest period did not go to heaven immediately at death. One proof text is Paul's statement just before his death: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that [future] day” (2 Tim. 4:8). In his Christian walk, he kept pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling and did not count himself as being worthy, but in reviewing his life just before he died, he felt that he had been faithful. Another proof text pertains to Stephen, who, being stoned to death, fell asleep. “And they stoned Stephen.... And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59,60). Now, in verses 51 and 52 of this First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul provided the dispensational truth that there would come a time in which the more-than-overcomers would no longer be in nonexistence, in a sleep, when they died, to be awakened at some future time period—for those who die in the end period of the Gospel Age would *immediately* be changed. The change to spirit nature would occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”

In verse 51, Paul said, “Behold, I show you a mystery.” This mystery is a prophetic picture. Three experiences are confirmed by verses 51 and 52, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, and Revelation 14:13, which reads, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Near the end of the Gospel Age, in the year 1878, all of the more-than-overcomers who had been asleep in death since Pentecost came forth from the grave as a collective group. Since 1878, they have been in earth's atmosphere, being instructed as to their duties in the Kingdom Age. But between that event and the final rapture of the feet members of the body of Christ as a group, any of the Little Flock who die as individuals are changed in the twinkling of an eye. The change of the last members as a class at the end of the age is also shown by Elijah's being taken up into heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). When Elijah was thus translated, the sons of the prophets, not knowing where he had been taken, searched for his body for three days. Elijah represents a class, just as Ahab and Jezebel represent classes. A proof text is Revelation 2:20, “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel [the Roman Catholic Church], which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

“The [last] trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The thought of a trumpet has been incorporated into newspaper names, such as *The Clarion*, *The Herald*, and *The Trumpet*, indicating public messages on current events that are circulated to the populace. Accordingly, Paul was saying that at the end of the Gospel Age, a message would be broadcast in various ways and circulated to instruct God’s people on the meaning of Scripture, and even on the subject of the resurrection.

The change would come “at [in or during, Greek *en*] the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The thought of “during the last trump” indicates a period of time, which has a beginning and an ending with respect to the 144,000, the very elect.

**Comment:** Did the seventh trumpet begin to sound in 1874 or in 1878 with the resurrection of the sleeping saints?

**Reply:** The seventh trump began to sound in 1878, and it will continue to sound until the end of the Gospel Age.

**1 Cor. 15:53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

**1 Cor. 15:54** So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Not only would flesh and blood not inherit the Kingdom, but the individuals would be gloriously different. The soul, or being, that is sown in weakness will be raised in power and glory. Eventually this class of mortals, who have been called down through the Gospel Age with a heavenly calling and been faithful unto death, will receive immortality. Not until the Church class is complete will all of the body members receive immortality together. At the marriage of the Lamb, when they are introduced to the Father, they will be given immortality as a wedding present.

The saying “Death is swallowed up in victory” was written by the prophets Hosea and Isaiah. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” (Hos. 13:14). “He [Jehovah] will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa. 25:8). God predicted in the Old Testament that He would plague and destroy death and that a victory would be involved. Paul said that these prophecies would be fulfilled after “this corruptible ... put on incorruption, and this mortal ... put on immortality,” that is, after the complete Church class had been raised to immortality. Isaiah predicted that death would be swallowed up in victory, and Hosea spoke of the power of sin and the grave.

Paul was talking about the *beginning* of the swallowing up of death in victory because he was speaking of only the Little Flock, not the world of mankind. “Then shall be brought to pass the [beginning of the] saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” The Prophet Isaiah gave a *broad* statement to the effect that ultimately there will be no more death. After the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom, Adamic death will be extinct.

**Comment:** The Pastor said, “Although *aptharsia* [Greek for ‘incorruption’] and *athanasia* [Greek for ‘immortality’] represent in many respects the same thought, yet by antithesis the Apostle brings out their shaded differences in verses 53 and 54.”

**Reply:** There are definite differences in the two words. Many Bible scholars have contended that the terms are more or less synonymous, but the very fact two different words are used both in the Greek and in the English translation indicates they do not have the same meaning.

Like an acorn, verses 53 and 54 are packed with information. The ingredients are compacted together. To understand about the dead being raised incorruptible, we first have to build up an understanding.

Jesus said in Luke 20:34-36, "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Jesus was talking about those who are worthy to obtain the age beyond the Millennium. Those who pass the test at the end of the Kingdom, when Satan is loosed for the final time before being destroyed, will be "children of the resurrection," "children of God." At the end of the Kingdom, no one will need to say, "Know the LORD," for all will know Him from the least unto the greatest, but the people will still have to pass the test in the Little Season (Jer. 31:34; Rev. 20:3). All will be enlightened, all will have perfect health, all will have a perfect conscience, etc., and then will come the final test. Those who pass the test will be like the angels: "neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels."

Jesus was talking not about immortality or incorruptibility but about everlasting life on the human plane. The likelihood of those individuals ever sinning again is practically zero, just as with the holy angels, who did not leave their first estate in the period prior to the Flood. The test to not materialize and cohabit with the daughters of men and to not commit violence was severe and crucial on the holy angels because they witnessed some of their fellow spirits take on the human body and even have children, and God did not punish or stop them. The holy angels waited for a severe judgment to occur, but it did not come until the Flood years later. For many years, the earth was being corrupted by both men and angels. Proof that the corruption covered a period of time is that the offspring of angels and human females grew up as giants in the earth. The hybrid progeny and the human race drowned in the Flood with the exception of Noah and his three sons and the wives. Eight people of the human race were saved and none of the humanoids. Meanwhile, when the fallen angels dematerialized, they were locked in earth's atmosphere, being under "house arrest," as it were. They were bound in chains of darkness in a plane, or sphere, called *tartaroo*. God destroyed those of Adamic stock and the hybrid angelic progeny, but it appeared that He could not destroy those of angelic stock, for the fallen angels were merely locked in prison. As a result, Satan is convinced that God cannot destroy him. In fact, Satan is getting bolder and bolder because he thinks God cannot destroy a spirit being. All the evidence seems to prove that Satan is correct, for up to the present time, not one spirit being has ever lost his life.

Imagine being a holy angel and watching the lust and violence for, say, 50 years and seeing nothing happen to stop it. When the Flood came, God was vindicated in the eyes of the holy angels, for they realized He had purposely waited to inflict that judgment. Had the judgment come instantly, they would not have seen the degree of depravity and violence that ensued. By their patience and restraint, the holy angels proved they will not sin. After the Millennial Age, any being who commits sin will immediately be expunged. Never again will evil be permitted anywhere in the universe. The insidiousness and the contagion of sin have already been shown. God foresaw that unchecked sin would spread like an infectious disease or a plague, and the angels and man are now getting that same education with regard to the nature of sin.

The mystery (verse 51) was that at the end of the age during the Lord's secret presence, when he would deal with his disciples in earth's atmosphere as a spirit being but not yet be reigning,

a work would be going on. The sleeping saints were raised as spirit beings in 1878—like Jesus when he arose from the dead after his crucifixion. Those of the Little Flock who have died since were also raised “spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18). A distinction is implied between the two words “corruptible” and “incorruption” and between “mortal” and “immortality.” “Incorruption” (Greek *aptharsia*) means “that which cannot decay.” The simple explanation of “immortality” (Greek *athanasia*) is deathlessness, that which is not liable to death. However, we feel there is another nuance. A more positive explanation of immortality is to have life *within* oneself (John 5:26). Jesus told the woman of Samaria that the “living water” (immortality) would be a well of water springing up into everlasting life; that is, it would spring up like a well (John 4:14).

The fact that Paul brought up the first distinction, incorruption, as that which is not liable to decay, and then paused before giving the second distinction, “This mortal must put on immortality,” suggests the possibility of a little interval of time for a two-step process. Based on other Scriptures, we believe that inference is here.

**Q:** Is the thought that we could be raised incorruptible and then, later, receive immortality?

**A:** Yes.

**1 Cor. 15:55** O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

**1 Cor. 15:56** The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

**1 Cor. 15:57** But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul effectively used the question form here. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave [Greek *hades*, that is, the hidden state], where is thy victory?” The sting, or virus, that produces death is sin. However, what seems to be a victory—death and the grave—will not be a victory in the final analysis. The real victory comes from God through Jesus. “O grave, where is thy victory?”

**Q:** Will the resurrection of the Church to immortality be the first evidence of death being swallowed up in victory?

**A:** Yes. The context of both Hosea 13:14 and Isaiah 25:8 pertains to the world of mankind, as well as to the Church inferentially, but the Apostle Paul used these Scriptures to prove that the resurrection of the Church is the first proof of a fulfillment of the resurrection. In other words, after the Little Flock is complete, this saying will *begin* to come to pass. Paul was trying to show the brethren who did not believe in a resurrection that their reasoning was foolish. He used the consecrated as an example and not the world of mankind.

In verse 56, Paul was referring to death during the present life, to Adamic death. The Jew is condemned in a double sense—through Adam and through the Mosaic Law. While Gentiles are not under the Law, the Law brings about a consciousness of sin and enlightens one as to the problems that exist. Thus the Law makes both Jews and Gentiles conscious of sin, but of course the Jew is morally obligated to fulfill the Law unless he comes into Jesus.

Verse 56 reads as follows in other translations: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (RSV). “It is sin which gives death its sting, and it is the Law which gives sin its power” (Phillips). The power of the Law is that it condemns man to death because imperfect man, being a sinner, cannot perfectly obey it. Man in his weakness and imperfection cannot keep the perfect Law. Thanks to God, the Christian receives forgiveness through Jesus and ultimate victory over death if faithful. Sin is the “sting of death” in that Adam ate the sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge (Ezek. 18:2). In other words, Adam’s sin caused death.

The “strength of sin is the law.” The Law was designed for a perfect man, and since all members of Adam’s race are imperfect, none could keep the Law except the man Christ Jesus. Therefore, he got the reward of the Law, which was human life. Jesus captured the prize of the Law, and he will use that human life to redeem Adam, the father of the human race. Stated another way, Jesus’ life was a counterweight, a corresponding price, for Adam. Adam forfeited his life, but Jesus will give his right to human life to the human race so that they can legally be redeemed from the grave. The Father Himself is a spirit, and Jesus now has a spirit life, which is different from a human life. In other words, Jesus had two lives. Because he was faithful and obedient even unto the death on the Cross, God has highly exalted him. Jesus did not forfeit his extra (or spirit) life. Rather, he willingly submitted to the Crucifixion, allowing himself to be put to death by the religious leaders of that day, who unrighteously took his life. Pontius Pilate and the Romans shared in that responsibility. Therefore, the strength of sin is with fallen mortals, who cannot break out of that mold, for the principles of the Law condemn the human race.

**Comment:** Paul said, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law” (Rom. 7:7).

**Reply:** Each epistle has a certain theme, and Romans pertains to the Law and righteousness, which comes by faith. There are two ways of pleasing God. The first proved to be a failure with the human race; the other, the righteousness of faith, is a success to those who walk the narrow way of faith.

Paul ended on a victorious note: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” From a human standpoint, there is no future because no one has been in heaven and returned. The so-called “after-death experiences” are hallucinations caused by the fallen angels.

Earlier Paul said, “Some have taught there is no resurrection.” Therefore, the whole subject of this fifteenth chapter is the resurrection—and with great detail. Jesus’ parables and discourses teach the same thing, but with a little here and a little there. Because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, Jesus taught the resurrection in fragment form.

**Comment:** For Paul to be so sure there is a resurrection, he must have been given information when he was taken in vision to the “third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2).

**Reply:** Yes. While Jesus brought life and immortality to light in an ingenious way that needs to be pieced together, Paul treated the subject in this fifteenth chapter (2 Tim. 1:10). Paul had liberty to speak about the resurrection, whereas Jesus did not. Jesus said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but [I cannot because] ye cannot bear them now [because the Holy Spirit had not yet come]” (John 16:12). The implication is that if Jesus had spoken in detail about the resurrection, the disciples would not have understood what he was saying. The explanation would have been too overwhelming for natural men at that time with their Jewish minds and training. Jesus excelled on this subject (more than Paul), but hours would be required to piece together the fragments of his teaching. After his resurrection, Jesus revealed information to Paul, who was the apostle most capable of handling it because of his logic and his having studied at the feet of Gamaliel, the most notable teacher of that day. Paul was well versed in the Scriptures.

Sin is not only the sting of death but also a process. For instance, if we were poisoned by a venomous snake, we would get the sting but might not die instantly. That is what happened when Adam sinned, and the death penalty came on the human race through him. Paul broached this subject in a slightly different way, bringing it more up to date by saying, “The sting of death is sin [with Father Adam].” However, in his letter to the Romans, as well as here,



he implied that the Law of commandments is also involved with the sting of death, but the Law affected only the Jews. Therefore, the sting has to go back to Adam in order to embrace both Jews and Gentiles.

“The strength of sin is the law.” Even though Corinth was a Gentile city, many in the class were Jews. The account of Paul’s first visit to Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1-4, “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth: And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded [both] the Jews and the Greeks.” Active Christian Jews, among whom were Aquila and Priscilla, had fled from Rome to Corinth because of a decree by Emperor Claudius.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory [over death] through our Lord Jesus Christ.” When one cannot die anymore, death will be “swallowed up in victory” for that individual (1 Cor. 15:54). With regard to a class, death will first be swallowed up in victory for the Little Flock.

**1 Cor. 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

**Q:** This question goes back to two earlier verses. How does the statement “this corruptible shall have put on incorruption” (verse 54) relate to, or differ from, the latter part of verse 50, “Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption”?

**A:** For those Christians who did not believe in a resurrection, the most they could hope for was a continuation of the present life—that they would live on and on and not die. Therefore, Paul emphasized that man is actually dying whether he likes it or not. All around is evidence of his dying and going into the grave, so to deny death would be to belie one’s own senses. The corruptible present body does not put on incorruption, for the old body must first die. Then, if faithful, the individual will get a new body in a new life. All around are change and decay (corruption). The only way for the Christian to inherit incorruption is to get a complete change of body and nature to a new life.

Now Paul was saying, “Brethren, be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Do not let others discourage you.” The Corinthian brethren who had the true view to start with could have become discouraged when others came along and said there is no resurrection. They could have asked, “Why am I enduring persecution for Christ if there is no resurrection? Why should I suffer and be humiliated if there is no future life?” The danger was that those Christians would slow up and change their course of action. Paul wanted them to retain their original hope, knowing that their labor in the Lord was not in vain. The future life was an incentive, and if that incentive was taken away, their behavior in the present life would be adversely affected. Not believing in a resurrection would undermine zeal and activity.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, ... ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” After a long epistle with a lot of constructive criticism in regard to what they lacked, Paul now encouraged the Corinthians. He answered ten or more problems in this first epistle.

**1 Cor. 16:1** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

**1 Cor. 16:2** Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

**1 Cor. 16:3** And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

**1 Cor. 16:4** And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Paul had been collecting money from the different churches in Galatia, a region in Turkey, for the brethren in Jerusalem and Judea, who were having a difficult time primarily from a severe famine. The brethren were impoverished because the famine had lasted a while. To alleviate the suffering and meet the necessities, Paul gave instructions to the Corinthians for a special collection. It was better that money be put anonymously in a common box in advance of his arrival so that when he got there, he would not have to go to each individual in the ecclesia to ask for donations. The money would be added to that received from the churches in Galatia.

In other words, this collection was not the normal weekly giving but an unusual circumstance. Paul's advice was for each of the Corinthians to lay money "in store" in a common collection box on the first day of the week (Sunday) according to ability ("as God hath prospered him"). Paul might not arrive for several weeks, so the money would accumulate and be given to him upon his arrival. One reason for this anonymous method was not to embarrass those who had less money and/or meager circumstances.

Instead of the brethren procrastinating, it was better for them to save a small amount every week over several weeks than to think they could give a large amount of money at the end. Perhaps by that time, there would not be as much money to give. Also, the implication is that a common box was preferable to having several collections.

"And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." Paul advised the Corinthian church to select several honest and dependable individuals to take the money to Jerusalem. He did not take it upon himself to bring the money but was asking them to handle the matter.

"And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." In addition, Paul suggested that he would not mind accompanying the committee to Jerusalem, for he would be glad to have companionship.

Incidentally, down through the Gospel Age, the good news has been preached mostly to the poor—not only to the poor in spirit but also to common, ordinary people who had to work from sunrise to sunset to earn enough money to provide necessities for themselves and their families. However, the circumstance of the brethren in the Jerusalem area was extraordinary, and Paul, feeling their dire need keenly, was making this particular collection. While the brethren in Corinth were far more prosperous than those in Judea, he had to prod them to be generous. The brethren with less means in Macedonia, Philippi, and Thessalonica were more generous than those in Corinth.

Today the nominal churches do a lot of solicitation for donations. The people are exhorted to give, yet many church leaders ride around in expensive cars and live in luxurious homes. It is obvious in such cases that money is being siphoned off for personal use. Usually those who need the money the most get the least in the final analysis.

**1 Cor. 16:5** Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

**1 Cor. 16:6** And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

Paul purposed to go through Macedonia in northern Greece, and then he would like to abide with the Corinthians for the winter before going back to Jerusalem. However, he was unable to follow through and spend the winter in Corinth. After a delay, Paul did eventually return to Corinth for a second visit. As will be seen in the second epistle, some found fault with him, saying he had not kept his word. In their hypercritical attitude, they did not make allowance for the difficulties of the journey. It is true that Jesus said, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; [or] Nay, nay,” but that would be barring an emergency (Matt. 5:37).

**1 Cor. 16:7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.**

**1 Cor. 16:8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.**

**1 Cor. 16:9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.**

“I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will [first] tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.” Paul planned to be with the brethren at Ephesus until Pentecost because “a great door [of opportunity] and effectual” had opened to him. He disputed daily in the school of Tyrannus, which was like a debating society, for “the space of two [additional] years” (Acts 19:1,9,10). Not only were the debates exhausting, taking his energy and strength, but “many adversaries” were at the meetings and in his private life. Nevertheless, good results came in that some recognized Paul had the truth and followed him. The debates resulted in an increase in the class. Because the results were productive, Paul stayed in Ephesus for 3 1/2 years.

Paul wrote this epistle from Ephesus. A confirmation is that he sent greetings from the brethren who arrived safely, to his joy, and were there with him: Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (verse 17). Priscilla and Aquila were also in Ephesus (verse 19).

**1 Cor. 16:10 Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.**

**1 Cor. 16:11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.**

**Q:** What were the circumstances with Timothy that Paul had to caution the brethren not to “despise” him? 1 Timothy 4:12 is a cross reference: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

**A:** The Phillips translation helps: “If Timothy comes to you, put him at his ease. He is as genuine a worker for the Lord as I am, and there is therefore no reason to look down on him. Send him on his way in peace.” Paul left Timothy behind in Ephesus when he went on to Galatia and Macedonia. Timothy was assisting churches Paul had established. Paul thought highly of Timothy, even likening him to his own son (1 Tim. 1:2). He wanted the brethren to cordially receive Timothy—to accept and respect him and put him at ease. Although Timothy was quite young, being in his late 20s or early 30s, and had not been consecrated as long as some of the older brethren, he knew a great deal, was a real genuine worker, and was zealous like Paul. Therefore, he was not to be considered a new convert.

When Jesus died, the apostles were looked up to, not only because they were set as apostles but because they had spent the most time with him and could relate the details of his ministry. Eventually, only the Apostle John was left, and all the churches looked to him in a special sense because he was the sole survivor. In connection with the ministry, Timothy was picked up along the way. The tendency of the brethren was to respect the old-timers. This tendency was

proper in the case of the apostles, and even with others, all things being equal, but all things were not equal for two reasons. (1) Just because one had been consecrated longer did not mean he was well established in the truth. (2) Only the apostles were infallible in their teaching. When Timothy came along at a later date as the emissary of Paul, the brethren were apt to dismiss him as a newcomer and to regard more highly the older teachers, who were elders, yet Timothy was more knowledgeable in the Scriptures and more zealous in his works. In summation, Paul was trying to assure the brethren that even though Timothy was a relatively recent convert, they were not to consider him that way. Incidentally, feeling coldness from the brethren can affect an individual. Even the Holy Spirit does not seem to function as well.

“He [Timothy] worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.” That was a good endorsement, especially coming from the Apostle Paul. Timothy received disrespect to a certain extent from the Corinthians, even though Paul said, “Let no man therefore despise him.” When Timothy went to Corinth, his ministry was not as well received as that of Titus. The brethren there did not think too highly of Timothy, probably because he was so humble, yet Paul spoke fondly of him and said that God had given him a remarkable insight into truth.

“Conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.” Paul looked for Timothy to return to him with a report of what was happening in Corinth, and other brethren would probably accompany him on the same boat. Paul expected that Timothy would bring back news of the brotherhood in Corinth.

**1 Cor. 16:12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.**

Paul had tried to persuade Apollos to go back to Corinth, but it was not convenient for him to return until later. The account does not state what the hindrance was with Apollos. Earlier in this epistle, Paul wrote that he had planted and Apollos had watered (1 Cor. 3:6). Paul thought highly of Apollos, even though they differed doctrinally for a while. Apollos had brought many to Christ, he was zealous and courageous, and he was willing to be instructed. Even prior to his enlightenment on the subject of baptism, he was commended as being full of faith in the Spirit and mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24,25). Paul properly weighed matters. Although one may differ in a doctrine, he may be better in some respects than the person who is criticizing him. The principle is to be careful with regard to the nature of the doctrine that is being incorrectly espoused.

**1 Cor. 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.**

**1 Cor. 16:14 Let all your things be done with charity.**

The *Diaglott* is good for verse 13: “Watch you! Stand firm in the faith! Be manly! Be strong.” The Revised Standard reads, “Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong!” The thought of being manly is to be brave or courageous; that is, the Corinthians were to be courageous and mature in understanding like men. (The Old English “quit” means just the opposite today.) Then Paul added, “Let all that you do be done in love” (RSV).

**1 Cor. 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)**

**1 Cor. 16:16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.**

This Stephanas was not the Stephen of Acts 6:8–7:60. Stephen’s martyrdom occurred before the

conversion of Cornelius in AD 36 (Acts 10). Therefore, Stephen was martyred only two to three years after Pentecost. Of course he may have been a disciple during Jesus' ministry, but he died three years or less after Pentecost. The name Stephen, or Stephanas, means "crown."

**Q:** What is the thought of Stephanas being "the firstfruits of Achaia"?

**A:** Achaia was a province in Greece, and Stephanas was the first Christian convert in that area.

The household of Stephanas had "addicted [devoted—see *Diaglott*] themselves to the ministry of the saints." In other words, they *practiced* faithful service; they devoted their lives to the ministry of the saints.

**1 Cor. 16:17** I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

**1 Cor. 16:18** For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

Verses 17 and 18, which are not a rebuke, are superior in the Revised Standard Version. "I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men." In the absence of the Corinthian brethren, whom Paul wished to be with, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus furnished him with fellowship. Paul was glad for their company.

**Comment:** The word "coming" in verse 17 is the Greek *parousia*, meaning personal presence, for the three were actually there with Paul. Jesus' "coming" (*parousia*) is also a personal presence.

**Reply:** Yes, verse 17 is talking about their recent arrival in Ephesus. Stephanas was originally from Achaia. Corinth, too, was in Achaia. It is interesting that Paul had companionship on some of his long journeys of a month or more.

**Comment:** Those who accompanied Paul had the benefit of his teaching. They, in turn, could go back to their home areas and help to establish the brethren in truth.

**Reply:** Their zeal and sacrifice resulted in a blessing. Not only did they have to take time off to travel, but they risked their lives, had expenses as travelers, and had to make arrangements for the care of their families until their return.

Why did Paul say, "Therefore acknowledge ye them that are such"? Even though Christians are adults, many times they have to be reminded as children. Paul was saying in effect, "When I am gone, remember the zeal of these three individuals for the Lord and for the truth." Sober, mature, thinking Christians do not normally need such advice because they observe the zeal themselves. Brethren should analyze and reflect on the nature of the service and ministry of others. By his comment, Paul was thinking of the future of the Church, as well as the present.

**Comment:** Big talkers often put themselves forward, while doers are in the background, unobserved.

**Reply:** Yes, and these three individuals could have been absent for a year or two. Meanwhile, others led the meetings at home and developed and cemented a fellowship, relationship, and/or kinship. When the three each returned to his respective home area, it may have taken valuable time before they were recognized again. The brethren in the home ecclesias should have reflected on what these three were accomplishing in their absence and immediately

received them back with esteem. After having the blessing of Paul's intimate fellowship and counsel, they would return being more knowledgeable than the leaders who stayed at home.

**Comment:** Since the Apostle Paul himself was being impugned, those accompanying him would also be disparaged if he did not correct the situation.

**Comment:** Verse 18, "For they have refreshed my spirit and yours," is how brethren should affect one another. We are to build one another up in the most holy faith and refresh each other's spirit, as happened with Paul in the company of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus.

**1 Cor. 16:19** The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

The "churches of Asia" were primarily the seven churches of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. There were also ecclesias at Colosse, Lystra, Iconium, etc.

**Comment:** Meetings and studies were held in the "home" of Priscilla and Aquila. They did not need a church building!

**Reply:** Yes, and they were tent makers like Paul, who was probably a guest in their home at times. Incidentally, back in those days, people realized that fortunes could come and then go suddenly through robbery, misfortune, or decree. Therefore, for reasons of prudence, the wealthy nobility learned a trade as a safeguard against such a disaster. Coming from a wealthy family, Paul was trained as a tent maker prior to his consecration.

The question might arise, How could Paul see to make tents after his eyesight was impaired from his glimpse of the risen Lord? He was able to be a tent maker, even with poor eyesight, because the sewing was done with large needles.

**1 Cor. 16:20** All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

The brethren were to greet one another with a "holy kiss." This meant that brother "kissed" brother on the cheek, and sister "kissed" sister as a sign of affection. The kiss would not be holy if the sexes were mixed. The handshake is our equivalent today in this country. The holy kiss is still used in certain places in Europe.

On rare occasions, a kiss on the cheek could be given between the sexes. For example, if one we love very much as a brother or sister in Christ has been absent for a long time (such as the Apostle Paul back there), even a sister might emotionally cry and embrace him, and the embrace would be proper. However, Paul's advice with regard to the holy kiss was to be the *regular practice* of everyone at daily and weekly meetings. Knowing the weaknesses of the flesh, he was not advising a mixing of the sexes on a regular basis with the holy kiss. Unfortunately, some greet each other a little too promiscuously.

Back in Paul's day, brethren were fighting a common enemy, times were difficult, and being a Christian was unpopular and brought persecution, so special affection and consideration were needed, brother for brother and sister for sister. A little extra warmth and appreciation in greeting were helpful. Instead of the brethren coming just for a study, social fellowship has a place in the service of God, although of course it is inferior to the holier level of communication of thought on the Word. However, both are needed with the proper emphasis on each.

**Comment:** Some have the practice of holding hands during prayer.

**Reply:** There are dangers with the ministry of touch, which is popular today, especially with charismatics. We should commune “alone” and concentrate on the prayer, and holding hands interferes with that concentration. On a rare occasion—for instance, when someone is leaving forever—two or more might want to hold hands during prayer and/or give a hug. Another example of an unusual circumstance occurred in the early Church when a brother was leaving on a ministry for many years and perhaps would never return. The group laid their hands on that individual, wanting him to know they were with him in spirit, but to do these things commonly not only is dangerous but also vitiates the significance. For example, using expressions such as “God bless you” too frequently renders the words meaningless after a while. God’s name should not be used commonly. In other words, the holy kiss, conduct during prayers, and verbal expressions should be proportionate to a true evaluation of feeling.

The word “kiss” means to touch gently. In the Hebrew is the thought that the Old and New Testaments “kiss” each other; that is, they complement each other. They are in close harmony and agreement.

**1 Cor. 16:21 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.**

The bulk of the epistle was recorded by another individual, but Paul wrote the greeting in his own handwriting. Timothy, Tertius, and Luke usually recorded Paul’s words or dictation. Luke was especially known as Paul’s stenographer or amanuensis.

**Comment:** Galatians 6:11 indicates that he wrote in large letters because of his poor eyesight.

**1 Cor. 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.**

“Anathema” means “accursed,” and “Maranatha” signifies “until the Lord comes.” Therefore, Paul was saying, “If any man does not love the Lord, let him be accursed when the Lord comes.” Why did Paul introduce this thought? How would the brethren know if a person did not love the Lord? Saying one should be accursed is strong, for it means he should be cut off. A number of factors were involved, as follows:

1. The brethren were to recognize those who were serving faithfully at home, such as Priscilla and Aquila, as well as those who traveled in their dedication for the Lord, expending money and physical energy. Sincere individuals were to be respected and esteemed. Also, the really valuable teachers should have been recognized.
2. Along another line, Paul had asked the brethren to take up a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. What is done for the brethren is service for the Lord. Those who were reluctant to give or who encouraged others not to give manifested an unloving attitude.
3. Some of the brethren at Corinth considered themselves superior to Paul and found fault with his ministry. Not only did they disregard his place in the church, but they were so high-minded that they placed their judgment and thinking above his.
4. When Paul commanded the Corinthians to excommunicate the fornicator in their midst, the majority followed his advice. To have disregarded the advice would be an evidence of not having principled love.

The point is that a combination of any or all of these attitudes manifested an unloving attitude. If a brother was identified with two or three of these unfavorable attitudes, fellowship was to be cut off. However, he was not to be accursed (“Anathema”) in the sense of going into Second Death. The thought was that one should not feel bad in disfellowshipping such an individual—both for his good and for the good of the one doing the disfellowshipping. Of course such

individuals would not actually say, "I do not love Christ." Rather, their *actions* proved they did not love the Lord, his Word, his teaching, or his servants. A good *Reprint* article, No. 4461, entitled "General Convention," tells about troublemakers in the Pastor's day who came to conventions and were disruptive. The article advised brethren to courageously disfellowship these individuals and not to encourage their attendance. The Pastor said that all believers in the atonement were welcome to attend except these individuals, for they were undercutting his teaching on certain doctrines. The article states the following with regard to how to treat "wolves." "All believers in the Atonement by the Precious Blood will be welcomed if they have the Spirit of Christ. But 'grievous wolves,' 'backbiters,' 'slanderers' and 'contentious' persons are not invited. Should such attend these [convention sessions] or any meetings of truth people, they should be treated so scripturally as to make them ill at ease and very unhappy at these Love Feasts. Mark the Apostolic delineations and admonitions and be of good courage in obeying the same. Read Jude 10-12 and Romans 16:17 and Philippians 3:17-19."

Some consider the Greek term "Maranatha" favorably, using it as part of their appellation to indicate that they look forward to the second coming of the Lord. However, since the term follows immediately after "Anathema," it suggests judgment rather than blessing and thus is condemnatory. "Anathema Maranatha" means that the Lord is coming to deal unfavorably with the individual who does not love him. The two words have to be used together.

The *Diaglott* incorrectly separates the two terms, indicating a break in thought and thus a favorable connotation. Since the original text contained no punctuation, the break would be proper if the context warranted it, but the context does not seem to justify the separation here.

**Comment:** Paul spoke strongly in this epistle but ended up with a sweeter tone. Nevertheless, he was saying, "Do not forget what I told you, for enemies are in your midst."

**Reply:** Yes, Paul had to be on guard, particularly in Corinth. Some Jews were openly hostile, feeling that Paul was a renegade and a heretic who was undercutting the Jewish religion.

**Q:** Was Paul especially referring to some of the consecrated who turned back and became unfaithful? They would have loved Jesus at one time.

**A:** He was referring to both, for there were spies as well. As we get nearer the end of the age, this will be our experience too. Some will come in among the brethren with ulterior motives. For example, individuals have attended meetings purportedly as interested parties and then written a book or a thesis as enemies of the truth. Meanwhile, brethren have opened their hearts to these individuals.

**Comment:** At the end of the age, just as in the early Church, grievous wolves will enter from the outside and also arise from within.

**Reply:** Some have come into the Truth movement and consecrated who apparently believed at one time but were never strong in the truth, and now they oppose it. For instance, they may say that the Pastor was not the faithful and wise servant and that the stars in Revelation are a class. Then one doctrine after another is discarded, such as the presence and the Church's share in the sin offering, yet they may still attend conventions and be in the midst of the brethren. When those who have accepted and taught the truth go astray, the matter is serious. We are to be more wary of those who have been in the truth and then go into darkness. By having close fellowship with such, we would be endorsing them in the eyes of others.

We should not solicit or encourage any brethren whose ministry we feel is harmful. Rather, we should treat them like a stranger. Of course we are not to judge destiny, for that will be made manifest when the Kingdom comes either by an individual's not getting a resurrection at all or



by his being in the Great Company.

**1 Cor. 16:23** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**1 Cor. 16:24** My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Paul's particular blessing and affection were to the consecrated, to all those "in Christ Jesus."

**Comment:** Paul gave the greeting in a broad sense, for there were problems in the class.

**Reply:** Yes, a measure of reserve was proper toward some, and excommunication was advised for the fornicator. The beginning of Young's *Analytical Concordance* lists a number of verses in Scripture where the word "all" does not mean "all" but is limited.

**Q:** Would the phrase "in Christ Jesus" be a qualifying factor?

**A:** Yes, although one should be given the benefit of the doubt unless he openly teaches wrong fundamental doctrine or practices wrong conduct.

## SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

(Studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1979, 1997, and 2001)

**2 Cor. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:**

As we go through this second epistle, we will try to demonstrate that possibly this second letter consists of two letters in one. A letter with questions from the brethren in Corinth was brought by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus to Paul while he was at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:17). Then from Ephesus, Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, answering those questions one by one and also introducing other subjects. Probably Timothy took Paul's letter to Corinth, and Titus was the messenger for taking Paul's second epistle back to the Corinthians.

This second epistle was written by Paul from Philippi in Macedonia on his way to Corinth for the second time. A clue that Paul was in Philippi is his saying that Timothy was with him. From one standpoint, Achaia encompassed all of Greece, which extended up and bordered Macedonia. From another standpoint, Achaia was a province, or territory, of Greece that included the city and seaport of Corinth. Paul had started the church at Corinth. In other words, he first introduced the truth to the Corinthians.

Notice that Paul said he was "an apostle of Jesus Christ *by the will of God.*" Since some in the class questioned whether Paul was an authentic apostle, he found it necessary to state that he was an apostle appointed by Jesus Christ personally. God selects the Bride for Jesus and begets all of His children with the word of truth. Thus *God* is the Author of the New Creation, the One who does the deciding. Therefore, although Paul was an apostle sent out by Jesus Christ, the will of God made the original selection. It was necessary for Paul to call attention to his role as an apostle because some of the contents of this epistle would be a little strong.

This second epistle was addressed "unto the church of God ... at [the city of] Corinth, with all the saints which are in all [the surrounding region of] Achaia." Corinth was in southern Greece, and Macedonia was to the north.

We will start our study of this second epistle by considering a series of Scriptures.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul stated that he purposed to come to them shortly. "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power" (1 Cor. 4:19). He also said, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators" (1 Cor. 5:9). When these two Scriptures are coupled together, we find that Paul had written a previous letter to Corinth, of which there is no record. Paul wrote letters to various places after previously being there. Thus the letters were addressed to those he already knew. Putting these two Scriptures together (1 Cor. 4:19; 5:9), we see that Paul had made an earlier visit to Corinth of which there is no record. We know of no commentator who illustrates this thought, but Paul may have made five journeys. Four different trips can be easily verified by Scripture. Although there is no record of a fifth journey, the Scriptures certainly hint that it occurred, and he wrote a letter about the problem, which he reiterated in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. Therefore, the first epistle is really his second epistle, and his second epistle is actually the third epistle. This conclusion is borne out by considering several Scriptures.

"I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 10:2). The second epistle shows that Paul intended to visit the Corinthians again.

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2). When Paul wrote this second epistle, he said that 14 years previous he had the experience of being caught up to the “third heaven.” Most Bibles incorrectly cross-reference this verse with the vision Paul had on the road to Damascus, but they were two different experiences. Paul’s being caught up into the third dispensation, the “world to come,” occurred in the middle of his ministry (Matt. 12:32). In other words, his ministry was 30 years in duration. He was converted prior to AD 36, that is, before the conversion of Cornelius, and he was martyred in approximately AD 66.

“Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children” (2 Cor. 12:14). Paul intended to visit Corinth a “third time,” which means he had already been there twice.

“This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor. 13:1). Most scholars are puzzled by this verse. Of the thousands of verses the Pastor discussed, he evaded the chronological application. The problem is that since the Scriptures contain no record of where Paul went on his first journey to Corinth, the other accounts cannot be harmonized. However, if we consider that Paul went to Corinth the third time, then that was his last visit to the church in Corinth. In time, he went to Miletus, Israel, and back to Rome, where he was eventually executed. From that standpoint, we can reason from the known to the unknown that there must have been another epistle and journey, of which we know nothing. The question arises, Why did Divine Providence take such care that all records needful and worthwhile for a Christian to make his calling and election sure were preserved in Scripture, yet omit Paul’s first visit to Corinth? One reason is that his first epistle would harmonize all of his journeys and would tell about the conditions he found when he first went to Corinth. Divine Providence deemed it not expedient to reveal those conditions in the present age lest they have a distracting influence upon Christian thinking. We can assume that conditions were bad and that they will be revealed in the future—both what Paul found and what he wrote as a result of his findings. In other words, 1 Corinthians is really 2 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians is 3 Corinthians.

**2 Cor. 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Verse 2, a typical salutation from Paul to an ecclesia, shows that the Father and the Son are two separate beings. Not only did Paul start with “grace ... and peace,” but he mentioned the Father first and then the Son.

**2 Cor. 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;**

Verse 3 refutes the Trinity: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” How could the two be coeternal when a Father precedes a Son? Instead of the account saying “the Spirit of love,” God is called the “Father of mercies [plural].” The mention of mercy and comfort was specially adapted to this Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Paul’s own experiences and severe trials were very much on his mind. He was able to extend mercy, comfort, and encouragement because of having been hard-pressed himself. The Christian’s life is one of warfare, of holding up the shield of faith against the onslaughts of the Adversary.

Another reason for Jehovah to be called the “Father of mercies” and the “God of all comfort” in this epistle is the retrieval of the erring brother mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5. Later in this second epistle, Paul told the class to receive the individual back and forgive him. The brother

had been made a target of excommunication so that he would know the nature of the sin he had committed. Now mercy was to be extended based upon his *remorse* and *repentance*. Paul said the individual had suffered enough and should be received back into the fellowship.

The first epistle treated the problem of divisions in the Church, where some polarized around Paul, Peter, or Apollos. The fragmentation was not conducive to peace because the brethren were striving in different directions. The intention of Paul's advice was to unify the brethren. Those in the church of Corinth who faithfully tried to obey Paul's counsel encountered a lot of opposition, friction, and cross currents. The ecclesia did obey in excommunicating the brother, but some of Paul's other advice was not fully carried out, as we will see.

**2 Cor. 1:4** **Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.**

Contrary to the first epistle, this second epistle starts with a restful theme, one of comfort. In verses 3-6, Paul used the word "comfort" six times in one form or another. Sometimes, such as here, repetition is helpful. Suffering and tribulation are mentioned along with comfort and consolation. Notice that the "Father of mercies," the "God of all comfort," is the One who "comforteth us." Paul received his experiences extremely well. He had a lot of persecution, opposition, and trouble in Asia, but he did not say the experiences were merely for his own personal development, as Peter did (1 Pet. 1:7). Peter said that our trials prove our faith and help us make our calling and election sure. However, Paul showed his concern for the brethren by saying, "You may be wondering about all my sufferings and whether the Christian walk is worth enduring them. The Lord is giving me these experiences so that I am in a better position to comfort you in your trials." Of course there was no comparison between Paul's suffering and that of the other brethren, but nevertheless, he equated the two.

Paul's reputation for enduring repeated persecution for the cause of Christ put him in a category by himself. Others may have died as martyrs, but he suffered *throughout* his Christian life. Therefore, for the class to receive a letter from such an individual, who said he was being comforted in his sufferings and wished the same for them, was very meaningful. In fact, the words were peculiarly meaningful when we consider that Paul was the writer. Stated another way, the character of the individual gave special weight to the written expressions.

**Comment:** The principle is the same with Jesus. He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities so that he would be a sympathetic High Priest. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

**Reply:** Not only is the experience gained from enduring sufferings for and with Christ a blessing to ourselves, but we are then in a position to give advice or comfort to others.

This second epistle will begin to reveal the beneficial effect of Paul's counseling of the church at Corinth. His advice was not 100 percent effective because some still dissented and questioned, but the majority were now in the right attitude, for they had responded favorably to his ministry.

**2 Cor. 1:5** **For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.**

Paul was comforted because he was amenable to whatever God's providence set before him. He said some hard things in his sermons and epistles, but he also said some comforting things, which should be given equal weight.

**2 Cor. 1:6** And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Paul was saying, “My trials are for *your* consolation and salvation.” He entered into the experiences of the brethren in being faithful to the truth by saying his experiences were similar. “My experiences have a good purpose in that I am now able to give you advice. And that is God’s will, His intention, not only for me but also for you—for your edification and comfort.” Paul was suffering, but he recognized that the brethren were also suffering. Thus the purpose of our suffering experiences is not only to develop our own character but also to appreciate what others have gone through, even during the Inquisition.

“Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation.” Notice the pronoun “we.” Those accompanying Paul shared, in varying degrees, some of the persecution he experienced. Paul was laying down his life for the brethren.

Notice how verse 6 is structured. “Whether we be afflicted, *it is for your consolation and salvation, ... or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*” The same clause is repeated. Today, as cultured people in the United States, we usually find repetition boring. In fact, people purposely avoid repetition, but depending on the importance of a message, repetition can be helpful. A message of real substantive value almost needs to be repeated to drum it through our skulls. Otherwise, we tend to get caught up in the harmony and beauty of an expression instead of thinking about it. The Heavenly Father also uses repetition. For instance, the instructions for building Ezekiel’s Temple are repeated over and over because He wants to impress upon us not only that the instructions were given thousands of years in advance but that they are specific and definite. When the Temple is seen, people will say, “Weren’t we dumb? Explicit details were given, and we did not pay attention to them or accept them. We just read the account quickly to get on to something more interesting.” Similarly, the Book of Numbers has been bypassed by almost all Christians, whereas when the landscape is seen and the drama is understood, the book will become very meaningful and its detail *startling*. The reaction will be, “This book was written like an eyewitness account, and we did not appreciate it.” Only those who turn to the Lord with humility and believe His Word is true are rewarded with understanding when the due time comes. The very particularity of detail will have an added punch when understanding is revealed to the world.

Moreover, the Bible provides many lineages and accounts of individuals. When these people come out of the grave and are seen on the screen, when God’s Word is revealed, it will be like the sun shining seven times (Isa. 30:26). Now we see through a glass darkly, but according to our faith, we are rewarded with a little understanding (1 Cor. 13:12). There will be tremendous impact in the future to show God’s prescience and foreknowledge of the minutiae of detail, yet in Scripture, God stated His foreknowledge as if it were almost already accomplished.

**2 Cor. 1:7** And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Paul’s message of comfort consisted of two parts. Christ suffered—he was a man of sorrows—but he also had certain joys. God does not purpose to press a person beyond all measure, so He gives a blessing with a trial. Thus the Christian’s experiences are both bitter and sweet. One joy Jesus had during his earthly ministry was seeing some fruitage of his labors, assuring him that he was accomplishing God’s will. Sometimes the consolation comes after the suffering, and sometimes it comes before the suffering. The intent on God’s part is mixed. As one partakes of the sufferings, so he must also partake of the consolation, some of which is in the present life and the greater part of which is in the next life. “If we suffer [with Christ], we shall also reign with him [in the future life]” (2 Tim. 2:12).

Notice how consolation and salvation are coupled in verse 6. The Christian is afflicted for consolation and salvation. Sometimes the consciousness of that salvation is experienced in the present life when we know we are trying to do God's will, but the fuller extent of salvation is in the next life. In verse 4, comfort is coupled with trouble. In verse 5, the sufferings of Christ are coupled with the consolation of Christ. We have to meditate on these thoughts in order to get the full significance of the couplings. We are called to sufferings and also to consolation.

Paul was always hopeful or optimistic in his expressions concerning others. For example, "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). He tried to identify that other believers, by maintaining their integrity and standing with Christ in God, would be equal sharers and companions and reap the same salvation as the apostles in the future. "Our hope of you is stedfast"; that is, Paul trusted that God's providence would bring the brethren through their ups and downs in life's experiences.

Previously, at the time of the first epistle, Paul's hope in the Corinthian brethren was not steadfast because they were wobbly on a number of issues: divisions in the class, false brethren, disputings, moral conduct, etc. In the meantime, his ministry was beneficial to them, resulting in favorable developments. The brethren were turned around 180 degrees in their thinking to a stable course.

As the Corinthians became partakers of Christ's sufferings, they grew in zeal and unity for the truth. They were persecuted either by false brethren in the class or from the outside. The effect of Paul's counsel was very beneficial, at least in the short term. "Our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). Because the Corinthians were rightly exercised, they received consolation. If they continued this way, they would get the highest consolation beyond the veil, the real reward.

**Q:** If a brother or sister commits suicide, is one problem that the individual did not recognize the comfort and consolation? Since the Scriptures guarantee that a way of escape will be provided with a trial, is the mind somehow not receptive to the comfort the Lord provides?

**A:** The individual who commits suicide constantly looks at and observes only the negative aspect of the Christian life. By always contemplating the negative, one can get into a condition of mind where he does not recognize avenues of escape or consolation. What is even more frightening is not only the individual who has that experience and commits suicide but also brethren who may have given wrong advice earlier. Brethren who give wrong advice may lead normally exemplary lives, but they are held accountable for careless instruction. An extenuating circumstance would be one whom the Lord considers a babe. Those who are babies in understanding yet have been a long time in the truth are more accountable than one who has recently come into the truth. In other words, the former is a dwarf, and the latter is an infant—and the responsibility of each is different. One who has been consecrated for a number of years and has not matured is held more accountable for such advice.

Unfortunately, some people are willing to give consolation out of emptiness. Paul could give proper consolation because he had had the experience and he knew the answers. However, if a person has neither the answers nor the experience but goes ahead and gives wrong advice, he will be held accountable. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). In connection with being indoctrinated in truth, if we, as individuals, do not establish independent thinking through reason and meditation, and if we get feelings over a long period of time where we would like to question a subject but keep silent, suppressing the questions, that condition is harmful to both the one who is being taught

and the one who is doing the teaching. Sometimes we only think of the individual during his experience in which he feels there is no way out and then takes his life, and we do not realize that there was a period of time when he was responsible and might have been able to pray but, instead, suppressed avenues of thought. And at times, we take burdens on our own shoulders for a long period of time without asking the Lord for help, without praying, without fasting, and without looking for advice. Then, when the trial gets to the critical phase, we are so sick that we give up. That condition should not happen, for God can save to the uttermost through Jesus (Heb. 7:25). In other words, sometimes we look at a situation as it is right now, whereas responsibility existed all along, prior to the experience, but was negated. The philosophy of suffering and the ministry of evil are an important topic to think out during our life, and we should not wait until we are in trouble. The same principle, along another line, is that the Holy Spirit can put words in our mouth for witnessing, but if we have not previously studied the subjects, how can we speak that which has never been harbored?

**2 Cor. 1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:**

“Asia” was the Roman province of Asia Minor, that is, primarily Turkey but also a small part of Syria. The “trouble” occurred specifically in Ephesus. What was the nature of Paul’s being “pressed out of measure”? He had continuing opposition in that city. One experience occurred when Demetrius and the silversmiths cried for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” (Acts 19:24-41). The people were ready to rush Paul into the arena to fight with beasts, but the brethren rescued him. A more daily experience was his disputing for two years in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9,10). On these occasions, Paul had to manifest great courage and fortitude, which in time took a toll on him physically. A *Manna* comment says that we do not know to what extent Paul’s success as a Christian and an apostle was due to the help of other brethren such as Aquila and Priscilla. Had he not had their comfort and support in connection with some of his experiences, he might not have made the grade. He would have been pressed beyond measure, where his faith would have faltered. Just as Jesus was humbled under the mighty hand of God through very crucial and trying experiences, saying, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” so Paul was pressed almost beyond measure (Matt. 26:38). He said, “We were pressed out of measure ... insomuch that we despaired even of life.” Almost despairing of life itself, Paul would have asked himself, “Are my sufferings worth the effort, since tangible results are so meager?” Later almost all forsook him as had happened to Jesus at the time of his crucifixion (2 Tim. 1:15).

Thinking on the philosophy of suffering and having confidence that God would somehow comfort him tided Paul over so that later he could give advice. He would have said, “I have been through a great deal, and I would like you to know that at one time, I suffered to the extent that I almost despaired of life.” We, too, can have trials of that nature, especially if our health is not up to par at the time. Depression can be severe.

Therefore, a practical aspect of Paul’s being pressed out of measure to the point of despairing of life itself is that he had to center his whole faith and trust in God, for who else could comfort him in that (supposed) last moment? Being brought to this position made Paul humble and helpful to others in similar experiences. In other words, suffering is designed to make us humble and to enable us to help others.

In our early years of consecration, we had an experience with a brother who was dying of cancer. When we went to see him in the hospital, his suffering was unbelievable. Feeling helpless, we wondered, “How can we help this brother?” The only thing we could think to say to strengthen his mind was, “Brother, just think of Jesus’ agony on the Cross.” By equating every pain with Jesus’ suffering, he would be able to understand the reason for his own

experience. Under similar suffering, some might reason improperly, “God is forsaking me.”

Another epistle tells how Paul went around from house to house to comfort and help the brethren in their trials, so his ministry was exhausting—to the point where he got despondent and was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. However, the Lord delivered Paul and gave him a sufficiency of strength.

**2 Cor. 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:**

The *Diaglott* interlinear Greek correctly has *present* tense: “But we *have* the sentence of death in ourselves.” “And I heard a voice from heaven saying ... Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” (Rev. 14:13). Consecration is unto death. Thus the sentence of death is in the Christian when he surrenders his will to the will of God. The consecration vow promises to lay down life on behalf of God, the truth, and the brethren. The requirement of the sentence of death is strict in fulfillment. Consecration costs something.

One purpose of having the sentence of death in ourselves is “that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God.” First, we give up our will; we are beheaded for the testimony of Jesus. From that moment on, Jesus becomes our Head.

The term “sentence of death” may refer to a trial of poor health that afflicted Paul at that time. The curse on Adam from a human standpoint was “dying thou shalt die.” Although Christians are considered not as dying in Adam but as being alive in Christ, for they die a sacrificial death, that does not mean one’s body members are immune to the ailments of the world. Evidently, Paul was referring to genetic deterioration, implying he was not in the best physical condition. He may have had a reoccurrence of a disease that came upon him in his travels.

“That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” Paul spoke along this line elsewhere about the resurrection power that is experienced in the present life by Christians who are living in a proper relationship to the Lord. If God can raise people from the tomb, He certainly can raise people from depression or sickness if He so wills.

**2 Cor. 1:10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;**

God “delivered [rescued—*Diaglott*] us from so great a death.” Why did Paul add the word “so” in “so great a death”? Was he referring to Second Death?

**Comment:** Paul was rescued from a particular experience, and in light of that deliverance, he expected to be rescued in future trials and troubles.

**Reply:** Yes. He was not speaking of the overall Christian walk but of a particular incident. He went on to say that he expected other experiences yet future, but in the light of the past deliverance, he looked forward in confidence to future victories.

The Christian is consecrated to the Lord’s death, to a share in the sin offering. There is also Adamic death, which is common to the world of mankind, but the Christian is delivered from that death at the time of consecration. Even though he may have the workings of Adamic death in his body and organs, death is not imputed to him on that basis, for the Christian walks in newness of life with different experiences.

Therefore, the expression “so great a death” seems to indicate Second Death. Since we are called to die for the Lord, Paul was not referring to Adamic death. “It is appointed unto men



once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). The high priest had to go under the veil. Paul was speaking of not only a past rescue but also future rescues from Second Death. In that severe trial, he was so discouraged that he despaired of life and was pressed beyond measure. If he had not been comforted, he might have given up and thus have gone into Second Death. And that is the lesson for us; namely, if God permits us to so despair, we should not think it strange but should believe we *will be delivered (rescued) from the trial*. David mentioned the “great transgression,” that is, the sin unto Second Death. “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the *great transgression*” (Psa. 19:13).

**Comment:** We should keep Paul’s and David’s reasoning in mind if we talk with a brother or sister who is contemplating suicide because of severe depression.

**Reply:** If God permits such a severe trial, He has a purpose. Since the Christian is to be tested, a “fiery trial” should not be considered strange (1 Pet. 4:12). God delivered Paul from his period of despondency. Paul had an emotional side as well as a keen, cold (in the sense of impartial) intellect.

**Comment:** God “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

**Reply:** Jesus and Paul were both pressed to the limit. God did not forsake Jesus, who cried on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” but for a moment turned His face, for Jesus had to have that experience. The feeling of a heart attack was coming on Jesus; the sac of his heart burst from sorrow.

In reading about other people, we do not see and feel the real-life drama as it actually was and is. However, Paul did acknowledge the prayers of the Corinthian brethren in verse 11. He had been shipwrecked, beaten with rods, stoned, etc., but evidently, the continuous nature of his experience in Ephesus for a period of at least three years was wearing him down.

**Comment:** Extreme depression is expressed in Psalm 119:28, “My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.”

**Comment:** Psalm 34:18-20 reads, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.”

**Reply:** Yes, the Lord delivers the faithful Christian, spiritually speaking.

**2 Cor. 1:11** **Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.**

The Corinthians prayed for Paul, and “many” sent gifts of money, which was a “thanks” offering in appreciation of his ministry and need. Although the details are not spelled out, we can gather from his experience that he had trouble selling the tents he made, for in the territory of Ephesus, everyone (Greeks and Jews) knew him from his daily disputings. Because of the opposition, he had financial difficulty. Paul was hungry and even sick for a while, so he was dependent upon others in the experience and now acknowledged, and was thankful for, the prayers and gifts of the Corinthians. He felt their concern was a participation in his ministry, a “helping together.” The pronoun “us” indicates Timothy was included in the prayers and gift.

God used the Apostle Paul in a remarkable fashion, enlightening him with superhuman knowledge that he shared with others. While he was the recipient of the knowledge, he was

also the channel so that the gift of his apostleship effectually helped others. It was like adding more coals to a fire. If coals are separated, they cool off and die out. The importance of prayer, fellowship, and meeting together is implied here.

The expression “Ye also helping together by prayer for us” shows unity. Now the brethren were thinking not of Peter, Apollos, etc., but of Paul and his needs. They began to really assist him. Paul had worked with his hands and supported himself so that his message would not be severely impaired through suspicion of an ulterior motive to fleece the flock. However, the brethren began to see that he had a financial need, for when he worked to support himself, he was deprived of time for witnessing and helping the brethren in other ways. The Corinthians also reacted with regard to the ministry of the poor in Jerusalem when the great famine came. Now Paul could boast about the Corinthians, but before that, in the first (unrecorded) letter and the second letter (recorded as 1 Corinthians), he had to prod them about how brethren elsewhere were more generous in contributing for the poor. In the meantime, the Corinthians evidently opened their purse strings and heartily entered into the spirit of giving. They also began to regard Paul as a local elected elder, as their representative. And they thought about him when he went to other places. This was quite a change in attitude.

**2 Cor. 1:12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.**

Paul was not given to the flowery oratory of the normal Greek philosophers. His wisdom was heart-to-heart talk in plain, easy-to-understand, sincere, and to-the-point language. Yes, he tried to impress the Corinthians with his sufferings and sincerity, but he was not trying to overly impress them with his capabilities. Paul used godly wisdom, not “fleshly wisdom.”

“Our rejoicing is ... the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity ... we have had our conversation [conduct] in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” If the Corinthians reflected on Paul’s conduct in the world and especially in the church there at Corinth, they would see what he had done on their behalf. He had manifested his sincerity of interest through deeds, and in all good conscience, he had testified the truth of God both in the world and in their midst.

In the first epistle, Paul reasoned, “I worked with my own hands when I was in Corinth. Even though I was entitled to gifts from you, I did not take any money but did everything freely so that you could see I had no ulterior motives.” Now, in this second epistle, Paul was having a new experience, and he was in need.

**Comment:** A brother or sister’s being in legitimate need is a test not only on that individual and his development but also on all of the brethren who hear and could help.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true. To give to a brother who is truly in need manifests faith and love.

**Q:** If an individual could receive but refuses support from the government, what should the brethren do? Would giving support under that circumstance be doing the brother a disservice?

**A:** Yes, that situation is different, for the individual is willingly and improperly trying to become a burden on the brethren and, therefore, should not be helped. Government benefits such as Social Security and welfare were not available to the public in earlier times, but when benefits are available, a Christian who falls on hard times should partake of them, acquiescing to the circumstances, rather than to obligate the brethren. However, if another brother (or sister) *of his own volition* wholeheartedly wants to take the individual in need into his own home, that is another matter and can be considered the Lord’s providence. The one in need

should not embarrass others into helping or make them feel they have a responsibility to help.

As a minister of Christ and of God, Paul provided things decent and honest in the sight of all men. In all of his affairs, spiritually and temporally, in the ecclesia and in the world, he behaved himself properly. Some of today's ministers, for example, have wealthy homes and luxurious temporal goods. It is true that they minister to other people, but if they are not earning a normal salary, we begin to question, "How can they support their temporal holdings?" Paul lived a simple, normal life as would become an ambassador for Christ. Whatever he had was shared with others in one way or another. Not only was he aware of the poor and the famine in Judea, but in his journeys, he had compassion for individuals and families who were in need.

"We have had our conversation [conduct] in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward [the Corinthians, for whom Paul was very much concerned]." When he eventually returned to Corinth, the journey cost him strength and means, but he did everything possible so that he would not be a charge to the brethren. He felt that laying down his life in time, effort, thought, money, and strength would redound to his crown. He was laying up treasures in heaven.

**2 Cor. 1:13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;**

Paul said he would not write new commandments to them with regard to the ordinary daily affairs of life, for his first epistle had covered, in a *general* sense, a whole spectrum of experience and advice on Christian conduct, marriage, the resurrection of the dead, idolatry, etc. He would not further advise them along these lines. Paul was saying, "We [will] write none other things than that which we have already written and which you have read and acknowledged [by responding with obedience]." Then he said, "And I trust ye shall acknowledge [them] even to the end." Paul trusted that the Corinthians would continue to keep the admonitions and advice to the end of their course. He had hope for them, for they were manifesting some stability.

**2 Cor. 1:14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

Notice the words Paul added. "Ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing." The Corinthians acknowledged Paul "in part"; that is, a segment of the brethren had responded heartily to his advice and obeyed but not the whole church of Corinth. Some did not yield to accepting Paul as an apostle, but evidently, all acknowledged that his counsel on moral comportment was correct. Even the opposers were forced by his logic to acknowledge that his advice was right in that area, but they had reservations about him as an individual. They still preferred others whom they held in higher regard. In other words, some of the Corinthians—perhaps a little more than half of them—heartily appreciated Paul's ministry and contributed to his needs. The others felt unkindly toward him and questioned his spirit.

"We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." Paul hoped he would see the Corinthians in the Kingdom, "in the [future] day of the Lord Jesus." Originally, a segment believed in Paul's apostleship, saying, "I am of Paul," but others said, "I am of Peter" or "I am of Apollos." Paul reasoned, "If you feel I am speaking the truth, accept it not because the words are *mine* but because it is *God's* will. Ye are of *God in Christ Jesus*, not of me." He wanted them to forget the *personalized* aspect of the office and power of his thinking. Those who were disposed to like him in the beginning probably continued to do so, and he put the power of his logic on a proper basis to keep them from idolizing him. Presumably some of the others also saw the superiority of Paul's advice and teaching, but a sizable number of brethren in the class did not, as will be brought out later in this second epistle.

Certainly we would like to know beyond the veil the outcome of all our consecrated friends—

to know who made the top grade and who got life. If we are faithful and Jesus welcomes us, we will embrace those we see and be happy that they were faithful unto death. Looking forward to this time, Paul frequently said words to this effect, "You are our hope of rejoicing. When we are beyond the veil, our hope is that you will be there with us." Since the sleeping saints were awakened in 1878, Paul is there now in earth's atmosphere. The "day of the Lord Jesus" began at that date, and those who have already experienced their change are aware of the destiny of their contemporaries. The "rejoicing" is on behalf of those who have made their calling and election sure in one form or another.

What a change had come over the ecclesia! Paul wanted the brethren to continue in faith and obedience so that in the Kingdom, they would be among the crown members—so that some from the class would be among the royalty and they could rejoice together.

**2 Cor. 1:15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;**

**2 Cor. 1:16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.**

"I was minded to come unto you before." Paul was explaining his tentative plans with regard to a second visit to Corinth, but his return was delayed. He had originally started the church at Corinth and subsequently wanted to benefit the Corinthians *twice more*, that is, on his way to and from Macedonia. Verse 16 helps to explain verse 15. If Paul entered the region by the southern route, he would sail from Ephesus to Athens and Corinth, and then go by land to Macedonia. He would return by land from Macedonia to Corinth, and then sail back to Ephesus or Judea. Hence Paul's next visit to Corinth was intended to be a *double* one.

**2 Cor. 1:17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?**

Verse 17 is translated various ways with radically different thoughts, but the King James is good. Paul had intended to make a double visit to Corinth, but his plans were interfered with. "In this confidence I was [past tense] minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit," but Paul had to change his plans. (The reason is given later.) He was highly criticized for this change in plans, as well as for other things, by some in the class who liked the flowery rhetoric and powerful oratory of Apollos. Paul's apostleship was questioned for the following reasons: (1) He was not with Jesus during the First Advent, yet he replaced Judas and Matthias, who was chosen by the apostles to take the place of Judas. (2) His sufferings for Christ were misunderstood as being punishments and disfavor of God. These were *fleshly* judgments, for the very sufferings, which were more than those of any other apostle, were credentials to show the importance of his apostleship. His sufferings for Christ were what the Church is called to experience. (3) Paul did not allow the Corinthians to support him but worked with his own hands. Some of the brethren in Corinth felt that if he was an apostle, he would not work. However, Paul explained that he worked so that they could not charge him with laying a financial burden on them. His labor was a labor of love and not a charge to them. The point is that those who wanted to find fault did so one way or another. If he had accepted financial help from them, they would have criticized that action too. (4) The Corinthians did not like Paul's looks, saying his bodily presence was weak. And they criticized his speech as being "contemptible" in that he used common sense and hard facts, rather than the rhetoric and oratory of the Greeks (2 Cor. 10:10). He got his point across with sound, simple logic, contrary to the majestic method of the Greeks. Those who liked oratory were fascinated with language, inflection, and delivery instead of straightforward reasoning on the death of Christ, its importance, and the hope of salvation. In many cases, the Lord used handsome, strong men,

such as Moses and David, but not always. On the surface, Paul did not appear to be an apostle, but if those who listened to his logic and the power of his arguments *loved* the truth, they realized that what he said made sense and that he was indeed an apostle.

Paul was apologetic here, being on the defensive. Imagine having to defend changing his mind! His critics accused him of vacillating and being weak-willed. Many in the world say one thing one day and the opposite the next day. Paul was accused of such instability because he changed his mind. Although Jesus said, “Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay,” this statement might lead to a wrong conclusion (Matt. 5:37 paraphrase). Did he mean that whenever we say yes, we cannot under any circumstance change our mind? If we make a commitment, are we bound by it like the law of the Medes and the Persians? No, but a minority of Corinthians were so hinting. They felt that if Paul was an apostle, his yea had to be yea—period! What a cunning undercutting! Jesus meant that our *habit* of thought should be consistent, truthful, and sincere. If a person is wishy-washy, this trait is discernible daily. Jesus was warning against the practice of making empty oaths—“by heaven this” and “by the altar that.” Frequently used strong or gushy statements are meaningless, such as “God bless you” or “I swear I will do such and such.” A person who is rough and gruff in the simplicity of his statements is more apt to be a stable character. Paul’s critics expected him to be infallible if he was an apostle.

Notice that in his argument, Paul did not retaliate against his enemies along another line. A minority in the class were critical because he changed his mind. They accused him of using “lightness,” that is, of being flighty and unreliable. If Paul had wanted to retaliate, he could have said that for him to travel from Ephesus to Corinth would entail a long, perilous journey that required money and strength. Therefore, he could have asked, “Who will pay my way?” The minority were not that keen on seeing him except with their mouth, but now that he could not come (because of a valid reason), they found fault.

**Comment:** Paul’s opposers were hypocritical because their faultfinding indicated they did not want to set eyes on him, yet they criticized him for not coming.

**Comment:** When the critics accused Paul of having a wrong motive for his change of plans, he had to humble himself again and ask in effect, “Would I do anything out of worldly wisdom?”

**Reply:** Yes, and knowing Paul’s character, the brethren should have trusted that he had a good reason for delaying his return.

**2 Cor. 1:18** But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

**2 Cor. 1:19** For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

**2 Cor. 1:20** For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

The clue on the “Yea, yea” and the “Nay, nay” is Paul’s response. “When Timothy, Silvanus (Silas), and I were with you, our preaching about Christ was not yes and no, but yes.” The critics implied that Paul’s earlier “Yea, yea” was in reality a “Nay, nay”—that he vacillated. Paul was saying, “Especially with regard to my doctrine, when I preached to you, my word was ‘yea and Amen’ in Christ Jesus.”

The Apostle Paul was not the exemplar of physical manhood, and his voice was not like that of a Greek orator, yet when he spoke, he commanded attention. He used powerful logic that only the prejudiced could escape. Paul nicely included Silas and Timothy, who were faithful partners with him in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to this new class at Corinth.

“All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen.” Almost invariably, Paul used “Amen” in reference to God, not to Jesus. However, the Apostle John’s “Amen” was used in regard to Jesus.

**2 Cor. 1:21** Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

**2 Cor. 1:22** Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

In verses 21-24 and verses 1-4 of the next chapter, Paul gave the reason why he changed his mind and did not go to Corinth. He began by saying, “He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.” Paul had a spirit of commiseration for the Corinthians and a spirit of participation with them in the wonderful communal hope of the Christian. He acknowledged God as the Author of the high calling.

The “earnest” of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the pledge, down payment, or installment of what is to come if we are faithful. The present inheritance of the saints includes a pledge of the Holy Spirit and various blessings. If faithful, we will receive the balance of the inheritance when we go beyond the veil.

Why did Paul speak about being “sealed” and the “earnest” of the Holy Spirit? The seal is a mark that shows *ownership*. For instance, Pilate’s seal, an external mark or insignia, was put on Jesus’ tomb in the garden, meaning “Do not touch or try to open that tomb.” Letters and documents were also sealed, and so were slaves. And cattle are marked with a brand that is burned into the hide to identify the owner. Accordingly, those who are the Lord’s receive a seal that not only indicates the possession of the Holy Spirit but also produces an external action portraying the individual as belonging to Christ. It is *God* who seals us and gives us the earnest of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit proves one is of God in Christ; it proves acceptance.

The “sealing” of verse 22 is really the quickening phase of the sealing. The Holy Spirit does not have much of a sealing effect at first, for at the time of consecration, it is the beginning of a process. In the Parable of the Sower, one category “received the seed into stony places” yet “anon with joy,” but because the soil was shallow, the roots sprang up and did not endure when tribulation or persecution arose (Matt. 13:5,20,21). In this case, the sealing proceeded to a certain extent but did not remain. The sealing is a fixing process. The carved seal is pressed down into the wax, and when the wax cools, the seal hardens. Discipline fixes the seal more and more. When the seal is first pressed into the wax, it is like quickening, which is equivalent to the fifth month of the fetus. The quickening is a hopeful and promising sign, first, that there is life and, second, that the zeal being manifested will end in victory, in a permanent sealing, if it continues. The process, which takes time, starts in the mind, the will, and then involves the heart.

The main point on Paul’s mind was the preceding criticism (starting in verse 15) of why he had not gone to Corinth as originally stated. He was trying to straighten out his critics, telling why he had to change his mind.

**2 Cor. 1:23** Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

Why did Paul call God “for a record” upon his soul? He was saying, “God is my witness that I intended to go to Corinth, but I changed my mind because of such and such.” If Paul was not telling the truth, he would be condemning himself, but his conscience was clear, for he had a valid reason. He was jeopardizing his own standing with God by saying God was his record; that is, he was *staking his calling* on the fact that he was telling the truth. In apologetically

defending himself, he condescended to the disgruntled element in the class in order to save them. Instead of ignoring them, concluding that their condition was beyond help, and letting them go to their destruction, he went out of his way to help them see their error.

Originally, Paul was quite hot about the way the Corinthians were tolerating loose morals and behavior in the class, as well as divisions. If he returned to them in that mood, his visit would not have been as beneficial.

**2 Cor. 1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.**

Paul was not trying to “have dominion” over the faith of his critics but was trying to help them have joy. In the first epistle, he laid down definite rules of conduct, but faith in Christ was a *voluntary* matter. The greater the Corinthians’ faith, the more they would obey. The more faithful they were, the more energetic they would be in following the instruction of Holy Writ.

As an apostle, Paul could have been much sterner, but he took a more humble attitude, even though he upbuilt himself by saying that in contrast to the other teachers, there was only one “father.” He had brought the truth to the Corinthian church. If Paul had wanted to “lord” his apostleship over the faith of his critics, he could have called for those individuals by name and had a church trial and convicted them. For example, Ananias and Sapphira agreed together to give a partial donation of their property to the Lord and to withhold the rest but to infer that they had given everything. The misrepresentation of having given their all was contemptible. As Ananias and Sapphira were confronted separately by the Apostle Peter, they successively dropped dead for lying to the Holy Spirit. Paul could have used the same method here by singling out those who differed with him, exposing them personally by name, and having them expelled from the church. They were questioning Paul, but their questioning was of the insidious type that could later develop into *open opposition*. What started as little differences could grow and grow until finally it became real enmity. (Unfortunately, that is what happened later, as we will see, for this element went from bad to worse.) Throughout, Paul’s motive was to help the brethren—and of course to please the Heavenly Father.

**Comment:** Paul’s concern with all of the brethren was their eternal salvation.

**Reply:** A principle is that if a person is sick and wobbly and teetering along the edge, he should not be pushed over the cliff. The individual should be warned but with discretion.

“For by faith ye stand.” Jesus said, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). In other words, “By [your own] faith ye [Corinthians] stand.” The principle is that faith has to be of our own initiative, and God rewards us if we respond of our own self-will. People can give us advice and encouragement, but we have to work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). The driving force in working out our salvation is faith.

Paul was saying that when he ministered unto the Corinthians, he did not want to mar their freedom of choice. For example, some parents inordinately make their children attend every meeting and thus override their personalities. Rather, they should deal with a baby as a baby and with a young child as a young child. An adult manner of training should not be used on a person who is undeveloped. Parents should be reasonable and generous in spirit so that their children will serve God of their own initiative. That is the value of freewill offerings. And so Paul was reluctant to use his mighty power to overawe, discipline, and force the Corinthians to obey, even though they opposed him. He refrained from being severe because he wanted them to obey of their own initiative, and his method worked wonderfully. What a wise master craftsman the Apostle Paul was in serving the gospel!

**2 Cor. 2:1** But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

Paul did not want to come to the Corinthians again in “heaviness,” that is, in grief and sorrow. In a lost letter, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth not to company with fornicators. He alluded to that letter in 1 Corinthians 5:9, “I wrote unto you [previously] in an epistle not to company with fornicators [in the church].” Then he proceeded to say that if anyone who is called a brother or a sister is a fornicator, the class should not so much as eat with that one.

In the church at Corinth was a man who was intimate with his father’s wife but had not been excommunicated. The rest of the brethren were glorying in their false love instead of feeling shame. Paul asked, “Do you not know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” Then he said, “I command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as if I were there, to put that individual out from the meeting.” Paul gave explicit advice, with reasons, on what to do with a consecrated fornicator. He laid down a stern law for excommunication. In other words, he exercised dominion over rules of conduct and evil works, but not over the faith of the brethren (2 Cor. 1:24). Stated another way, he exercised dominion over what was clearly written in the Word of God. The class obeyed and did excommunicate the individual as advised.

With regard to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the church at Corinth had sent a letter full of questions to Paul at Ephesus at the hands of three individuals—Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. However, the case of fornication was not a question, for Paul said, “*It is reported commonly* that there is fornication among you.” Paul wrote a letter back, addressing the various questions and the fornication. Then he waited. Had he returned to Corinth too soon after writing the first epistle, he would have had to do much stern talking and excommunicate the fornicator himself instead of letting the class act on his advice. In other words, he would have robbed the class of the virtue of taking a stand. The principle is that sometimes it is good to wait awhile, for by acting too peremptorily, too quickly, we can rob others of the opportunity of taking a stand. But if after a time, a stand is not taken, a class incurs double condemnation. Paul waited until the class had followed his advice, and he could then go back with joy. He was very stern, but when the man was excommunicated and then subsequently repented, Paul said, “Receive him back again, for he has suffered enough. We do not want him to be swallowed up with sorrow and the Adversary to take him into Second Death” (2 Cor. 2:6,7 paraphrase).

This, then, was the excuse Paul gave for not returning to Corinth as originally intended and having a double visit both before and after going to Macedonia. It is good that Paul changed his mind and waited. We can see his wisdom in dealing with the Lord’s people.

Paul was not indecisive about returning to Corinth. He had a valid reason for changing his mind, for had he come at the time originally intended, he might have arrived in the heat of his anger. In speaking to them, he might have been too severe, for he had the authority of an apostle. Thus he deliberately delayed his coming. And another reason for the delay was that he had a serious illness, almost unto death. He appreciated the many prayers of the brethren on his behalf and felt they were effectual (2 Cor. 1:11).

**Comment:** The previous time Paul had visited Corinth with a heavy heart, or burden. He did not want to do this again.

**Reply:** With all the questions Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians, we can see that there were a lot of problems in the class, which apparently contained quite a number of consecrated individuals. They had accepted the truth with joy, but they were not living up to the standard of the truth. As time went on, internal differences were doing much harm, and the lack of inner harmony in the class was not conducive to unity.



When Paul was there in Corinth, he could not address all of the different problems, for to do so might have caused confusion. In those days, the class did not have a way to record Paul's talks, and we cannot imagine that a stenographer was present to take down his remarks for a record of what he had said. Another problem was that not all of the brethren were in attendance at every meeting. Thus the Holy Spirit prompted Paul to realize it would be better to address all of these problems by letter. Not only would the letter be preserved, but he could sit down in relative leisure to think soberly about the problems and then put in writing, in as few words as possible, what he deemed to be solutions to the various issues. Therefore, when Paul was in their midst, his sermons were probably in the nature of exhortations addressed to both the consecrated and the unconsecrated, for he wanted to build up the class.

If Paul had treated all of the problems in person, the result would have been disruptive. A letter has less emotion in the sense that an individual does not feel he is being singled out. (For example, when pilgrim brothers have gone to classes and spoken on a certain issue—such as a morals problem—one or more in the class imagined that someone had told the brother what had happened.) To clear up the matter, Paul wrote, “Those of the house of Chloe reported to me” and “I heard.” These written expressions were a little less personal, yet Paul was honest and open. This method was more beneficial than a talk, which would have been forgotten a couple of days later. A letter became a record that could be reviewed repeatedly to understand Paul's thinking. From our standpoint, Divine Providence wonderfully overruled so that Paul's two epistles to the Corinthians were preserved. The written record is like having tapes.

**2 Cor. 2:2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?**

Verse 2 shows Paul's reluctance to return to Corinth if the brethren were still in a spirit of heaviness. For him to arrive under this situation would create a bad atmosphere. He would rather return, if possible, under better circumstances. Paul said, “If I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but ... [the one who was] made sorry by me?” If Paul came too soon, the brethren would still be grieving over the stern remarks in his first epistle, and the mood would not be joyful. He wanted to give the class time to obey his instructions. Thus he deliberately delayed his return.

Paul wanted to return to the Corinthians when they would be rejoicing in his presence. He was saying, “If I make you unhappy, you will not receive me with joy, and the sadness will be reciprocal.” Sadness breeds sadness, just like money makes money.

**2 Cor. 2:3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.**

Some scholars feel verse 3 indicates that Paul wrote another letter, a stern one, in between his First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians. However, we think otherwise. Paul's earlier statement “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators” (1 Cor. 5:9) tells that a letter, of which we have no record, did precede the first epistle. Therefore, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians was actually his second letter. When Paul said here in verse 3, “I wrote this same unto you,” he was referring to his First Epistle to the Corinthians, which was stern enough, especially chapter 5. The man Paul referred to in verses 2, 5, and 6 was the sinner of 1 Corinthians 5. Some scholars feel he was the ringleader and thus a different person from the sinner, but certain verses later on in this second epistle are proof texts to show that this “man” was the sinner.

Originally, while in Ephesus, Paul had gotten a report of the fornication at Corinth. Then he carefully wrote the first recorded letter, answering the questions and using strong language

with regard to the fornicator and the reaction of the class. If, instead, he had immediately gone back and spoken to the brethren in person, the class would not have had a sufficiency of time to respond the way he hoped they would. And that is what Paul said in the previous chapter; namely, he did not desire to lord his advice over them. To return immediately would have robbed them of the initiative of responding in a positive manner to his advice and of the virtue of their taking a stand. Paul gave strong advice in the letter, but he allowed time for the advice to sink in. Therefore, when he said in verse 3, “I wrote this same unto you,” he was apparently referring to his First Epistle to the Corinthians, and not to another letter sandwiched in between.

**Q:** When Paul said, “Lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice,” was he referring to some who might have been reluctant, at least at first, to excommunicate the fornicator?

**A:** That would not necessarily be the case because the whole class was guilty originally of not seeing the need for excommunication. The brethren felt that having the sinner in their presence showed the magnanimity of their love. In addition, there were other problems and divisions. Thus Paul delayed his return a little while to let them respond properly.

“Having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.” Paul was hopeful that the brethren would take the advice in his letter so that he could return later and talk on happier subjects instead of having to remind them of their responsibility to excommunicate the sinner.

Paul sent Timothy to the church at Corinth and urged the brethren to receive him. However, Timothy was rebuffed because of his youth. Next Paul sent Titus, who was more willingly received because he was older. The Corinthians regarded Timothy’s age as an indication of immaturity and also did not like his manner. Since he came from a more undeveloped province in Asia Minor, his background of education was not on a level with many in the class at Corinth, so they were prone to look down on him. His youth was an excuse, for they felt he should have the finesse of the Greeks. However, Timothy had the zeal, the constancy, and the truth of the matter more than the Corinthians, and Paul hoped they would recognize and receive him from that standpoint.

We feel that Titus brought the Second Epistle to the Corinthians to the church at Corinth but that Timothy brought the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Notice how this second epistle opened: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth.” Although others were there with Paul, he singled out Timothy, whom the Corinthians had previously rebuffed, to show that he still thought very highly of Timothy. He associated Timothy with himself to show that Timothy was his helper. Paul’s method was in the nature of a rebuke, for Timothy was being trained to take over in his absence. The Corinthians received Titus more favorably, yet he was more fickle, as will be seen.

The epistles to the Corinthians were unusual in that they brought in more personal matters about the Apostle Paul than any of the other epistles. He intended to make three trips to Corinth but was able to go only twice (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1).

**Comment:** Paul wrote, “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction” (2 Cor. 13:10).

**Reply:** Yes, he thought a return trip too soon would be damaging and would create sorrow. He wanted to have an atmosphere of hope, joy, and goodwill rather than one of sorrow, gloom, and anger. He preferred to address the issues in writing, expressing what he really felt

and thereby hoping to accomplish more good than he would by speaking with force in their midst. When present with them, he wanted to be somewhat gentle, and then afterward he could be stern by correspondence. This method was one of tact, common sense, and sober reasoning. Thus far Paul was revealing his feelings and attitude toward the brotherhood.

Paul's earliest letter to the Corinthians is missing. The first epistle recorded in Scripture was a reply to a prior experience. Subsequently he visited the class. This second recorded epistle informs us what had happened. Evidently, the first two epistles (the missing letter and the first recorded letter) dealt with problems in the class that Paul addressed. Apparently, because of the sternness of the missing letter, the Holy Spirit overruled that it was not preserved. It would not have been helpful for those newly coming into the truth. However, the loss of that letter makes it difficult to explain all of the verses in the proper sequence.

**2 Cor. 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.**

In telling about the circumstances under which he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul revealed his emotional involvement with the brethren. He wrote "out of much ... anguish of heart ... with many tears," and he wanted them to know how much he loved them. He was concerned for their lasting welfare and not for their immediate friendship. Friendship is easy to retain by speaking pleasant things and avoiding admonition, but then the brethren would have lost out in the end. In other words, he did not purposely try to stir up trouble and grieve them, "but that ye might know the [more proper] love which I have more abundantly unto you." Paul wanted them to come to the level of maturity that he desired in all who accept the truth.

There was a higher caliber of character in some of the other churches, whereas Corinth was a "sin city," whose inhabitants were known for fornication and illicit relationships. Because of the sinful environment, the Corinthian brethren were more apt to be tempted out of the way. Therefore, Paul was concerned lest he lose some of the brethren in that class. His concern was the proper attitude of a shepherd for the sheep. In caring for the flock, a good shepherd had to come back with a piece of an ear as evidence that he had risked his own life in trying to defend the sheep against a bear, wolf, or other predator. Paul was an unusual individual. To a certain extent, outward appearance has credibility, but judgment on that basis is dangerous.

**2 Cor. 2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.**

The RSV reads, "But if any one has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to you all." While the incident of fornication was a burden to Paul in that he expended energy in writing a letter because of his concern, sorrow, and grief, he was showing the brethren the better way. Writing the letter did cause him some pain, but he felt the danger to all would be far worse if they did not follow his advice. Thus the danger, the problem, and the pain should have been more extreme to them than it was to him, for he was just giving the remedy.

**Comment:** Those who were not in full harmony in supporting excommunication were in as much danger as the one who actually committed the sin.

**Reply:** Yes, another verse brings out that principle.

Paul was misunderstood and falsely accused by some in the class. Although not immune to feelings in connection with these experiences, he did not let his feelings overreact in his treatment of others. In other words, he got over the experiences and did not let them sink in

too deeply because of his concern for the brethren. He had more abundant love for them.

Paul did not want to “overcharge” the brethren; i.e., he did not want his tone to be too severe. Had he returned to Corinth in that attitude, he would have wielded the stick of authority. Therefore, for their benefit, he purposely delayed his return lest he come in the heat of anger. He liked to talk in a fatherly manner, being as constructive as possible, so he carefully chose the words, some of which sound rather strange to us. Being emotionally inclined, Paul could have been an orator, but he purposely curbed himself and spoke in a simpler, more direct fashion.

**2 Cor. 2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.**

The fornicator had shown sorrow and contrition as a result of the necessary excommunication and being turned over to Satan by “many” in the class. A sufficiently large majority of the class had responded to Paul’s counsel to put away the individual from them. The minority, who were reluctant to support the excommunication, were persuaded to act in harmony with the majority because of having no grounds not to go along with the action. In other words, the minority were not fully in sympathy, but Paul’s advice was so strongly and purposely written that they yielded to it. He was pleased that so many saw the necessity for taking a stand and thus complied with his advice.

While the punishment of excommunication was inflicted, there was always the danger that the Corinthians would be too sensitive to Paul’s advice and criticism. He mentioned how weak and wishy-washy they were in dealing with morals problems instead of putting the fornicator out of their midst. The Corinthians had mistakenly thought their laxity was love. For the same reason, false love abounds today, and in time that false love becomes a bondage prohibiting verbal expression on many subjects lest someone be offended because of race, gender, religion, etc. Laws along the lines of discrimination, which were designed with good intentions, actually form another layer of regimentation. As an illustration, if a traffic light is installed on every street corner in a city, the result is gridlock. A land of liberty can thus become the opposite—a land of restrictions. The general public is frequently not aware of these laws until they are on the books. Either too much or too little restriction is a problem.

Because many Bible scholars do not recognize that Paul wrote an earlier letter, which is missing, they feel that 1 and 2 Corinthians were written about six months apart. To have this thought would mean that the excommunicated individual was away from the class for only about six months. We feel that the excommunication lasted at least a year and a half because of the grievous nature of the sin.

**2 Cor. 2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.**

There is no doubt that the man repented, for he could have been “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow”; that is, he was truly despondent about being excommunicated. Such was a “godly sorrow” (2 Cor. 7:10).

**Comment:** One who has strong remorse after being excommunicated might even feel like committing suicide in his “overmuch sorrow.” Brethren should realize the Lord is permitting this situation for the individual’s good, that is, to bring about repentance.

**Reply:** A person should not be comforted in his wrongdoing and deflection. The comfort comes afterward, following true repentance, when the individual should be received back lest he be swallowed up with “overmuch sorrow.”

If a brother does take his life in suicide, we should not assume that the Lord will forgive him

and that he is possibly still in the body of Christ beyond the veil because he did not know what he was doing. That type of advice is wrong. Rather, advice should have been given earlier to *prevent* the circumstance and not to be so merciful and forgiving as to excuse the suicide. The fact that the individual in the church at Corinth repented is encouraging, for it shows that if a proper course is taken, there is the hope of retrieval.

“So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him [now], and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” “Overmuch sorrow” results when punishments are too harsh or are not given with wisdom. For instance, if young girls got pregnant out of wedlock a hundred years ago, the stigma of society was so much against them that many committed suicide. Today conditions are exactly the opposite—pregnancy out of wedlock is almost the norm. “Overmuch sorrow,” extreme depression, can lead to suicide, which is like putting three nails in the coffin of a new creature. Intuitively, from comments made to him, Paul realized this person, when shut out of the fellowship, so hungered and thirsted for reinstatement that he was exceedingly sorry for what he had done. That sorrow was the basis for forgiveness—not just saying, “I am sorry,” but godly sorrow, which was accompanied with real anguish and grief.

Paul was saying that the excommunicated party should now be brought back into fellowship. A responsible member of the ecclesia should inform him that if he would like to return to the class, there would be no opposition. Incidentally, Paul did not tell the Corinthians to follow Jesus’ advice in Matthew 18:15-17 because that procedure was to determine whether the party was guilty, and in this case, the guilt was apparent. In other words, Matthew 18 is more of a fact-finding procedure to determine who is at fault. For example, did both parties commit adultery, or just Brother A, or only Sister B? Since the case in 1 Corinthians 5 was commonly known, judgment could be rendered without going through the steps of Matthew 18.

**2 Cor. 2:8** Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

Paul suggested that the Corinthian brethren reinstate the repentant individual. He was saying, “I gave advice, and you followed it. I was very concerned whether you would see the need for excommunication.” Had the Corinthians not followed Paul’s advice, his influence would have gone down the drain, for that reaction would have been the beginning of their forsaking him. Sadly, near the end of his life, after having done so much for the brethren, Paul said, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2 Tim. 1:15).

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* inserts the word “publicly”: “Wherefore, I entreat you *publicly* to confirm your love towards him.” Since the fornicator was publicly censured, it was proper that he be publicly welcomed back by the ecclesia as a whole following his repentance.

**Reply:** Yes, if the excommunication was done in the name of Christ, that is, publicly, it should be withdrawn (after repentance) in the name of Christ—publicly.

Sometimes the ones who are deep in sin and then realize their need for salvation make the best disciples in the final analysis. When their character changes, others can see that God is working in them in a remarkable way. Their reformation redounds to God’s praise, for it manifests the power of His Spirit coming from His Word through the example of the life of Jesus Christ.

The brethren would “confirm” their love toward the obviously repentant excommunicated individual by extending the right hand of fellowship. Since the class had voted him out, they should now vote him back in. Welcoming the brother back would be commensurate with how the disfellowshipping had taken place. It would be very helpful for the individual to know now that he could start afresh. However, he could not be an elder. Incidentally, the length of an excommunication period would depend on the circumstances of repentance.

**2 Cor. 2:9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.**

The King James is superior to many other renditions for verse 9, although the *Diaglott* is the best. Most translations give the thought that Paul's real reason for giving the advice and commandment in the first epistle was to prove whether the brethren were "obedient in all things [in his advice to them]." However, the word "also" indicates that testing their obedience was not Paul's only motive. His motives were (1) salvation of the individual, (2) salvation of the class so that the brethren would not all become leavened, and (3) obedience to his advice. The proper emphasis is, "For to this end *also* did I write"; that is, Paul had an *additional* motive. The Greek *kai* can mean "and," "even," or "also," as here.

Paul was hopeful that the Corinthians would obey him in the matter of excommunication, but he gave advice on other subjects too: eating food offered to idols, marriage, etc. Paul hoped the brethren would be "obedient in [his advice on this matter and] all things [other matters]." The first epistle contains advice from Paul on numerous subjects. He took the time and the pain to write, praying and weeping in that regard. In other words, he was emotionally involved.

Evidently, several brethren opposed Paul, trying to undermine his work in the class, but there was one particular opposer, as will be seen. We do not think Paul was referring to that individual at this time.

**2 Cor. 2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;**

Paul was not saying that no matter what the class forgave, he would do likewise, for he meant "any thing" in a qualified or limited sense. In addition to forgiving the brother who had committed fornication and repented, he was beginning to spread into other areas of the advice in his first epistle. Thus far in his second epistle, he focused primarily on the fornication and excommunication incident. He wanted to see whether the brethren would be "obedient in all things," starting with his stern advice and then going into his advice on other matters. The Adversary had multiple tactics, not just overmuch sorrow that would lead the brother to renounce his consecration, give up all hope, and thus, in despondency, go into Second Death. Satan was seeking to undercut and undermine the class and chew it up in various ways. Divisions based on circling around a particular leader instead of the Lord Jesus Christ were another area in which he was working.

Therefore, in saying, "I forgive [anything] also," Paul was referring to other problems in the class. A minority in the class were directly undercutting his authority, suggesting the possibility that he was not an apostle, that there were inconsistencies in his character, and that he may have had an ulterior motive in taking up a collection for the saints. They had a problem accepting Paul's apostleship. Although they did not directly charge him with not being an apostle, they inferred that possibility. Hoping the class would mend its ways, Paul bore no grudge against any of the brethren. He was willing to forgive and forget with regard to the various problems if the brethren would respond and obey his counsel and have peace and harmony. If they, including the minority who opposed him, changed their mind and attitude and admitted that Paul's advice was wholesome, he would let bygones be bygones. He was saying, "If you forgive one another, I will forgive." In other words, "It would be nice if we could just start over again on a better basis, but you will have to initiate the change."

"For your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ." Paul was showing this was not a personal matter. In 1 Corinthians 5, he wrote strong language "in the person of Christ." "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our

Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan” (1 Cor. 5:4,5). Paul was writing the Lord’s instructions. Stated another way, the advice was given in Christ’s stead.

The divisions in the class were very real in the sense that the brethren did not necessarily all meet under the same roof except on special occasions, such as when there was a visiting speaker. If they persisted, the differences would harden and thus lead to a permanent physical separation, where they would refuse to meet together under any circumstance. If the Corinthians forgave one another and met together on all occasions, that would be better.

According to the Greek, Paul asked for the second epistle to be read openly to the class. In other words, he did not want the letter to go privately to the secretary of the class with perhaps a delay in the reading as it was passed from individual to individual. The letter was to be a quick communication. “In the person [presence—*Diaglott*] of Christ.” Paul thus indicated that his advice expressed the principles of God’s Word, which teach that the Lord is near to those who are of a contrite and humble disposition. The excommunicated individual gave evidence that he was grieving. Paul was saying, “As Christ’s ambassador, I am telling you that Christ approves of the advice I gave you. Jesus will think highly of what you have done.”

While Paul’s concern was triggered by the individual’s sin, he saw that many other brethren could fall as well. Thus he was concerned for the many, as well as for the individual. He was saying, “I gave stern advice because I was concerned for your welfare.” To empathize or sympathize with wrong principles is dangerous. If brethren allow their emotions to condone the wrong actions of others, they enter into the sin. Paul was concerned about the behavior and attitude of the class, for they were proud—they boasted and gloried—in their false love.

“For to this end also did [past tense] I write” (verse 9). When Paul got the good news that the brethren had responded to the advice in his first recorded epistle, he was thankful. Here, in verse 10, he was saying, “As the apostle, or representative, of Jesus Christ, I forgive the individual, seeing he has manifested a repentant disposition. I do this in Jesus’ sight.” Of course, with the Corinthians having the approval of Jesus and the Apostle Paul to reinstate the brother, at least to fellowship, it was propitious for them to do likewise.

**2 Cor. 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.**

Satan has many techniques. “Divide and conquer” is one strategy. He tries to alienate affections within a class, so that the brethren become divided in their enthusiasm to resist his tactics. This division is figurative instead of physical. The Adversary will use any method that will help his cause and undermine the cause of truth. He also uses disappointment. For example, Satan plays upon a tender conscience so that, if possible, a person’s remorse becomes overwhelming.

“For we are not ignorant of his devices.” Paul was saying that Satan is wily and has many different methods for upsetting peace and harmony, so we must beware lest we get ensnared. Satan prospers when there is an unsettled situation. Herbert Hoover expressed this wrong principle along another line by saying, “The Communists like to fish in troubled waters.” We would amend the statement: “Satan likes to fish in troubled waters.” The Adversary is not wobbly in unsettled conditions, for he has a fixed purpose. To the contrary, the brethren become disadvantaged. Paul was saying, “Your act of excommunication was commendable and helpful in warding off what Satan was trying to do.” On another occasion, the Apostle John commended the young ones in the class for taking the right stand in overcoming Satan in a particular troubled situation (1 John 2:13). The brethren were relatively immature in the truth, but in their sincerity and desire to follow what they believed was right, they took a courageous stand, which probably required sacrifice (the loss of friendship). John commended them for defeating the Adversary, much as Paul was doing here.

**Comment:** The apostles had the power to represent the Lord in both giving and withholding.

**Reply:** Yes, with apostolic authority, whatever they bound on earth was bound in heaven, and whatever they loosed on earth was loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19). The Church is built on the foundation of Jesus and the 12 apostles. Paul was chosen for his unique role because he was well versed in Scripture and knew the proper course to take.

One of Satan's devices is overmuch sorrow, for he likes to take advantage of discouragement. Another arrow in his quiver is pleasure, that is, getting the Christian inordinately occupied in other matters—business, finance, or whatever.

**2 Cor. 2:12** Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

**2 Cor. 2:13** I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

Paul had been at Ephesus. Traveling north from Ephesus took him up the coast of Asia Minor and on to Troas, which had a good harbor. Ships went from Troas to Macedonia. Evidently, Titus had gone to Corinth. Paul had expected to meet him at Troas, so he was concerned when Titus did not show up—"I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother." However, Paul found responsiveness at Troas, so he delayed there for a while—"a door was opened unto me of the Lord." Paul could have taken the indication of the "open door" as a reason to remain longer at Troas, exploiting the situation fully, but he did not delay as long as he would have liked because he was disturbed about the situation in Corinth. Thus we can see how much conditions at Corinth weighed on his mind. He was waiting to hear the news, but Titus did not come. Titus knew the prearranged route that Paul would take, but when Paul went on to Macedonia, Titus was not there right away either. The Book of Acts indicates that Paul eventually met Titus in Philippi of Macedonia and there got good news (2 Cor. 7:5,6).

We believe that Paul wrote four letters to the class at Corinth, three of which are recorded in Holy Writ. The First Epistle to the Corinthians was actually the second letter, for in it Paul referred to an earlier letter that is not part of Scripture. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians consists of two letters that were combined. Thus Paul wrote four letters—the first was not recorded, the second is 1 Corinthians, and the third and fourth comprise 2 Corinthians.

Verses 12 and 13 show that Paul took the northern route to Corinth through Macedonia and then into Thessalonica. He took a long, round-about way to Corinth, whereas he could have gone direct, because other churches were involved. Whenever he started a church, he usually visited twice, first to establish servants and how meetings should be held, and later to see how the church had progressed. If he could not go personally, he made sure he got word.

Paul anticipated in the timing that Titus would be at Troas, and that then he would stay longer in the area. Apparently, Paul was still weak from his sickness, and he wanted to get to Corinth.

**Comment:** In Troas, Paul was expecting to hear news about Corinth from Titus. Now he could not wait any longer, so he proceeded on to Macedonia.

**2 Cor. 2:14** Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Paul was alluding to a custom of his day. When a victorious general returned home after a foreign campaign, there was a victory parade or celebration. Preceding the general was a chariot in which incense was burned and his family sometimes rode. In addition, flowers and



palm branches were strewn in the hero's path to welcome him home. The flowers and incense were designed to be a sweet fragrance. In verse 14, Christ was the General who returns in triumph. Paul likened himself and the brethren as being in this victory procession, celebrating the cause of Christ and bearing incense. Wherever Paul went in his ministry, the spreading of spiritual incense caused him to triumph in the victory parade for the cause of Christ.

In such a welcoming ceremony, many rejoice over the success of a certain individual or cause, but enemies, who are not in the right heart condition, resent the sweet-smelling flowers. To them, the sweet fragrance is a stench. And that is how the gospel affects people; it is sweet to some and repugnant to others (verse 16).

Verse 14 can also be likened to the following. The conquering Roman emperor was the *chief* figure in a victory parade. In addition, generals identified with the victory were normally included in the parade. The emperor honored the generals by having them associate with him. Here Christ was the chief figure, and Paul and other emissaries who represented Christ's cause were in the triumphant victory parade. "God ... always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." The wording suggests an active role for Christ and the Apostle Paul.

As an ambassador for Christ, Paul tried to take the wholesome influence of the Savior's life, character, words, and doctrine wherever he would go. The holy, pure fragrance of the gospel message went with him, even though discord, problems, and persecution occurred. Such trouble was the result of the truth and not of the personality who was espousing the truth.

**2 Cor. 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:**

The gospel should be a sweet savor to *all* (to those who are saved and to those who are perishing). Therefore, whether or not the gospel is sweet depends on the individual who receives it. There is nothing wrong with the fragrance—the fragrance is good—but to the class that does not have the proper heart condition, it becomes a stench.

Verse 15 is a gentle hint to wayward Christians, who are perishing. If they do not realize their circumstance, they will perish. Of course all the world is perishing, but Paul was especially addressing the Corinthian church.

The reference was to a custom of the Roman emperors, most of whom were generals who got the seat of authority because of their power as leaders of the armed forces. When the generals, who were away from home for several years in their conquests, returned to the homeland, there was a glorious celebration. The populace threw flowers, and incense was burned. To the populace, the celebration was a time of joy, but prisoners in the entourage were being led to their death. Great personages who were conquered were humbled, brought to the homeland, and executed. Thus the incense was an omen of the nearness of their demise. Paul used this custom for a play on words here in verses 15 and 16.

**2 Cor. 2:16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?**

**2 Cor. 2:17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.**

Why did Paul ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Here was an innuendo, worded softly, that the Corinthians should take Paul's instructions to heart. Otherwise, his ministry, although designed for good, could be a damaging experience in that judgment and responsibility follow

a hearing of the message. Paul was saying, “Who is able to meet this situation? Who is fit for such things?” The answer would be, “Those who believe and obey the Word in simplicity, earnestness, and honesty.” That class, who want to know and obey the will of God, are in a better position than those who want to doctor the Word to suit their tastes. A knowledge of the truth brings responsibility. In *simplicity*, we are to hear and obey.

The phrase “corrupt the word of God” has the thought of doctoring or slanting the Word to suit the fleshly mind. The *Diaglott* interlinear has “adulterating,” which implies using the Word of God but not in its pure form.

“For we are not as [the] many, which corrupt the word of God.” Paul was not speaking to just those in the church at Corinth, where certain leaders and teachers—a minority at that time—were involved. From the standpoint of the overall, or *generalized*, picture of the numerous places Paul visited, “in every place” (verse 14), many were adulterating the Word of God. Quite a number were involved in this nefarious, undermining ministry in contradistinction to Paul’s ministry of openness, honesty, simplicity, and earnestness in the sight of God.

In the King James Version, Paul’s language is gentle with innuendos that have a far deeper significance. Some of the other translations use stronger language, such as the following. “We are not like those hucksters—and there are many of them—whose idea in getting out the Gospel is to make a good living out of it” (Living Bible). “At least we do not go around offering the word of God for sale, as many other people do. In Christ, we speak as men of sincerity” (Jerusalem Bible). “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God” (Revised Standard). This element doctored the Word for their own gain. The KJV uses the word “corrupt,” with the gentler thought of “doctor,” but the implication is that this element had a wrong ulterior motive.

**Comment:** By lowering the standard, these teachers got more numbers, money, and pleasure.

**Comment:** A footnote in the *Diaglott* states, “Or *sophisticating* the word of God, referring to the practice of vintners, who adulterate their wines. Dr. Bentley paraphrases it thus,—‘which *adulterate* and *negotiate* the word of God for their own lucre and advantage.’”

**Reply:** These other translations read into the account the effect of *why* the teachers were mishandling the Word. However, Paul gave a simple statement—they “corrupt [doctor] the word of God”—and then left the rest up to our imagination to determine how and why. It was self-evident that these teachers doctored the Word for gain one way or another, such as for friendship, membership, and influence.

Those who are not Christians look negatively on the calling of God, feeling that the individual has to give up many liberties. Not realizing that the Lord is gracious, they want to hold tightly to the pleasures of life. Yes, certain liberties have to be curbed, but the Christian is more than compensated in many other ways for whatever is sacrificed.

We are reminded of the rectangular Tabernacle, which, covered with black sealskin, resembled a coffin. Accordingly, the Christian is viewed by the world as a fish out of water. Not wanting to give up carousing in the world, the unconsecrated regard the Christian life as death to a former condition, which it really is. However, the world cannot see what is inside the coffin: the Candlestick, golden boards, the Incense Altar, the Table of Shewbread, and the Ark of the Covenant. Conversely, we look on the world the same way the world looks on us. We do not want to fraternize any more than is necessary lest we become contaminated with that spirit. If we are truly living a consecrated life in harmony with God’s Word, we are repugnant in the eyes of the unconsecrated.

Another illustration is the bullock that was taken outside the camp. There the hide and dung of the sin offering were burned, showing how the world views the Christian life. The gospel is a stench to those under the influence of Satan, but to the Christian, it is like the incense in the Holy—a beautiful fragrance. One is a savor of death unto death and the other of life unto life.

“Who is sufficient for these things?” As to how a person reacts to the truth is out of our hands. We speak the truth in love, but we are not capable of understanding what it does to another person. We preach responsibly and leave the results up to God, who does the drawing, or calling. His Son, Jesus Christ, is the door of entry into the Christian faith.

**Comment:** With regard to the statement (paraphrased) “For we are not as the many who corrupt the word of God,” some in the class were twisting the message to suit the pleasures of the flesh. They were handling the Word of God deceitfully.

**Reply:** They were wresting the Scriptures into another meaning. The attitude of false love and sympathy toward an evildoer, described in the first epistle, was the result of wrong doctrine. The Corinthians were influenced by questions such as “Don’t you have any love?” but God’s love is *principled*. Jesus’ life and ministry must be studied carefully to see how he manifested love. (Of course his death on the Cross was the supreme sacrifice, but we are referring to his ministry up to that point, for words cannot convey what Jesus did in laying down his life.) The study of proper love is a daily study of Jesus’ behavior and message over the years.

“As of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” Some who corrupt the Word of God are unabashed in asking for money. They mistake the accumulation of wealth for an indication of God’s approval. Paul gave a little insight into his character by saying, “When we speak about the Word of God, we do so in sincerity, as though God were listening.” For example, if we think of God and Jesus as being with us, we will be very careful in giving advice to others. It would be better to keep our mouth shut than to utter wrong advice. To speak the truth in “sincerity” implies simplicity (as opposed to oratory to sway people’s emotions) and honesty. Those who honestly studied Paul’s message and his conduct in both his private and his public life would realize his dedication to God and Christ. With dedication just exuding from him, he did not have to explain it. It was difficult for Paul on those rare occasions when he had to list his “credentials” and sufferings, but he felt that if doing so could prevent even one individual from being lost, he should speak and humble himself in that way. Those who are really seeking truth look beyond the exterior and outer gloss.

Another form of deceitfully handling the Word of God is to say, “God told me such and such.” Not only is that kind of familiarity repugnant, but the appearance of those who make such claims is usually very worldly, as are the garish television sets in which they speak.

**2 Cor. 3:1** Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

Paul was alluding to 1 Corinthians 9, where he defended his apostleship. Why did he now have to reiterate the proofs? Later on in this epistle, we find that others, particularly from Jerusalem, entered the church at Corinth and introduced themselves as authoritative teachers. They had “letters of commendation,” which were a good practice under normal circumstances because the individuals were unknown. In other words, it was helpful if brethren attested to the fact that these individuals were clear in the truth and had been a blessing, and then suggested the use of their services. Thus the practice itself was not bad, but there were problems when Jewish brethren from Jerusalem arrived at Corinth and not only spoke with *great authority* but also spoke *above and beyond* the letters of commendation. The letters were intended to recommend them as having teaching qualifications, but instead these individuals magnified themselves and minimized Paul. They were causing the real problem in the Corinthian church, as will become

apparent. Not only did they use the letters of commendation to build themselves up as apostles, but they derided Paul. They exalted themselves and debased him and his ministry.

Paul said, “When I came to you, I did not need a letter of commendation because I started this class.” How could a letter of recommendation have been given to a class that did not yet exist? Paul continued, “Do I now need a letter? You are the proof of my apostleship and authority.”

The words “begin again” indicate the subject was an old story. Paul had started the class in Corinth, and now, later in life, questions regarding his apostleship had arisen. He was saying, “Is it necessary that I start all over to present my credentials or that some group write a letter recommending my ministry? You yourselves are the testimony that when I came to this city, you accepted the gospel as I preached concerning Christ.” If Paul were a stranger (which he wasn’t), then certainly a letter of recommendation would have been helpful, especially if written by some who had maturity of judgment.

**2 Cor. 3:2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:**

Here Paul introduced a somewhat complex subject. In talking about Moses and the tables of the Law, he brought out many lessons. Of course the Holy Spirit overruled for our benefit, for we read more into Paul’s words than the Corinthians were able to do at that time. They looked at the *practical* value of Paul’s illustrations, drawing lessons to fit the situation or circumstance of the problems in the ecclesia, whereas we look at the difference between the Law Covenant and the Grace Covenant as a beautiful picture. Stated another way, we almost invariably take an intellectual or *theoretical* approach and do not see the practical aspect, but in order to get the feel of this second epistle, we must recognize how it applied back there. Otherwise, we will miss certain aspects of the lesson.

Paul applied the lessons to the *real situation* back there. Principles of life come from the Bible. Since there was no New Testament in the early Church, Paul studied the Old Testament—not only the letter of the Law but also the principles. He used these as a precedent of authority for his conclusions. We, too, as Christians, must use Biblical precedents, for contemporary precedents may be unreliable. Paul went back to Moses and the giving of the Law to prove to the Corinthians that his reasoning was correct. These thoughts were compacted into his mention of letters of commendation.

The term “our hearts” is interesting. “Ye are our epistle written in *our* hearts.” Those who responded to Paul’s ministry were not only receptive to the gospel of Christ but also zealous in communicating that message to others. By so responding, they endeared themselves to Paul’s heart in a special way. He wanted the Corinthians to know that he was concerned for them not just intellectually (with the mind) but also emotionally (with the heart). The effect of the gospel was that they witnessed to others—they were “known and read of all men.” In other words, the neighbors and families of these new Christians could see a startling change. The Corinthian brethren became an “epistle” both in Paul’s heart and to neighbors and family who witnessed this change.

**2 Cor. 3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.**

“Ye are ... the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.” The others had letters of commendation written on parchment with ink to introduce them to the class, but Paul did not need a literal letter written in literal ink, for he had more authority in that he had established the class.

The two “tables of stone” were engraved with the Ten Commandments by the “Spirit of the living God.” They were put *inside* the Ark of the Covenant, along with the golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded. In addition, the scrolls of the Law were carried on the *outside* of the Ark; that is, when the Ark was in transit, a written explanation (for example, the Book of Leviticus) was visibly seen accompanying the Ark on the exterior. The tablets were the rudiments of the Law, and the scrolls provided the ceremonial aspects of the Law, instructions for the Tabernacle, and guidelines for handling certain incidents in life.

**Q:** Where were the scrolls when the Tabernacle was set up?

**A:** The account does not tell us the exact location, but they were probably under the side flaps of the Tabernacle for ready reference.

In transit, therefore, the nation of Israel was aware that the explanation of the Law was attached to the Ark of the Covenant. However, the people were not able to read the Law in its rolled-up scroll form. Just as the Ark was covered during travel, so the scrolls were probably covered separately.

The Ten Commandments personified the whole written Law. Paul was alluding to both the tables of the Law and the scrolls. With regard to the ministers, or teachers, who came from Jerusalem with letters of commendation, Paul referred back to the tables of the Law and hinted at the written (pen and ink) details. In contradistinction, his authority was of a different nature, as will be seen from his strong statements.

Of the two, the stone tables, written by the “finger of God,” were more sacred in signification than the elaboration of the Law on the scrolls, which was also of God but written and codified by Moses (Exod. 31:18; 32:16). The written scrolls that accompanied the Ark on the outside corresponded to the written letters of the Jerusalem church commending the teachers who came to Corinth in Paul’s day. Paul was comparing his ministry to the mysterious writing of the finger (or Spirit) of God on the stone tablets, which were superior to the outside codified elaboration. Thus Paul was saying that his ministry was like that written on stone by the Spirit of God in Moses’ day, but now it was written by the Spirit of God on the *fleshly* tablets of the *heart*. In other words, Paul likened the tables of the Ten Commandments to the tables of the *heart*, or *mind*, upon which the Holy Spirit now operates. Just as Paul’s ministry was higher, so in the Kingdom, the “law” will go forth from (spiritual) Zion, but the “word,” the explanation of the Law, will go out from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). The *explanation* will be done by the Ancient Worthies down here, but the higher *authoritative* or *basic* aspect of the Law will come from The Christ in glory. Incidentally, just as there were two tables of stone, so there are two parts to the heart. When the two tables are put together side by side, they even resemble the “valentine” shape of the heart.

Many people in the Pastor’s day were quite advanced students of the Bible. That is not true today, even in our midst. Those who are brought up in the truth are usually brought up on the *Volumes*. Both the *Volumes* and the Bible, the *source*, the *authority*, are needed. The Pastor called spiritual people out of Babylon who, generally speaking, already knew the Bible.

When Moses and the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai following the Exodus from Egypt, some remarkable things began to happen. Not long after their arrival, Moses ascended the mount several times. Three of the ascents were especially prominent, and at the *first* of the three, God said to Moses, “The people are to prepare themselves because on the third day, I will appear to the nation and speak to them” (Exodus 19). On the third day, Moses was down in the valley, or plain, with the Israelites. Thunder, lightning, etc., occurred and the sound of a trumpet got louder and louder. The people could hardly bear the sound of God’s voice when He began to speak to them from the top of the mount, verbally uttering the Ten Commandments. We

usually think of the Ten Commandments as being given on stone tablets, but God *first orally declared* them to the entire nation of Israel with His own deep, loud, penetrating voice.

Here in verse 3, Paul was alluding to the later occasion, when Moses ascended Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments written in stone. His reference to the “tables of stone” pertained to Moses’ *second* prominent ascent. The elders of Israel climbed part way up Mount Sinai, Moses and Joshua went a little farther, and Moses alone went to the top of the mount. The people down below thought Moses would return shortly, and apparently, Moses himself did not know he would be delayed for 40 days and 40 nights while God talked with him and he talked with God. Since the time period was not anticipated, and because of what happened subsequently, we assume the elders who accompanied Moses up into the mount turned back and went down to the plain with the people. However, Joshua faithfully remained behind, staying on Mount Sinai but separated from Moses.

Meanwhile, the children of Israel waited for Moses, but he did not return day after day. In his absence, they made the golden calf. At the end of the 40 days, Moses heard some strange sounds down below, at the foot of the mount. Wondering what the sounds signified, he descended the mount with the two stone tablets engraved with the Ten Commandments in his hands. As he approached, he saw the people dancing and carousing in connection with the golden calf. In righteous indignation, he broke the two stone tablets and burned the golden calf “in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it [the powdered gold]” (Exod. 32:20).

Of the five or so ascents up Mount Sinai, this incident with the breaking of the golden calf was the *second startling* account. Here in verse 3, Paul was zeroing in on the *third* prominent ascent of Mount Sinai. Moses took a new, or different, set of stone tablets on which were engraved the Ten Commandments. When he came down from the mount, he did not realize that his face shone. This explanation puts us on the wavelength of this third chapter.

Let us consider verse 3 again. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” Paul was preparing the Corinthians with deeper truths. While they were able to grasp, perhaps better than some of the other churches, the intellectual knowledge of the truth, they did not know much about the “Spirit” of the truth. Paul was saying, “Those two stone tablets are our hearts, on which are codified the *Spirit* of the law of God. God writes, or engraves, His law on our hearts, so that, if faithful, we will be used in connection with the New Covenant, which will be ministered to the nation of Israel.”

The point is that Moses went up into Mount Sinai multiple times, but his second and third prominent ascents pertained to the Ten Commandments. Paul sometimes speaks of the second account and gives an application in the present age. With regard to the third account, however, the reality, or antitype, will occur in the Kingdom Age. In other words, the breaking of the tablets on his second ascent occurred *spiritually* at the First Advent, specifically with the Crucifixion of Christ. At that time, the nation of Israel was rejected, as Jesus indicated when he said, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38). Only a few, relatively speaking, a small remnant of the nation, received Jesus as their Messiah during his ministry.

Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul took pictures of the Old Testament that, in their strict application and full fulfillment, will occur in the Kingdom Age and applied the *principles* to the Gospel Age. Since the Gospel Age is the tutoring stage, the school of Christ, and those of the Little Flock are to be ministers of God’s Law in the next age, we have to know something about the principles of that Law in the *present* life. Accordingly, Paul gave several Scriptures a current (Gospel Age) application, whereas in reality, the strict fulfillment will take place in the Kingdom Age, and it is for this reason that many sincere brethren are confused about whether

or not Christians are under the New Covenant. We believe the Church is not under the New Covenant in the present age.

Just as the Spirit of God wrote on the tablets, so Paul was writing on the hearts of the Corinthian brethren. But he was careful to say, “Do not misunderstand me. I am not equating myself with God. God did the writing on the literal tablets, and as a minister *of God*, I am doing the writing on the fleshly hearts. I am writing on the fleshly tablets by the *authority invested in me*, for I am nothing in and of myself. God has appointed me as an apostle to do this work, and it is on His authority and with His power that I have exercised this influence in your lives. The ecclesia was established miraculously by God but using me as His servant. I do not want to magnify myself unduly, but I have to in order for you to see the subject clearly. Do not think of me above what I am, but at least recognize that I am an apostle of God.”

**2 Cor. 3:4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:**

Verse 4 is self-explanatory. Notice that Paul mentioned Christ. A paraphrase would be, “And we have such trust through Christ toward God.” Just as Jesus, in doing his miracles, brought in the Father as the Author, so Paul was careful not to make himself equal with God or to leave Christ out of the picture. It would have been easy for Paul, in speaking authoritatively as an apostle, to jump from God to himself, but he properly brought in Christ again and again. For example, in verse 3, already considered, Paul said, “Ye are ... the epistle of *Christ*.” God gave the Law, but Christ is next under God, not Paul. Nor did Paul bypass Christ in verse 4. Similarly, we pray to God *through* Christ and not direct.

**2 Cor. 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;**

We are not sufficient in and of ourselves. By means of the arrangement through Christ, God has graciously made up for what we lack.

**Comment:** The Amplified reads, “Not that we are fit (qualified and sufficient in ability) of ourselves to form personal judgments or to claim or count anything as coming from us; but our power and ability and sufficiency are from God.”

**Reply:** The Corinthians had asked Paul a lot of questions on doctrinal and moral issues, and he gave a lot of answers in the first epistle, including instructions on how to handle the divisions in the class. While Paul’s appearance was ordinary and he lacked Greek oratory, the Corinthians felt that his logic and reasoning were powerful. Therefore, they obeyed his counsel with regard to the person who had committed fornication, and Paul commended them accordingly. Evidently, he got wind of the fact that some felt his reasoning was extraordinary. Now he was saying, “The wisdom and judgment that I gave were not really of me, for they are what I have learned from God’s Word, and I am a minister in dispensing that Word. The value of the instruction does not originate with my own personal human wisdom and intellect but by the Holy Spirit of God, which moves in me.”

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* reads, “Not that we are qualified of ourselves to reason any thing as from ourselves, but our qualification is from God.”

A mixed group was in the class, and Paul commended those who were reasoning along correct lines. He complimented where he could and admonished those who were reasoning incorrectly. When the whole epistle is read, we notice that he addressed some who were zealous and obedient and others who were dragging their feet.

**2 Cor. 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but**

**of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.**

Verse 6 does not teach that the Church is developed under the New Covenant. Paul stated the matter much deeper than the Corinthians could realize. The Lord's Word was recorded in a way that at a later date, when due, many things would be seen more clearly. Thus Paul wrote *above* what was needful for the circumstance back there. Stated another way, he wrote very carefully so that succeeding generations would not misunderstand. He emphasized the *ministry* of the New Covenant more than the *development* under that covenant, which will take place in the next age, when God writes the New Covenant in the hearts of Israel and, later, the world of mankind. Paul was saying that the *principles* of the next age apply now, in the Gospel Age, but not as specifics. Just as Moses was the mediator between God and Israel, so Christ, the apostles, and the Church body proper are being made ministers of a *future* covenant; that is, a similar work is being done in us in preparation for that later work. The *principles* of the New Covenant for the next age are being written in our hearts in the present life. God writes in our hearts *now* to prepare us for the *future* work of being ministers of the New Covenant.

Paul was talking to those who responded favorably and recognized his ability as a representative of Christ and the gospel. The principle was, "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare for the warfare?" (1 Cor. 4:8 paraphrase). The one playing the bugle has an effect, for even in peacetime, martial music has an effect with some.

Paul was saying that God made him an able minister "of the new testament," just as Moses was an able minister of the Law Covenant. The Law revealed what a perfect man should do. Christ obeyed perfectly and got the reward of that Law, namely, everlasting human life. The New Testament is God's law written for people who are sinners but who repent, changing their course of life. This "new testament" can be obeyed perfectly, even when we make mistakes, *if* we acknowledge them by washing our robe in prayer. The Old Law Covenant did not have the arrangement for forgiveness except ceremoniously. People could be typically justified by the Law, even though it did not cleanse their inner sin. If they tried to keep the Law Covenant to the best of their ability and obeyed in ceremonial fashion, God was pleased with their attitude, even though the blood of animals cannot in reality cleanse sins, only the blood of Christ. And so a person could be blessed under the Old Law Covenant depending on the spirit in which he tried to fulfill it. Jews who tried daily to perform the letter of the Law were favored by God, even if they did not get perfect life.

**Comment:** As an example, Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness (Rom. 4:3).

Verse 6 goes back to what Paul said in verse 3. We should study the *principles* of God's Law and try to incorporate them into our life. By God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to become familiar with the principles, but only a perfect individual could fulfill the letter of the Law and maintain that obedience forever. Only Jesus Christ kept the letter of the Law perfectly and thus acquired the gift of the Law, perfect human life. Jesus now loans his right to human life to Christians to give them a standing of justification so that they can commune with God in prayer in Jesus' name.

Now we come to the part of verse 6 that is very unusual: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [covenant]." The Greek word *diakonos*, translated "ministers," is also rendered "deacons." Therefore, in applying that which is future to the present life, Paul was saying, "We are like *practicing* ministers now. If faithful as deacons, we will be the real ministers of the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age." This work of making us *able* ministers means we are practicing ministers in the present life, so that when the New Covenant is inaugurated, we might be qualified, capable ministers by God's grace. With His Holy Spirit and a new body and mind, we can be a blessing to the world of mankind, starting with Israel.



Since there are other Greek words for “servant” and “messenger,” the use of *diakonos* is significant. Therefore, when we read verse 6, we should not substitute the word “servants” for “ministers.” God has made us “able deacons.” Thus Paul applied the third prominent account of Moses’ going up into Mount Sinai to the Gospel Age, that is, *in advance* of the reality in the next age. We are being tutored now as deacons, and if faithful, we will graduate as real elders (kings and priests) in the next age.

**2 Cor. 3:7** But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

The “ministration of death” was a reference to the Law Covenant. Notice, the account does not say that the Israelites could not behold the face of Moses but that they could not “stedfastly” behold his face. They could see that his face shone but could not look at it very long, for the sight was too overwhelming. Similarly, we see the sun shining by giving it a glance, but we do not stare at the sun lest it burn our eyes.

Of course Moses’ face did not shine for the rest of his life but just for a period of time. This experience should have given the Israelites great faith, but the majority were not rightly exercised. The fact that the Israelites still disobeyed, despite such a miraculous manifestation, tells us that the same thing will happen in the Kingdom Age. Even though the truth is made plain, a certain class will not grasp the significance of principles and hence will not apply them and will go into Second Death. If the Israelites had understood the principles of God’s dealing with Moses, they would not have questioned his authority. Because they failed to analyze what was happening, they soon forgot the event(s). They “forgot his [God’s] works, and his wonders that he had shown them”; they forgot what Moses had done on their behalf as God’s representative (Psa. 78:11). The whole setting of the giving of the Ten Commandments was dramatic, but the people forgot. To a certain extent, the same reaction happened at the First Advent. The scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus firsthand—they saw what he did and heard his words—but was an impression made on them? No. For the most part, they just found fault. The heart condition is all important.

**Q:** Should we assume the Apostle Paul was not in Israel at that time and thus did not have firsthand contact and observation?

**A:** Paul’s only contact with Jesus was on the way to Damascus. While Paul did not live with the Master and see the miracles, Jesus *specialy* appeared to him in a way that was superior to what the other apostles saw of Jesus as a human. Paul had a more honored experience by seeing Jesus *after his ascension*, not during his ministry.

**Q:** What did Moses’ shining face typify?

**A:** Just as a glory was associated with Moses and his ministry that the people soon forgot, so Jesus and the apostles had authority that was soon forgotten. The same is true of a Christian, especially with one who formerly led a reprobate life. When that individual consecrates, those who see the radical change know that the power of God operated on him, but as time goes on, that change and how God dealt with him are forgotten. If the people had truly observed the Apostle Paul’s ministry, they would have realized the superiority of his teaching and seen that the hand of God was on him. As time went on, Paul did fewer miracles, which were external evidences of authority, and dealt more with the mind, giving instruction. Thus, as it was with Moses, so it was with Jesus, the apostles, and the Church (in descending order).

“Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away.” A better translation would be, “which glory was passing away.”

Not only is the Law passing away, but so was the glory on Moses' face. He had to put a veil over his face so that the people could listen to him. The glory began to fade as time went on until he was normal again. Every time he went to see God on Mount Sinai or entered the Tabernacle, his face shone. The Law has not yet passed away but is in the process of fading away. It will not totally fade away until the Kingdom.

If perfectly obeyed, the Law would bring life, but since none of Adam's posterity could perfectly obey, the Law brought death. Thus the Law revealed, or exposed, the sin in man. Those who read the Law with an honest heart not only knew they could not keep it perfectly but became educated as to what God approves. From that standpoint, the Law taught death; that is, it taught that people are sinners according to the flesh—it revealed sin.

In contrast to the Old Law Covenant, the New Testament is uplifting, for it gives hope to the sinner who repents. The counterpart of the Ten Commandments is the Sermon on the Mount. Under the new arrangement of the gospel call, which is based on justification by faith, individuals could have a standing before God and become "sons" of God through Christ.

**Comment:** The Law was a "schoolmaster" to bring Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

**Comment:** In contrasting the Law with the gospel, Paul was saying that the influence of the Judaizing Christians was harmful.

**Reply:** Yes, in insisting that circumcision and other requirements of the Law were mandatory for the Christian, Judaizing Christians minimized the gospel of Christ.

"The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious." In other words, when Moses came down with the tablets in his hands, an aura of light was around him, indicating the circumstance was awesome. Not only did the Israelites hear the sound of God's voice, but there was an earthquake, fire, etc., and a light around Moses' face that was so overpowering they could not look at it for more than a few seconds. The glory of the Law Covenant will end when the New Covenant is established. While the Old Law Covenant had a glorious beginning, its death knell will be the establishment of the New Covenant. The Mosaic Law is still operative to Jews who have not accepted Christ, but it is passing, or fading, away.

In verse 7, as in verse 6, Paul was talking about Moses' *third* prominent ascent up Mount Sinai and purposely gave an application in this age to show we are being prepared for the work of the New Covenant. In the type, when Moses came down the third time, having the second set of stone tablets, his face shone with such glory that the people could not steadfastly look on it. The brilliance of the light, which resulted from his being up in the mount communicating with God, remained on his flesh, so that when he descended to the people, he had to cover his shining face and talk to them through a veil. Many years ago Bro. Percy Reed spoke about this glory and showed that it gradually disappeared from Moses' face. (The *Diaglott* Greek substantiates this thought.) Meanwhile, he had to keep a veil on his face. Sometimes the Lord spoke again to Moses before the glory had completely disappeared. Evidently, the glory stayed on his face for a couple of days, and if he had to go into the Tabernacle to commune with God during that time, his face was still shining. Moses had to remove the veil when he went into the Tabernacle. Thus the glory was retained for a period of time and gradually subsided.

The question is, How did Paul apply the veil in the Gospel Age? In the Kingdom Age, the antitypical Moses—that is, Jesus and the body members—will have a veiled face because of the divine nature and thus will have to speak through the medium of the Ancient Worthies. Down here on earth, the Ancient Worthies will be mouthpieces for The Christ in earth's atmosphere. Jesus and the unseen spiritual Church will communicate with the Ancient Worthies in a miraculous fashion with the Law going forth from Zion "and the word of the LORD from

Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). That is the *literal* interpretation of the antitype, but Paul applied the antitype in *principle* during the Gospel Age. Now the veil is over the face of the Jews. The veil that hinders, or blinds, them from seeing Christ as the antitypical Moses in the present age is the Law of Moses from another standpoint. The Jews are so schooled in the importance of literal Moses and the Decalogue and the Torah that they have great difficulty seeing Christ. But to the few who have a hearing ear, the veil disappears. Thus the veil in the present life is the Mosaic Law itself, which is a hindrance, let alone the Cross. Incidentally, it is interesting that the Cross is in the Law, for the sprinkling of blood on the Ark of the Covenant and the splashing of the blood of the Passover lamb on the lintels and doorposts of the homes were in the shape of a cross. In spite of his great training and his being immersed in the Law, Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, could see this subject clearly because God took the veil from his eyes.

**2 Cor. 3:8** How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

**2 Cor. 3:9** For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

“How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” In other words, if in the type, the shining of Moses’ face was glorious, how much more glorious will be the “ministration of the spirit” in the Kingdom Age! We are only practicing the ministration of the Spirit now, but it will be a reality in the next age. Many sincere Christians have great difficulty in seeing that we are not now under the New Covenant because they confuse the Gospel Age mini-application with the reality of the next age.

The ministration of the Holy Spirit is more glorious than the earthly. The “[ad]ministration of righteousness” embraces two ages—the Gospel Age and the Millennial Age. During the Gospel Age, God is preparing able ministers in righteousness through *faith* for the future work of developing the world of mankind in righteousness through *deeds*. The world will be given a new arrangement that will grant life instead of the condemnation and death that resulted from the Old Law Covenant. To repeat: the righteousness of the next age will be not according to faith but according to deeds. Both the Gospel and the Millennial ages bring life and hope, whereas the Law of Moses brought condemnation and death. The only exception was Jesus, who obtained the prize of life.

**Comment:** The following Scripture expresses what happens when one becomes a Christian: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

**Reply:** Yes, when one accepts Jesus as Savior and consecrates, having God in the heart becomes apparent to others. Although the outward light is not as intense as the light in the heart, some remarkable manifestation is evidenced by a change in conduct.

The term “ministration of condemnation” applies to the Old Law Covenant, which lasted up until the Cross. At the Cross, the Law was removed for those Jews who believed in Christ. Believing Jews get the spirit of liberty, faith, grace, and mercy, whereby they can serve God in the Spirit in the present age. However, the Law remains on unbelieving Jews to this day. For them, the Law Covenant is still in existence and is an obligation, even though there is no enforcement, or punishment, as it was in Moses’ day. We can see why the Pastor was inclined to think that when the blindness of Israel is removed in the near future, more of the Orthodox Jews will have their eyes opened, as opposed to the liberal, nonreligious element; that is, it will be predominantly Orthodox Jews who are in the right spirit of mind.

**Comment:** Just as the Apostle Paul needed a literal experience in order to see, so it seems that the Jews at the time of Jacob’s Trouble will need something literal to open their blind eyes.

**Reply:** Yes, that line of reasoning led us to think, after many years, that God will use a literal short but startling method, or revelation, to convert the Holy Remnant. Jews can still come into Christ, although relatively few have done so recently. However, a small number of Jews may yet spiritually discern and learn the Word. The Holy Remnant of the future is basically an earthly class. Following the great Time of Trouble, the Gentiles will take hold of this class, as described in Zechariah 8:23, “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”

**2 Cor. 3:10** For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

As a mini-review, Paul was referring to the experience of Moses the second time he ascended Mount Sinai in connection with the tables of the Law. The first time Moses descended with the tablets he broke them in righteous indignation because the children of Israel were worshipping the golden calf. Subsequently he went up into the mount and came down with a second set of tablets, which were preserved, with the codified Ten Commandments.

Paul was saying, “We are not trying to minimize the glory in connection with the giving of the Law Covenant, but when that glory is contrasted with the spiritual, the latter *far exceeds* what was done in the type.” When Moses came down the second time with a set of tablets, his face was glorious. His countenance radiated with such light that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold him when he conversed with them, and he had to put a veil over his face. Paul was saying that this picture has an antitypical fulfillment, but for Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, the experience is different in that they can behold the glory without a veiled face.

Moses put the veil on his face at the bottom of the mountain when he appeared to the people and communicated to them. In other words, the children of Israel, who were listening to Moses, did not put a veil over their faces. Rather, Moses, the speaker, veiled his face. Which side of the fence are we, as Christians, on in beholding the glory—are we on Moses’ side or the people’s side? When reasoning from the standpoint of being at the bottom of the mount, we would be in Moses’ stead because he had a veil on his face. Paul was saying that this veil is being removed from the Christian’s face—or from Paul’s face, who was communicating.

Now we have to change the perspective and not view the incident just from the standpoint of Moses’ speaking to the Israelites down below. Paul was referring to us when we are *up in the mountain beholding the glory of the Lord*—not down in the valley. And when Moses was up in the mount, he did not have the veil on his face. Accordingly, the glory that will be associated with the inauguration of the New Law Covenant will far surpass in wonderment the glory that attended the inauguration, or giving, of the Old Law Covenant. Moreover, the blessings of the New Covenant will far exceed those that attended the Old Law Covenant. The Christian is changed from glory to glory even in the present life (2 Cor. 3:18). Although a transforming, elevating influence takes place in the present life, if we are of the Little Flock, that glory will greatly exceed any glory we might have previously anticipated.

**Comment:** Since the Tabernacle had not yet been built in the type, that structure with the Shekinah light was to follow as part of the glory of the Old Law Covenant.

**Reply:** Yes, miraculous signs and wonders were associated with the period in which the Old Law Covenant was not only inaugurated but also implemented a year later with regard to the codification and explanation of the Law and the building of the Tabernacle. A pillar came down from the cloud and penetrated the Most Holy as the Shekinah light. These happenings were another aspect of the glory from a positive standpoint.

In addition, there was another type of glory from a different viewpoint. When the Law was first given, prior to the engraving of either set of tablets, the people heard God's awesome voice speaking the Ten Commandments; that is, God briefly and audibly enunciated the Law. An earthquake and cloud were associated with this initial giving of the Law, and the mountain shook terribly. (Evidence of congealed molten, fluid rock can be seen on Mount Sinai today.)

When the Tabernacle was established, a lightning bolt, as it were, came down and consumed the offering on the altar. The year that the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai was a process of being imbued with the details of the Law while they physically constructed the Tabernacle as a house of meeting for communicating with God through the Levitical priesthood and the stewardship of Moses.

Paul was talking about us—that we behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face—for the faces of the Israelites were never veiled. Whenever Moses communicated with God, it took time for the glory to fade from his face. The glory stayed with him for a little while, and then later he could remove the veil and communicate with the people in a normal fashion.

The antitype is the establishment of the New Covenant. The Old Law Covenant was put in force after its codification and rehearsal to the people. From that time forward, the Israelites were obligated to keep the Law, because they said, "All these things we will do." The Law was initiated in Mount Sinai and continued up until the First Advent, but it is still binding on the Jews unless they become dead to the Law by accepting Jesus.

Paul was talking to Christians in the Gospel Age, who are not under the New Covenant but are being made able ministers of that covenant. Christians are being schooled to be priests, kings, and teachers to the world of mankind in the Kingdom. Therefore, when Paul said, "By reason of the glory that excelleth," he was referring to a present as well as a *future* glory. The present-tense aspect applies to the schooling of the Christian Church during the Gospel Age, which prepares them to be able future ministers of the New Covenant. Thus Christians are not under the New Covenant but are being trained to be its ministers.

**2 Cor. 3:11** For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

The *Diaglott* properly adjusts the thought of verse 11 as follows: "For if that which is *being annulled* was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

**2 Cor. 3:12** Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

When Paul said, "Seeing then that we have such hope," he was referring back to the phrase "by reason of the glory that excelleth" and giving it a future application. Even now down here in the preparatory stage, Christians, like Paul, can behold God's glory. We behold the glory that excels the Old Testament glory as a *foretaste* of what will come if we are faithful. And that future glory, which will excel all prior glory, will occur when the New Covenant is inaugurated in Israel following the deliverance of the Holy Remnant.

Paul was saying that Christians have benefited by not being hindered with a veil on their faces. The Law has been superseded by a covenant of grace, the Sarah Covenant, and from that standpoint, they are more like Moses, who pictures not only Jesus but also the body members. If these verses are read too quickly, the body-member aspect will not be seen. Moses' ascent up Mount Sinai with the first set of tablets pictures the First Advent, and the subsequent ascent, with the second set of tablets, pictures the Second Advent in connection with the Church getting Kingdom honors, being glorified, and returning to reign. The catching up of the feet

members with the rest of the risen saints in the near future will be the second ascent up into heaven of The Christ. Stated another way, in antitype, the first ascent of Moses pictures Jesus only, and the second ascent pictures The Christ.

The experience of Moses shows that the Church is part of the great Mediator and Prophet. Moses said that God would raise up a Prophet greater than he from among the brotherhood of Israel, but since only a relatively few Jews accepted Christ, Gentiles have filled up the rest of the body members, who will comprise the great Mediator.

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” The hope had not yet materialized to Paul. (What is attained is no longer hope because the reality has come.) Thus Paul was giving verse 12 a future application as it pertained to himself and to the rest of the brotherhood. All had the hope that at some time during the Second Advent, there would come the wondrous reality of the crown of life.

**Comment:** Paul’s saying, “We use great *plainness* of speech,” emphasizes the fact that there is no need for elaborate church buildings, incense, statues, clerical robes, etc. Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). That gathering can be in the simplest of rooms.

**Reply:** When David danced before the Ark of the Covenant, his wife, who was looking out the window, thought he was disgracing himself. She did not realize the principle that God is more interested in the intensity of one’s reverence, worship, and praise than in ceremony and a degree from a seminary.

**2 Cor. 3:13** **And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:**

Again the *Diaglott* helps with the tense. The end of verse 13 should be “to the end of that [which is] *passing away*.” What was Paul saying about himself in verses 12 and 13, and indirectly about the entire Church to a greater or lesser extent? The people beheld Moses, but Moses had previously beheld *God* with an unveiled face. Therefore, Moses’ going up into the mount and communing with God face to face, as it were, was a lot different from what happened to the Israelites. When Moses descended the mount and spoke to the nation, he *reflected* the light of having communed with God. Even though the glory was reflected, the Israelites could not steadfastly behold Moses because they were in a lower capacity, whereas with Moses, God’s glory was more direct. Moses saw *God’s glory* with *unveiled* face, but the Israelites could only see *Moses’ reflected glory* if his face was *veiled*.

Like Moses, Christians are on a higher plane, for they are up in the mount communing with God, as it were, being instructed in holy things. Christians get a different type of training so that in God’s due time, they will be the blessers of the New Covenant for the nation of Israel, who will be underneath that government. Stated another way, the blessers, or mediators, of the New Covenant will have a higher role than those who are blessed under their mediation. Just as Moses beheld God direct, so we behold God now through Christ.

When the New Covenant comes, everything pertaining to the Old Law Covenant arrangement will be “abolished,” done away with, replaced. Under the Old Law Covenant, the Israelites were in a more direct relationship with God, even though Moses was the mediator. The awesomeness of God was manifested in His voice, the thunder, the lightning, the *Shekinah* light from the cloud, etc. In the Kingdom Age, the arrangement will be more amenable to the world in the sense that instead of approaching God direct, mankind will approach Jesus and the Church. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:31). At the end of the Kingdom Age, after

the Little Season, the people will be able to deal with God direct.

The Old Law Covenant was in process of being abolished. It is abolished to those Jews who receive Christ, recognizing him as their Head, Lord, and Redeemer. And the Law is abolished as far as Christians are concerned, for they are not under the Law but under grace.

**2 Cor. 3:14** But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

The people beheld Moses with a veil on his face, and even up to the time Paul wrote this epistle in the beginning of the Gospel Age, this condition was still true for the nation of Israel. They did not get beyond the reading of the Law, that is, the *letter* of the Law. However, the “veil is done away in Christ”; that is, the Law Covenant *has passed away* (past tense) to Jews who have come into Christ. For Jews who do not accept Christ, the Law is only *being* taken away; that is, it still exists. In the future in the Kingdom, the Old Law Covenant will be taken away for all.

Paul was trying to educate the element in the class who were attempting to Judaize the Corinthians by saying the Christian has to obey the Law as well as have faith. To them, “faith” was not a justifying faith but a belief in God. Thus there was an adulteration, or mixture, of truth and error to make Christianity more palatable. Stated another way, the unvarnished truth becomes more palatable by either additives of human imagination or erroneous doctrines cleverly introduced by the Adversary.

**Comment:** The veil is used as a symbol of blindness in both the Old and the New Testaments. Not only have Jews as a people been blinded to the gospel, but even Christians can have degrees of blindness. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the veil of blindness being removed from the world of mankind in the Kingdom. God “will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations” (Isa. 25:7).

**Reply:** That veil of darkness includes Moses’ veil, the veil of the Law. Although Gentiles are not blinded by the Law, they are blinded by Satan, the god of this world, lest they see the “light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4). For the Christian, blindness has been removed in the sense of seeing through the veil. Paul likened Moses’ shining face when he was up in the mount speaking with God to the face of the true Church. We behold the glory of God through an understanding of His Word. We see why He is so worthy of worship and call him “Father.”

**2 Cor. 3:15** But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

**2 Cor. 3:16** Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Jews who have not accepted Christ are still pictured by the nation’s beholding Moses with a veil on his face. With few exceptions, the veil continues to be on the hearts of Jews today. The veil will be taken away when they turn to Christ following Jacob’s Trouble.

The pronoun “it” in verse 16 refers to the heart. “Nevertheless when it [the heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” If the pronoun is considered to be the plural “they,” the reference would be to the Jews. “Nevertheless when they [the Jews] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” The veil is removed from the individual who changes his course and turns to Jesus.

The antitype applies in another sense too. Under the Law, the stone tablets were literal, Moses was a literal physical person, and he had a literal veil. In the Kingdom Age, those who turn to the Lord as individuals when awakened from the tomb will have the spiritual veil removed, and they will begin to behold the truth as it really is.

From still another standpoint, the veil will be collectively taken away at the end of the Kingdom Age for those who are proven worthy in the test of the Little Season. They will then deal direct with the Father, for Jesus will turn over the Kingdom so that God will be all in all—He will be 100 percent in every individual (1 Cor. 15:28). At that time, collectively speaking, the veil will be removed from The Christ, and the people will be sons of God (Luke 20:35,36; Rev. 21:7). Moses was a picture of Jesus and his Church. During the Kingdom, the people will be the children of Jesus, the age-lasting Father. After the Kingdom Age, when the work of reform has been fully accomplished, they will be children of God. What a beautiful picture!

For Jews who have not accepted Christ, the vast majority, a veil is on their mind and heart (verses 14 and 15). Because of their high regard for the tutelage of the Law and Moses, they cannot see Christ. From their standpoint, the acceptance of Christ is an apostasy, and thus they are blinded.

**2 Cor. 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

Paul tied in the word “liberty” with the “Spirit of the Lord.” The opposite of liberty is bondage. Those who came from Jerusalem with letters of recommendation were trying to get Christians to go back under the Law, under *bondage*. They were saying, in effect, that Paul was not only a false apostle but also a heretic. Their claim was, “We came direct from Jerusalem, where we saw Jesus and one of us even knew him personally, so who could better teach what the Master said?” They forgot that Paul also saw Jesus—and in a far more glorious aspect.

With regard to “liberty,” these false teachers were saying that a Christian had to not only accept Christ but also be a Jew under the Law. Paul cleverly wove in the concept of liberty by showing that he was writing on the tables of the hearts of the Corinthians. His ministry was superior to that of the false teachers, who carried literal letters and were trying to bring the brethren under bondage. He was saying, “If you want to know the Spirit of the Lord, you need a touchstone. Those who are trying to get Jewish Christians to go back under the Law, and thus under bondage, are *dangerous*. In order to identify a proper teacher, make sure that the individual is not surreptitiously trying to get you under bondage again to the Law.” Rather than speak directly, some of the false teachers taught lessons to gradually indoctrinate the hearers and make them feel obligated to keep the Law. As soon as this trend was observed, the brethren were to recognize that it was not the spirit of liberty and of Christ but the spirit of Antichrist. The spirit of Christ magnifies the office of Jesus—grace, forgiveness, and faith—not works. For that reason, Paul said to the Corinthians, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22). The false teachers were trying to get away from Christ, so in their sermons, one heard less and less of Christ and more and more of the Law. How clever! The letter of the Law was bondage and condemnation. The false teachers did not love Jesus, for they minimized and did not properly respect him. The teachings of Christ, which are based on grace and faith, are the spirit of liberty.

**Comment:** Paul expressed this principle in Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Paul found it necessary to speak of liberty to the Corinthians. The ecclesia was a mixed group, and he wanted to save as many as possible who were in the factious attitude. He wanted them to change and to have consideration for one another, recognizing the spirit of liberty. If he had not written this epistle, the whole Corinthian class would probably have gone back under the Law. However, Paul’s letter set the matter straight, and the majority saw that he was right.

Paul mentioned “liberty” because Christians are not under the bondage of the Law but are under grace and liberty through Christ. The Holy Spirit helps to liberate as well. Having



accepted Jesus, we were justified, had our sins forgiven and covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness, and were begotten by the Holy Spirit. We could then pray and have a relationship as sons of God. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of remembrance and understanding.

**2 Cor. 3:18** But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Christians behold God with an "open [unveiled] face" through Christ and God's Word. The allusion was to Moses on top of the mount beholding God with an unveiled face. Christians behold God in the person of Jesus, whose teachings, life, ministry, character, and commandments are a *direct* reflection of the Heavenly Father. God's Word is the Christian's "glass" for seeing Jesus. To all practical effects, therefore, Christians have an unveiled face, although Christ is between them and God as their Advocate. In both cases then—Moses earlier and Christians now—the faces are not veiled.

In the present life, we see a reflected light, as through an opaque glass. As Moses talked with a representation of God up in the mount, so we pray to the *Father* and look into *His* Word, which is the mirror that reflects His glory. The glory is so powerful that even though it is reflected, it should leave some sort of change in our life.

The removal of the veil from the Jew will be a process in the Kingdom; that is, the veil will be slowly removed. When Jacob's Trouble occurs and the Holy Remnant is delivered, the living generation will quickly see that the Kingdom of God has now commenced, that Messiah is here, and that the reign of Christ has begun. However, some nations will resist, and the Scriptures state that upon them will come a plague of no rain to bring them to their senses (Zech. 14:17). With regard to the start of the general resurrection, the people will come out of the tomb with the same mental development they had when they died. As they learn, the veil will be removed from their faces. When the next generation is resuscitated, the veil will be removed from them as well. Thus a gradual unveiling will occur throughout the Kingdom Age.

**Comment:** The Weymouth translation uses the word "mirror," which gives the thought of reflecting. "And all of us, with unveiled faces, reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness."

Verse 18 is a summation of many preceding verses. The "glass," or mirror, in which the "glory of the Lord" is beheld is the Word of God. In connection with the Tabernacle, the women sacrificed their precious highly polished (and refined) copper mirrors, giving them to Moses to be melted down and made into the Laver in the Court. When the Israelites went individually to the Laver on the Day of Atonement, they could see themselves and their blemishes. Christians antitypically see the perfect example of Christ in the Holy Scriptures, which, when contrasted with self, shows the need for reform, growth, and development in one's own character—the need to put off the deeds of the flesh and take on the deeds of the new creature.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." We are to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus, who is the likeness of God. If God could come down from heaven and appear in human flesh, which He cannot do because of His glory, He would speak, act, and teach just as Jesus did. Therefore, Jesus is an image of God, and we, in trying to follow in the Master's footsteps and copy his example, are really copying the example of God's character likeness.

**2 Cor. 4:1** Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

**2 Cor. 4:2** But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending

ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

**2 Cor. 4:3** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

For verses 1-3, the Phillips translation reads, "This is the ministry which God in his mercy has given us and nothing can daunt us. We use no hocus-pocus, no clever tricks, no dishonest manipulation of the Word of God. We speak the plain truth and so commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel is 'veiled,' the veil must be in the minds of those who are spiritually dying." Only the last term, "spiritually dying," is questionable. Although it is probably correct and is a good thought, liberty was taken to assume that the Apostle Paul was directing his message not merely to the brethren but also to those who once had the truth and were now perishing spiritually.

Paul was trying to offset the damaging influence of the false teachers who had come into the Corinthian church. They used the Word to supposedly justify their false teachings and principles, whereas actually they were handling the Word of God deceitfully. For example, the false teachers thought "love" was tolerating the presence of the fornicator in the class. Also, they thought that an apostle should exercise more authority and have mannerisms befitting an apostle. Evidently, a minority felt Paul was lacking in these qualities. Moreover, they felt that his sufferings were evidences of disfavor with God. Instead Paul pointed out that the sufferings were the very marks of his apostleship. And the false teachers thought Paul should have flowery speech and be more gifted in oratory if he was an apostle. Paul could have been more eloquent, but he purposely restrained himself, for he wanted to speak the plain, unvarnished truth. All of these false criticisms were manifestations of handling the Word of God deceitfully to laud self. And there was a sectarian spirit in the class, with some saying, "I am of Paul," others saying, "I am of Cephas," etc. Paul discouraged this sectarian spirit, saying that faith should be in God and thinking should be centered in Christ—and not in themselves or in anyone else. These false teachings were dishonest manipulations of the Word of God to knock down some and to uphold others, whereas the brethren should have been upholding Christ.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid [covered] to them that are lost [being destroyed—*Diaglott*]." Hence the Phillips translation "are spiritually dying" seems to have validity as a *process*; that is, these individuals were being lost or destroyed. It is dangerous for any of the consecrated to become even a little blind, for that blindness can increase. Also, Paul was referring to the previous chapter, which spoke of Moses' having a veil on his face.

Those who have not accepted Jesus and consecrated, yielding to his control and receiving the robe of his righteousness, are considered dead in trespasses and sins. However, those in the nominal Church use verse 3 to say that any who do not accept Christ now are lost forever.

The false teachers had been accusing Paul in various ways, denigrating his ministry. As a result, some in the class were beginning to question his apostleship. Therefore, in verses 1 and 2, Paul was saying that the character and doctrine of Christ were manifested in his everyday living, and he hoped the Corinthians would stop for a moment and consider and analyze his daily conduct. A person's conduct in the ecclesia might seem pious and reverential, but the question is, When he is out in the commercial world, does his conduct square with what occurs with brethren? Thus Paul was saying, "When I visited you, you saw how I lived and worked."

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." What "mercy" was Paul referring to? The Jews had difficulty seeing the truth and accepting Christ, for they had been under the Old Law Covenant all their life. With schooling and indoctrination under the Law, which taught works, deeds, and ceremony, it was hard for them to accept the gospel of faith. Paul himself had been so chained to the Law that when this new religion began to prosper, he wanted to kill any who followed Jesus as being guilty of heresy of the worst

kind. He even haled some into prison and was responsible for their death, let alone their persecution. But God struck Paul down with a bright light on his way to Damascus, bringing him to his senses. Paul likened that experience to the mercy of God and of Jesus Christ in breaking him away from the fetters of the Law. From this standpoint, we can see that Paul was continuing the theme of chapter 3, comparing the New and the Old Law Covenants because the Judaizing element in the class was trying to seduce the others.

Paul directed his comments to converted Jews and Christian Gentiles. He was trying to counteract prejudice along certain lines. The Judaizing Christians in the class were so schooled under the Law that some felt one had to be half Jew and half Christian in order to please God. This mixture was dangerous, for the keynote of the gospel is justification by *faith*, not works. However, the faith that justifies does works as an evidence of a *living* faith (James 2:20).

“But if our gospel be hid[den], it is hid[den] to them that are lost.” Nominal Christianity would interpret the expression “to them that are lost” as a permanent negative condition. Some consider the destiny to be an eternity of torture, while others think it is like an everlasting sleep, from which there is no awakening. The Greek word *apollumi*, translated “lost,” has two connotations, namely, the thought of being lost forever and not forever. For instance, that word is used from the standpoint that Jesus came to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We would interpret the meaning to be that they are not permanently lost but that they can be retrieved (or saved), found, or rescued. Also, *apollumi* is used with regard to the prodigal son, who went out and spent all of his inheritance but, when in the proper heart attitude, was eventually reconciled to his father. That same Greek word is used elsewhere to indicate a permanency. An example would be Judas, of whom Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, “None of them [the apostles] is lost, but the son of perdition” (John 17:12). Of those God gave to Jesus, Judas was the only apostle to be lost. In other words, the context, or the harmony, of the statements wherever *apollumi* is used helps us to understand whether the reference is to a *temporary* present lost condition or to a *permanent* lost condition. A logical question is, What usually determines a more severe and lasting lost condition?

**Comment:** The degree of light, knowledge, and understanding that comes with a commitment of consecration to serve Jesus determines the penalty.

**Reply:** Many, in talking about sin as a subject, do not make a distinction as to whether the sin(s) occurred before or after consecration. If the sin takes place after consecration, the individual does not necessarily incur Second Death, but the situation is much more serious. Some say, “Sin is sin,” whether the transgression is adultery or just missing the mark. It is true that all sin is sin, but there are different *degrees* of sin. Now let us change the word “gospel” in verse 3 to its true meaning: “But if our *glad tidings* be hid, they are hid to them that are lost.” Right away a different contextual slant is given, showing that the “lost” have been in darkness and thus have not yet had a knowledge of the truth. Verse 4 seals this interpretation by saying that Satan has blinded the minds of mankind.

**Comment:** Not only does the Adversary hinder the spread of the gospel, but there are a number of impediments to believing. For example, as shown in the Parable of the Sower, the heart condition of the individual is a factor.

**Reply:** In other words, circumstances in the contextual picture help determine the degree of culpability. In the Parable of the Sower, the birds that took away the seed were of the Adversary. In addition, thorns and thistles, as well as shallow soil on the rock, were factors. Here in 2 Corinthians, Paul attributed the responsibility for the greater proportion of these experiences to the Adversary in one degree or another.

In what ways can the Word of God be handled “deceitfully”? (1) Fear can be put in the hearts

of hearers through the doctrine of hellfire. (2) Some join the ministry in the church systems as a way to make a good living. Generally speaking, the greater the success, the higher the salary. (3) Another reason to be a minister could be enjoyment of the praise and flattery of men. (4) The gospel is sometimes misrepresented for personal gain along the lines of money, influence, and popularity. There are a number of subtle reasons for slanting the gospel to benefit self. It is deceitful to use the Word of God to justify a wrong situation and/or behavior. (5) Today, instead of the “fear” factor, many ministers preach the “benefit” factor of healing and prosperity, which are based on a simple confession of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. (6) Related to the last reason is the doctrine of “once in grace, always in grace.” This teaching allows a person to have one foot in heaven and the other foot in the earth. The “insurance policy” approach has had great appeal down through the age.

While we believe there is a great need for social gathering with regard to the fellowship of true Christians, one has to be always on guard lest sociality should become the motive. The motive of the Christian should be the desire to hear and know the Word of God and to try to conform one’s life to that Word. Other aspects of the Christian life have a benefit when kept in the proper perspective and role.

In summary, in verses 1-3, Paul was showing that the Christian has a moral responsibility. The verses warn against practices that were (and are) being adopted in Christian circles and service.

**2 Cor. 4:4** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Satan has successfully blinded the minds of the world, who believe not. He exercises a terrific influence for evil, and as a result, the whole world lies in the Wicked One. The consecrated, especially those not in the proper condition of heart and mind, have to continually fight him as an adversary, for, if possible, he would like to use the blinding influence to entrap and again blind those who were once enlightened.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* interlinear contains the word “distinctly” in verse 4: “In whom the god of the age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving ones, in order ... not to see *distinctly* the effulgence of the glad tidings of the glory of the Anointed one, who is an image of the God.” Therefore, Paul seemed to be including some who had believed *part* of the gospel.

The word “god,” which refers to Satan, is the Greek *theos*. In fact, the Greek is *ho theos*, meaning “the god.” Two points need clarification. (1) When the definite article is included, the translation should be “*the* god” to eliminate confusion. Here Paul was speaking negatively, saying that “the god” has blinded the minds of men so that they will not believe. (2) The word translated “world” is the Greek *aion*, meaning “age.” “The god of this *age* hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” To show the prejudice in the church systems, we refer to Nestle and Marshall, the Greek interlinear endorsed by orthodoxy. Whenever they come to the definite article “the,” whether or not it is there, they insert a dash and thus strike it out. This practice is followed throughout the New Testament whether the reference is to God Himself or to Jesus. But in this text, verse 4, they contradict their thinking because of prejudice. They render the clause as “in whom the [*ho*] god [*theos*],” and they correctly use lowercase letters for Satan as the god of this age. However, in the same verse, particularly at the end where the Greek says that Jesus is the image of *the* God, they insert a dash and eliminate the word “the.” Nestle and Marshall follow this procedure to protect the Trinity, whereas they are really blind on the subject. The word “Trinity” does not even appear in the Bible, yet in the past, Christians were burned at the stake for not believing in that doctrine. Trinitarians often become angry when one does not accept that doctrine, and it is impossible to reason, using clear, plain logic, with one who is angry—just as one cannot use scholarly reasoning with a person who is drunk.

Emotion distorts rationality so that one cannot calmly listen to what the Word truly says.

“Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Inferentially, Paul was referring to the veil over Moses’ face in the type. In antitype, the “veil” is over the minds of the world to this day lest the light of the gospel should penetrate. Paul likened Moses, who conversed with God in the top of Mount Sinai, to the Christian, who communicates with God through Christ. The people of Israel, who were down below, did not converse face to face with God but saw Moses with a reflected light on his face. Even that light was too strong, so Moses veiled his face. Just as the Israelites could not look steadfastly on Moses’ unveiled face, so the world cannot look steadfastly on the gospel, for they fear it. They regard the gospel as a restriction of their liberty—they cannot sin, drink, smoke, dance, etc. Sensing these curtailments, those of the world are frightened to make a commitment to serve God and to recognize that Jesus is the mouthpiece of instruction. Thus they close their minds—they are blinded—through prejudice.

**Comment:** There is a saying: “Prejudice is man’s greatest timesaving device, for it allows one to form an opinion without hearing the facts.”

“The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” Is this statement still true? Yes! Is Satan being bound and running amuck and away? No! Satan is still the “god of this world.” It is a great anomaly to try to teach that Christ is now reigning over the world while Satan is still the god of this world. Such a condition does not make sense. With regard to the reign of Christ, he has always reigned over his Church. In fact, when we consecrated, we jeopardized our eternal future in the sense that we made a commitment to serve Jesus Christ with spiritual hopes. If we do not get a spiritual resurrection, we will lose all life.

**Comment:** It is also an anomaly to say that Satan’s binding is going on while we are in the Time of Trouble.

**Reply:** Yes, that perspective also does not jibe.

Verse 4 throws light on verse 3, which speaks of those who do not make a commitment of consecration in the present life. One of the major reasons for their not doing so is that Satan has blinded their minds lest they understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Verses 4 and 6 speak about “light.” The light shines on one who has had his mind opened and makes a covenant of sacrifice. As Christians, we have been up in the mount, as it were, in a higher realm and plane of being and have seen things from a spiritual standpoint. When Moses communed with God in the mount, the first and primary application is to Jesus at his First Advent, but in a secondary sense, we have had that experience too. Our souls have been lifted up on eagles’ wings, and we see and breathe purer air.

**2 Cor. 4:5** For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.

“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” Those who differed with Paul were magnifying themselves. Instead of calling attention to God and Jesus and the importance of being consecrated and dedicated to them, the false teachers tried to draw away disciples unto themselves. That spirit was wrong, even if one tried to think of himself as being of Christ. The attitude should have been, “We are of God in Christ.” Sectarianism and/or isolationism (the attitude “I am of God, and everyone else is contaminated”) is wrong. Dwelling on the theme that “we are all of God in Christ” is ennobling to ourselves as well as to others in their devotion.

**2 Cor. 4:6** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our

hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 begins a comprehensive lesson. In saying that God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, Paul was hearkening back to (1) the account of the First Creative Day (Gen. 1:3-5) and (2) the incident when Moses came down from the mount after communing with God and a veil had to be placed on his shining face so that the people could look at it.

Before God said, "Let there be light," there was darkness, and after the command, light shone out of darkness. Paul was drawing a parallel to that light. For the Corinthian church, the "light" that shone was the gospel message. In other words, the gospel message is the light that God commands to shine out of darkness. The words of a hymn are, "The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin; the light of the world is Jesus." The thought is not only of Jesus as the Savior and Redeemer but also of his message and hope of salvation.

Why did Paul liken Jesus to the "image of God" in verse 4? The predominant light in creation was the *sunlight*. There is the light of the sun, and there is the light of the gospel. Paul was referring to the sun as an astral body, the *source* of light. However, the *astral body* was one thing, and the *light* from that astral body, the sunlight, was another. Paul was saying that back in the creative picture, the astral body out of which light shone represented Jesus, who is the image of God. Then, in verse 6, Paul used the word "face." The glorious light of the gospel is seen, or evidenced, "in the face of Jesus Christ [the sun]." One cannot look at the face of the sun because that astral body is too brilliant. Nevertheless, that sun is, as it were, Jesus' face. The glory of his countenance is a direct image of God. No one has seen God at any time, but people have seen Jesus Christ in the flesh. Jesus spoke and acted and did the things that God Himself would have done had He been down here. Thus Jesus is the representative, the very "image" of God. From one standpoint, the light of the glorious gospel is reflected in Jesus' face, and from another standpoint, he is the source of that light.

Although Paul referred back to the first chapter of Genesis, creation was not his main thought. He was saying that as planet Earth became enlightened because of God's commandment, as light broke through on the fourth day so that the orbs of the sun and the moon could be seen, so the Church can be likened to Moses when he looked figuratively at God and communed with Him on the top of the mount. In antitype, Christians are a part of Moses. Jesus is the one communing with God, and we, as Christians, are the body members. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," and his followers, who are baptized into him, share in that light (John 8:12). Only the "face," the Head, Jesus, the antitype of Moses, communed direct with God. The body members share that glory indirectly by being part of the body of Moses.

Paul was alluding to creation. Just as light shone on the darkened earth, so the light of the gospel has shone on the hearts and minds of those who have been blessed. The statement "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" reminds us of John 1:5, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." The Apostle John used the same illustration as Paul, that is, Genesis 1:3, "Let there be light: and there was light." And John brought in the same point that the Adversary has darkened the minds of men lest they see that glorious light. John applied the light primarily to the First Advent when Jesus appeared on the scene as the light-bearer, the messenger, of God. His own people, the Jewish nation, did not accept him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). Except for a few, their minds were blinded to the truth.

What are some other pertinent Scriptures about "light"?

**Comment:** When Jesus was born, the shepherds saw a great light (Luke 2:9). Also, the wise men came from the East, following the light of the star to Israel (Matt. 2:2). And Herod rejected light when the wise men came before him.

**Comment:** At the time of circumcision, Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

**Comment:** The Apostle Peter said, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

**Comment:** The following saying is appropriate: “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.”

**Reply:** Yes, that saying brings a beautiful harmony between the two.

**2 Cor. 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

After alluding to the account of creation and Moses’ veiled shining face, why did Paul bring in the thought of “this treasure in earthen vessels”? Some in the class criticized his “weak” bodily presence (appearance and bearing) and his “contemptible” speech, which lacked the eloquence of Greek oratory (2 Cor. 10:10). They knew he claimed to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, but in viewing and listening to him, they boldly felt he did not give any evidences of apostleship. Therefore, when Paul said, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” he was referring to *himself*. Of course we draw the secondary lesson that all of the consecrated have “this treasure in earthen vessels,” but in the context here, Paul was calling attention to the fact that he was being criticized. He admitted that his bodily presence was not the best to behold, but nevertheless, he did not want to minimize the treasure. Stated another way, the human body may not be glorious to look at, but the new mind, the new creature, is valuable and priceless.

We have to understand a number of points that are packed into this lesson before we can begin to put it together. One point is that when Paul said, “We have this *treasure* in earthen vessels,” he was alluding to the common practice of hiding earthly treasures in inconspicuous vessels or places to keep them from being stolen. Archaeologists sometimes find buried in the earth an ordinary clay pot filled with gold and silver coins. Hence the inconspicuous vessel not only preserves the treasure but also contains it in a convenient fashion.

Paul was saying, “The new creature is like an earthly treasure, for we cannot necessarily tell the value of either by its cover.” A common saying is, “You cannot judge a book by its cover,” meaning its superficial appearance. The publisher tries to make the cover attractive so that people will read the contents, and many people are swayed by this method, yet the most expensive, beautiful four-color cover of a book may contain poor, low-caliber reading material. Paul was saying to the Corinthians, “This treasure is in a common earthen vessel, but the contents of that earthen vessel are valuable and priceless. You cannot judge the contents by the vessel.” Some of the Corinthians were judging the Apostle Paul externally, using superficial judgment instead of proper analytical reasoning based on Scripture of what to look for in an apostle. An apostle should be *sincere and dedicated*; he should *suffer* for the truth and speak the truth *boldly and plainly*, not with flowery, oily language. As God said to the Prophet Samuel, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; ... for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the *outward* appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart [the *inward* part]” (1 Sam. 16:7). Thus Paul called attention to an earthen vessel to show that a proper judgment of apostleship has to go much deeper—into the *contents* of the vessel and not on the exterior.

Paul packed a lot of information into this illustration that can be only partially observed by us because his mind, thinking, and brilliance were so outstanding. Normally we take *one* facet of

his thinking and hold onto it as being wonderful, but there are *many* facets.

Thus far we have the illustrations of an earthen vessel, the sunlight of creation, and Moses' coming down from the mount. When Moses descended the mount, his *face* (not his body) shone so that the people could not look steadfastly on him. Paul took the creative period of the sun shining out of darkness and tied it in with the picture of Moses coming down from the mount with his face shining like the sun. He identified the face of Moses as being the face of Jesus Christ. The light emanating from the face of Jesus Christ is the glorious gospel of truth. Not only is Jesus in this picture but also the Church. In chapter 3 and verses 1-7 of chapter 4, Paul was saying that Moses represents The Christ, Head and body. Of course Jesus is the most outstanding, but the Church will share in the honor and glory.

God “commanded the light to shine out of darkness, [but it] hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (verse 6). When Moses went up into the mountain and communed with God, he first *absorbed* the light. Then, later, he *reflected* the light—the light shone out. Thus there are two aspects: (1) Moses represents Jesus and his Church, and (2) in face-to-face communion with God, as it were, the light of truth shines in our hearts. If we are a proper medium as an emissary of Christ, that light should shine forth unto others who are in darkness.

“But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Paul likened the Church as part of the antitypical Moses communing with God face to face—but actually the Church needs Jesus in the relationship. In the type, Moses talked “face to face” with God but was actually communing with the Logos. The Church communes with God through Jesus. As Moses was up in the mount communing with God, so in proportion as the Church down here in the flesh is in a prayerful, elevated condition on the mountaintop of Christian experience, it is near God. As Moses was up in the mount, so The Christ class are on the mountaintop down here on earth. Jesus went alone to pray and commune with God at night on a mountaintop, and the Church does likewise, figuratively speaking. Christians commune with God through His Word. Knowledge and instruction come not audibly as with Moses, who talked with God and was verbally instructed, but through the “glass,” *the Word of God*.

There is an additional reason why Paul brought in the thought of a treasure being in an earthen vessel. Moses was a grand specimen of humanity. Not only was he born a fair babe, but he was quite majestic and powerful to look upon as an adult. Therefore, some thought that an apostle should be like Moses, Daniel, or David—individuals with virile strength. The false teachers at Corinth did not accept Paul and his message because they judged him externally and were looking for someone with a stately appearance and powerful voice like Moses. However, Paul was saying that the real value was the *contents*, not the appearance. Sometimes the treasure is hidden in a common vessel. In alluding to himself, Paul was saying, “Do not be deceived. Do not overdraw the illustration of Moses coming down from the mount and conclude that all of God's servants have to be grand in appearance in order to have a message like Moses. In everyday life, some of the most valuable treasures are hidden in plain, ordinary vessels.” The treasure in the earthen vessel belongs to God. God commanded the light to shine out of darkness. And the glorious gospel of God is seen through Christ, the very image of God.

Paul summed up the whole lesson, which included Moses, the light of creation, and the earthen vessel, with the observation or philosophy set forth in verse 7—in order “*that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*” We have this treasure in an earthen vessel so that the emphasis will be *on the message and on God*, the Author of that message, rather than on the vessel. The false teachers wrongly called attention to vessels that had little or no content and thus handled the Word of God deceitfully and dishonestly and condoned certain practices that the Word of God disapproved. The imperfect human bodies of God's servants, or agents of



truth, keep them from thinking too highly of themselves. The messenger should constantly call attention to the Author of the message of salvation and not to himself. Sometimes we have to be humbled to remember that “the excellency of the power” is of *God*, not of us. When humbling is necessary, we can be sure it happens for our eternal welfare.

Many sermons have been given about our being cracked, leaky vessels. We have infirmities, but thank God, He looks on the new creature, the inner man, rather than the outer man. The only way to keep an earthen vessel full, particularly a cracked one, is to keep it submerged in water. That illustration is true spiritually because if a Christian willfully takes himself out from a godly influence, the light becomes dimmer and dimmer. Realizing our weaknesses and the dangers of the Christian walk, we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. We know that unless this arrangement of mercy continually covers us, we cannot finish our course. If we depart from the sayings of Jesus, we separate ourselves from him and will suffer irrevocable damage. Only in rare instances do some come to their senses when they get to the outer peripheral darkness and are shocked into renewing their consecration.

**2 Cor. 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;**

**2 Cor. 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;**

Paul compared four circumstances, using “but not” and “yet not.” “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.” The Greek word for “distressed” is frequently used in connection with athletic contests, where a stranglehold is put on an opponent so that he cannot extricate himself and has to admit defeat. The stranglehold wears him down physically. Accordingly, some translations use the word “suffocated,” as with a bear hug, which causes a person to give up or die. Paul was saying, “We are troubled on every side but not defeated. Although we may be temporarily down, we are in a contest of life, and God gives us a way out in our experiences.”

The Christian does not escape trouble, which comes from every angle. If we are resigned to the trouble and look for the Lord’s leading and react properly, it will work out a blessing. The trouble is a schooling, an experience, that can be very beneficial, especially under the superintendence of providence that God exercises on our behalf.

“We are perplexed, but not in despair [to the point where we give up].” Many Christians feel perplexed in their experiences, wanting to know the reason for a trial or how to solve it. One should acquiesce to the situation and then pray to God for understanding and a way out. The Apostle Paul mentioned that he almost reached the point of giving up, and Jesus humbled himself under the heavy hand of God (2 Cor. 1:8).

God allows us to be perplexed—and perhaps for a long time—but we are not to give up hope. Persecution, too, is part of the Christian experience. Some physical persecutions and tortures under the Holy(?) Inquisition were almost unimaginable. In some cases, eyewitnesses who knew the individuals and their frailties reported that they were miraculously sustained. Usually people who recant do so under the threat rather than during the actual persecution.

The majority of Christians, at least to some degree, have had similar experiences. Thus the supplied pronoun “we” is proper, for Paul’s experiences were an example to brethren in Corinth (and are also an example to us). If the brethren preached the gospel in its purity, they would, in a measure, have some of these experiences themselves.

**2 Cor. 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**

Jesus died not only on the Cross but also from the day of his baptism at Jordan. He was an example from the time he dedicated himself and began his public ministry. Although he was intelligent and fair and spoke as never man had spoken before, the majority did not appreciate him but found fault and made disparaging remarks. Paul was saying that the Corinthians were doing likewise with him, and Christ's followers must have the same experience as their Head. If the Head was criticized, all members of the true body of Christ will also be criticized. Of course the body members are different from the Head in that they are imperfect and, generally speaking, have the treasure in a mean vessel. However, although brethren and the public can observe the imperfections of an individual, a person's message is not to be judged on the imperfections of character, speech, grammar, etc. Paul admitted he was an earthen vessel—even a leaky, or imperfect, vessel. Nevertheless, the imperfections of a human body should not minimize the message inside.

Some translations have the thought of carrying the corpse of Jesus with us. He died daily by laying down his life for the brethren. He had a lowly birth in a cave, and his parents were poor. If the wise men had not brought gifts, Joseph and Mary would not have been able to support themselves in Egypt. During Jesus' ministry, he was wholly dedicated and went from place to place, not having a place to call home. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). Externally, everything was against Jesus, yet he is the chief messenger of God, the very image of the Father. Paul delicately alluded to these characteristics of Jesus to show that as an exponent of Christ, he must have the same experiences. And all Christians have similar experiences in proportion as they are faithful to the truth. Incidentally, as punishment, a corpse full of maggots was sometimes strapped to a criminal.

The "dying" of Jesus was that his outward man was perishing as he laid down his life for the Church and for the world. All Christians must do likewise. However, along with the perishing, the "inward man" is renewed (2 Cor. 4:16).

**2 Cor. 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**

"That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." In talking about the life and dying of Jesus, Paul implied that if we are dead with Christ in the present life, "we shall also live with him" in the next age (2 Tim. 2:11). In addition, there are rewards in the present age. In proportion as one is dying in Christ, he is living in Christ. Stated another way, in proportion as the outward man is perishing as a sin offering, so the person is alive as a priest of God. For all of Paul's hard experiences, he was rewarded with truth that no one else had as a compensatory blessing. For every denial, he got a blessing, even in the present life. The lesson, then, is that in proportion as the outer man is perishing, in proportion as he suffers for Christ, the inward man is being renewed, spiritually speaking. We are told to take up our cross and follow Jesus, to be faithful unto death, to suffer with him so that we will reign with him.

Verses 10 and 11 are sometimes so spiritualized that they lose their power. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, ... that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." The statement is often made that the outside does not matter, just the inside. However, Paul was not saying that. Of course God does not judge the outer man with the same perspicacity that He judges the inner man, for He can thoroughly appreciate and accept the intent, the will, the desire, as the new creature under the robe of Christ's righteousness. But nevertheless, the Christian is responsible for what is on the outside, described here as "our mortal flesh." He is to be modest in his outward behavior.

As an "epistle [of Christ] ... known and read of all men," the Christian is to be an example to the world (2 Cor. 3:2). However, when the unconsecrated look at the Christian, that is, at the

outer man, they think all the good things of life are being sacrificed. And they usually feel uncomfortable in the company of the Christian, and vice versa.

The question may be asked, To whom is the life of Jesus being made manifest? The benefaction is primarily to fellow Christians, and secondarily to the world. There is a difference between viewing the Christian outside the Tabernacle, where there is a stench, and viewing him in the Court or in the Holy. The Court is for believers in Jesus, some of whom are considering consecration, and of course the Holy is for the new creature. The Christian also spends time in the Court. For example, the high priest, representing the man Christ Jesus, was in the Court as well as in the Holy. Particularly in the Court condition, which contains a mixture of consecrated individuals and believers, the Christian can have a helpful influence. We fail on many occasions, but the Lord is looking for an outward manifestation of crucifying the flesh.

The Word of God can be in the heart, but salvation comes from the confession of that which is in the heart. Stated another way, *outward* confession leads to salvation. With the heart, man believes unto righteousness, but the mouth and the outer deeds (manifestations) reveal that something inside the Christian is motivating him. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). Paul's life is an outstanding example of a consecrated believer.

The Christian is to live a life of self-denial and, better yet, cross bearing, which means being persecuted for righteousness' sake. We hope to have the strength and nobility of character to properly develop. If not, the fault is ours, for God has done everything for us and will continue to do so.

**2 Cor. 4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.**

Verse 12 is tied in with verse 11. While we bear about in our bodies the *death* of the Lord Jesus, we manifest his *life* at the same time. The Master died daily, especially laying down his life for the apostles and incidentally on behalf of the world. While his main concern was to teach the apostles, he physically expended energy to heal the masses who came to him.

Paul was talking about himself and the active copartners who traveled with him. He was sending to the Corinthians this epistle of their experiences.

**Comment:** An earlier statement of Paul applies here. "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1:6,7).

**Reply:** Paul's major concern was for the true Christian to be exemplary to the believers, rather than to have an overemphasis on the world. "Life in you" was the thrust.

**2 Cor. 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;**

Paul called attention to the fact that he was a true apostle, as manifested in his seeking to be a true follower of Christ. Like Christ, he was expending energy. He was working with his own hands, earning his own living, so that he would not be a charge to the Corinthians, and at the same time, he was laying down his life for them. While his efforts were quite exhausting, he rejoiced to see that some were benefiting from his instruction. He was saying, "While I am dying, I am happy to see that some fruitage, some life, is resulting from my efforts."

Paul quoted from Psalm 116:10, which tells what the Christian is to do. “I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.” In using the personal pronoun “I,” the Psalmist portrayed the David class, showing that the Church should preach—and thus accept responsibility for hearing the gospel. Paul was saying, “We believe as the Psalmist David stated. In harmony with the principles of God’s Word as narrated in the Old Testament, we do the same. We speak, therefore, and expect to serve God and to be pleasing to him.”

When we consider that there are 150 Psalms and that Paul selected this one verse, we can see how carefully he read the Old Testament to be able to remember this buried statement and quote it. Of course the Holy Spirit helped him, but to recall this fragment of Scripture is remarkable. Evidently, when Paul originally read this verse, it made an impression on him.

“We having the same spirit of faith.” The pronoun “we” perhaps refers not just to the Christian Church, for our whole walk is a walk of faith and our battle is a battle of faith. Rather, Paul might have been including the Ancient Worthies, for faith was common to them as well as to us, even though they had the spirit of friendship, not the spirit of sonship. Stated another way, the plural pronoun perhaps refers to *all* of God’s people—all who have been called in both Old and New Testament times and who have accepted that responsibility and, therefore, have the desire to witness.

**2 Cor. 4:14** Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

“[God] raised up the Lord Jesus” and “shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.” Verse 14 refers to the Church’s being raised to earth’s atmosphere, and not up to God’s throne immediately. This interim step of being raised from death to earth’s atmosphere is similar to Jesus’ resurrection from the tomb and being on earth for 40 days before his ascension.

Earlier Paul gave the resurrection a *present* application—that when we are baptized into Christ’s death, we are both buried into his death and raised to newness of life in the present life. Here Paul showed that the real fulfillment of resurrection will be in the *future* life in the happy destination beyond the veil. The resurrection will be an entrance into the presence of God and of Jesus. Notice that in exhorting the Corinthians, Paul included himself. He was confident that he would be there and hoped that some of them—as many as possible—would also be there.

In the past, to accommodate an understanding of verse 14, we explained that it was technically permissible and not seemingly a violation—whether actually the fact or not—for Jesus to raise from death all those who have slept in him. However, the giving of immortality is different from the giving of life. Only God has the prerogative of granting immortality, but it is possible that Jesus raised the sleeping saints to meet him in the air.

**Q:** Can John 2:19 be used to show that Jesus’ statement, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” indicates he raises the Church?

**A:** Yes, John 2:19 is a harmonious companion text. What appears to be a discrepancy is not a contradiction because the risen saints are still in earth’s atmosphere and have not yet been presented to the Heavenly Father, let alone gone to the wedding. Other Scriptures show that if we are of the Little Flock and we die during the present time—that is, since 1878—we will have an instantaneous resurrection to meet those already congregated in earth’s atmosphere, where, we believe, they are undergoing orientation for their judgment work in the Kingdom Age. That schooling has been going on ever since 1878.

The Living Bible, Phillips, Revised Standard, New International Version, Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible, and other translations have raised “*with* Jesus” instead of raised “*by* Jesus.” The *Diaglott* interlinear uses “*through*.” Although a footnote states that the Vatican Manuscript has the word “*by*” instead of “*with*,” it superimposes the word “*with*” above the Greek word “*by*.” The Greek word is *sun*. The first recisionist feels that the word should be “*with*.” We usually give a higher priority to the Sinaitic Manuscript, even though it was written about the same time as the Vatican Manuscript. The main text of the Sinaitic has the Greek *sun* right in the text, the interpretation being “*raised with* Jesus.” If the verse is studied from this standpoint, the meaning is slightly different; that is, if “*with*” is the better rendition in verse 14, the verse would read, “Knowing that he [God] which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also *with* Jesus, and shall present us *with* you.” Then the last clause would refer to the presentation of Jesus and the Church for the marriage. In other words, the clause would not refer to the awakening from the tomb and the raising to earth’s atmosphere but to the presentation of Jesus and his espoused Bride before the Father. Whichever is the true situation, both versions are of interest to us as Christians, but the word “*with*” gives a little more meaning to the last six words of the verse.

**Q:** Is the thought that, depending on which preposition is the intended meaning, verse 14 is saying the raising would be either from earth to earth’s atmosphere, or from earth’s atmosphere to God’s presence?

**A:** Yes, we have no problem either way and do not want to be dogmatic in view of John 2:19.

**2 Cor. 4:15** For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

The Father was being emphasized. For those who are faithful and receive the ultimate resurrection of the divine nature, thanksgiving and grace will be abundant as they are ushered into the presence of God and Jesus. What glory and happiness will be theirs!

Verse 15 expresses the driving force behind Paul’s effort at evangelizing as many as possible on his missionary journeys to know and serve God and to glorify Him. The joy sustained him.

**2 Cor. 4:16** For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Daily the outward man perishes, but the inner man is renewed. This statement tells why, from a practical standpoint, Paul suffered *personally*. *External* evidence of his weakness, humiliation, and suffering should not have detracted from the authority of his ministry, the principle being that a Christian should not be judged by his outward appearance, for God judges the *inner* man. Paul’s inner man grew as his outer man perished in laying down his life for the ministry—and so it should be with us. His sufferings *proved* he was an apostle, not the reverse.

Verse 16 helps us see the driving force that motivated the Apostle Paul in zeal and faithfulness. Persecution just spurred him on to greater loyalty and determination. Imagine fighting fatigue, sickness, weakness, misunderstandings, humiliations, and apparent defeat in many cases as he did! Most brethren would become discouraged if such little fruitage resulted from so great an expenditure of energy. The tendency would be to slow down efforts because of the meager results, but Paul became even more energetic, feeling that perhaps the fault lay with him if his ministry was not effectual. He continually tried to perfect his language, reasoning, and zeal, and every time he suffered externally, he renewed his efforts. Truly the Holy Spirit saturated him! All of his energy was directed to teaching just a few individuals. He was satisfied to mingle with ordinary fishermen, some women, and others who were considered outcasts but were looking for salvation and hope. In short, verse 16 gives insight into the Apostle Paul, whose

driving force is an example for us. He expected to make his calling and election sure, and he wanted to bring as many as possible with him. Helping others to be faithful unto death would add to his happiness—not just to get the reward himself but to see some he had labored with also make the Little Flock. Then there would be an overflowing of grace and thanksgiving.

Hopefully, with each of us, the outward man is perishing each day as the inward man is being renewed. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel, the fallen body. The old nature houses the new creature, which is to grow more robust and stronger every day, while the outward man peaks and becomes more and more feeble until death. The world cannot perceive this strange paradox, which is the experience of the Christian who is developing and maturing. Based on our physical and mental capabilities, we are to hold fast to whatever we attain unto. Giving all diligence, we add to our faith the steps of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness (piety), brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet. 1:5-7). The “renewal” is progressive, not static.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* has “wasted” instead of “perishing.” The thought seems to imply that, as a general rule, the sacrifice of the Christian is one of the flesh. Those who make the Little Flock will have spent themselves physically in the service of the Lord.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the higher standard.

**2 Cor. 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Paul called his affliction “light,” yet how he suffered! His mathematical mind balanced “light affliction” with “weight of glory.” The hope of the future reward and being in the presence of Jesus was “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” when measured against the “light affliction, which is but for a moment.” As analytically stated, he contrasted the (1) momentary (2) lightness of (3) affliction with the (1) eternal (2) weight of (3) glory. The affliction was *temporary*; the glory is *forever*. To take that perspective in life is hard because we get so involved in personal tragedies, which weigh us down inordinately and affect us physically, emotionally, and mentally. However, our present experiences are nothing compared to eternity. In short, we should try to weigh matters from the *eternal* standpoint.

Paul was *way above* human thinking. He was able to place himself in the future, and from that perspective, he looked back and realized that although the present life may seem long and almost unendurable, it is really but for a moment. For about 30 years, he had nothing but threshing, or persecuting, experiences. However, the glory that follows will be superabundant. In comparison with the reward, as those who comprise the Little Flock look back, they will say of the present life, “It was a light affliction.” But for Paul to make this statement *while still experiencing the persecution*—that is, *before receiving the weight of glory*—shows what strong faith he had. He desired that such faith would be inculcated in those to whom he preached.

**Comment:** At the time of Paul’s conversion, Jesus said, “For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:16).

**Reply:** Yes, Jesus spoke these words when Ananias did not want to communicate with Paul. Jesus said to Ananias in effect, “You better do what I am saying, for this individual is a vessel that I will use in a remarkable manner.”

In his analytical consideration of the prize, it was as though Paul had a scale. On one side of the scale was a pebble (a *light* affliction), and on the other side was a gold bullion block (the *eternal weight* of glory), which caused the scale to go down with a thud. When we consider all of his sufferings for Christ, to have this perspective and appreciation of the prize was marvelous. How high Paul held the standard with such enthusiasm and zeal! As weak as he was in

appearance, when he spoke these words of verse 17, he must have almost strained his gullet in trying to emphasize the importance!

**Comment:** Jesus said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:11,12).

**Reply:** Jesus’ comments give the basis for these statements of Paul.

Years ago we had discussions on the subject of faith as found in the Bible. 1 Peter 1:7 reads, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” The usual explanation for this verse is that trials are the *proof* of our faith—that going through trials faithfully and responding properly are invaluable stepping-stones in our Christian walk. But Bro. Robert Krebbs liked to say that *even the trial itself, the opportunity of proving our faith—that is, before our faithful response to the trial—is exceedingly precious.*

**Comment:** For the term “eternal weight of glory,” the Pastor stated, “When the reign of Christ begins, all the members of the Body will share the glory, share the reigning.” (See *Expanded Biblical Comments*, 1879-1916.)

**2 Cor. 4:18** While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Verse 18 is foreign to human thinking. “The things which are seen ... are temporal [transient, temporary, for a season or time]; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” The now, the present, is as nothing—as if it is unseen—for when the eternal, everlasting future occurs, the present will seem short and *ephemeral* by comparison. Three billion years from now, going on to eternity, we will look back and say with regard to the present life, “When was that?” Now the future is difficult to see, but in the future, the past will be hard to remember.

The spiritual things that are prophesied are the realities. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1). “Things hoped for” are not yet real, but faith views them as *substantial* and present things as *relatively meaningless*. If we could carry this inspiration for the rest of our life, then being “all for Jesus” would not be difficult to do. Paul gave *practical* lessons to those in the church at Corinth with their *immediate* problems. While giving such advice, he presented this enlarged viewpoint.

Faith is different from sight. Sight is physical—it is seeing with the natural eye. Faith, which is spiritual and cannot be seen with the natural eye, pertains to the future and is more practical and has more substance than what we see with the natural eye. Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, we must be students of, and desire to be taught by, that Word (Rom. 10:17).

Verse 18 is a pragmatic, common-sense statement. Elsewhere Paul used this same theme and likened it to looking at the heavens, but what we see in the heavens at present happened millions of years ago. Stated another way, what we see now no longer exists. No doubt we would be startled if we could get a close-up view of things as they actually are. The Greek word *proskairos*, translated “temporal” here, is rendered “transient things” in the *Diaglott* interlinear. What we see in the heavens is in the past and thus is not real, and what exists down here will change. Jesus’ statement “Behold, I make all things new” is true both of those who will experience the change to divine and spirit nature to be God’s instruments in the future and of mankind down here (Rev. 21:5). There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, for the

former things will pass away. Faith can look ahead and see this reality, whereas what people see now is only temporary. In a book entitled *Christ in Concrete*, the author's point was that Jesus is the real Savior, and whatever he prophesied is as good as done. The Christian, having tasted that the Lord is good and that He is gracious, does not find it difficult to exercise faith to believe that these things are so. Thank God, our eyes have been opened to see the truth! Paul said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly," but what he saw was remarkable (1 Cor. 13:12).

**Comment:** Paul said, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

**Reply:** He also said, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry ... we faint not" (2 Cor. 4:1). Paul pursued the theme of "faint not," keep pressing on, for we will be rewarded. "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition" (Heb. 10:39). Paul tried to encourage us to maintain our hope unto the end. Verse 18 is powerful reasoning that the world cannot understand. As the people look for something substantive, they consider us dreamers for desiring the riches of God's promises.

Natural men might look at the heavens and be impressed with their immensity, but not being consecrated, they do not look at the Author of the heavens. They look only at the handiwork—at what can be *seen*. In contrast, when we look at the heavens, we think more about the One who created them. In other words, we dwell in the realm of the unseen, which is in back of what is seen in the forefront. God has given us wonderful insight into the truth, but there is danger for the Christian today. Ever since the French Revolution, a remarkable change has taken place in the experience of the Church in that the opposition of prior centuries is lacking. To be a Christian in the past was a life-and-death issue. Generally speaking, we suffer today not because of having espoused the Christian faith but because of how we live up to it. The tremendous knowledge we have seems to be producing proportionately less of the Little Flock than in prior times of persecution, for in spite of all the light, it is more difficult to make our calling and election sure. Because knowledge is so prevalent, everyone wants to preach. And friendship with the world is preached—that we should love one another without a standard of what love is. This false love is permeating the Protestant churches more and more, and the Roman Catholic Church is compromising from their wrong but stern standard of the past. The "love bug" is affecting and deceiving virtually everybody today with regard to outward acts and expressions with the mouth. However, the Lord weighs these expressions and tries to match them with the reality. This is one reason why it is taking such a long time, in spite of the tremendous knowledge that is available and all of the study helps, to complete the Little Flock. The number is becoming harder and harder to glean from the crop that now exists. Perhaps one reason the Lord is going to Africa and India is that, proportionately speaking, we are living in a period of less productivity of true spirituality.

**Comment:** In *Reprint No. 176*, the Pastor said that none of the things which we prize are visible to the natural eye—our Heavenly Father's smile, Jesus as our leader, the crown of life, and the prize of the high calling.

**2 Cor. 5:1** For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

If the artificial break is removed, verses 1-4 of chapter 5 fit in with verses 17 and 18 of the previous chapter.

Verse 1 in the RSV reads, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Our "tabernacle," our "earthly tent," will be struck down (flattened or dismantled), for our time in the flesh is only temporary. Since "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," the time must come when we die (1 Cor. 15:50).



The goats' hair curtain, called the "tent" of the Tabernacle of Moses, represents our flesh, the humanity of the Church, which needs a covering. Above the goats' hair curtain is the curtain of rams' skins dyed red, which covers our flesh so that it might be acceptable in God's sight.

The curtain aspect suggests a temporary arrangement, an expediency for the present life, whereas the future holds a permanent structure, a "house ... eternal in the heavens [plural]," that is, an *expansive* arrangement. The crown of life is the highest form of life, being a dominion over all other forms of spirit life.

**Comment:** If we are faithful, our future spirit body will be our permanent, eternal "house" in the heavens.

Paul likened the Church in the flesh to a tabernacle, or tent. For "dissolved," many translations use terms such as "destroyed." The *Diaglott* has, "If the tent of our earthly dwelling be taken down." Our earthly tabernacle is folded up, dismantled, taken down—the cords are loosed—when we move from the present life, that is, when we die. Elsewhere the word "tent," or "tabernacle," applies in a progressive sense in the present life, meaning that we go from place to place, but here Paul reasoned that at death, the tent we live in is folded up and put into the tomb. When this happens, we have "a building of God." Thus Paul was contrasting a tabernacle (or tent), a *temporary* dwelling, and a building (or house), a *permanent* dwelling. If our tent is laid aside in death, we have a permanent heavenly home.

"Not made with [human] hands, eternal in the heavens." We are reminded of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that will smite the image (Dan. 2:34). In other words, neither the house nor the stone is of human origin. The future house has nothing to do with the workmanship of humanity down here. Eternal life is the inheritance of all the faithful, all the "church of the firstborn," both the Little Flock and the Great Company (Heb. 12:23).

Our earthly tabernacle is temporary in the sense that one day it will be dissolved. Paul compared our *earthly* tabernacle with a *heavenly* house. If faithful, we will be transferred to a *heavenly* realm, or location, in a *heavenly* body, house, or vesture. Anything previously cherished down here is not worthy of comparison with the abode that exists above, the eternal building of God, for those who are faithful. The change of nature from an earthen vessel to a spiritual body is both a transfer and a transformation.

**2 Cor. 5:2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:**

**2 Cor. 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.**

**2 Cor. 5:4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.**

Verses 2 and 3 are superior in the RSV: "Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked." Notice the word "clothed" in the King James. We "groan [sigh with anxiety], earnestly desiring to be clothed [invested]" with our permanent house from heaven. We do not normally think of a house as clothing, yet the Tabernacle boards were covered, or clothed, with curtains made of skins.

The Book of Revelation uses the word or thought of being "clothed" several times. If faithful, we will be clothed in the next life with an actual linen robe of righteousness (Rev. 19:8). The "woman [the true Church, was] clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1). John saw a "mighty angel [Jesus] come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud" (Rev. 10:1). In addition, the Apostle

Peter said that a desirable trait of Christian character is to “be clothed with humility” and that the Christian should be ornamented with a “meek and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4; 5:5). These Scriptures are examples of old-time thinking and terminology. Another example was calling a woman’s veil the “house of the face.” God asked Job, “Hast thou clothed his [the horse’s] neck with thunder?” (Job 39:19). The neck of an angry horse, which is frightening to behold, was called a “house of thunder.” Formerly, the word “habit,” from “habitation,” meant clothing. Much of this terminology is foreign to our Western thinking. We are so literalized that we think a house has to be made of wood, concrete, or some other material.

Normally we think of the term “naked” in a disparaging way, but Paul was saying that when a person dies, whether consecrated or unconsecrated, the body goes into the tomb and decays. Scholars in the nominal Church are so wedded to a wrong concept of the soul that they do not realize the problem in their thinking. Paul’s main theme was the Christian’s yearning for a future home. One should not be satisfied with the present life but should be looking forward to the future. The King James reads, “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon.” The expression “clothed upon” is what causes the problem among Bible scholars and translators. Those who are consecrated to God almost universally think that the body and the soul are raptured in one form or another. We will read several translations to show that many scholars cannot extricate themselves from the situation.

The King James has, “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (verse 4). Christians do not want to die just for death’s sake. Their desire is to be with the Lord, which is a happy state. However, when the faithful died all down the Gospel Age, they slept in the tomb—until the Harvest period. In the Harvest period at the end of the age, in 1878, the dead were raised first. Then those who remain and are faithful are caught up individually as they die, one by one, to the changed spirit condition. At the very end of the age, the feet members will be taken up as a class like Elijah.

Here is what some other translations say. “It is not that we want to get rid of our earthly body [this is instinctively true of all of us], but we want to have the heavenly one put on over us so that what is mortal will be swallowed up of life.” A slightly better translation is, “Because we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” “Because we do not want to have the old body stripped off, rather our desire is to have the new body put on over it, so that our mortal part may be absorbed into life.” The Jerusalem Bible has, “Not that we want to strip it off, but to put the second garment over it [the old garment] and to have what must die taken up into life.” Phillips reads, “Not because we want just to get rid of these ‘clothes,’ but because we want to know the full cover of the permanent house that will be ours. We want our transitory life to be absorbed into the life that is eternal.” The Phillips translation is a little softer, but it still contains the ingrained thought. Although somewhat better, the Revised Standard also has the same problem. “Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further [additionally] clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” The Living Bible senses the dilemma but does not solve it. “But we wouldn’t like to think of dying and having no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will, as it were, be swallowed up by everlasting life.” Of all these translations, the King James is remarkably superior: “not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.” A new garment will not be put over the old garment. In the literal Greek, “unclothed” and “clothed” are the same basic word.

Romans 8:23 starts the ball rolling in the other direction with the expression “the redemption of our body.” “We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Earlier in the same epistle, Paul referred to the old vile body as “the body of sin [that] might be destroyed” and “the body of this death” (Rom. 6:6; 7:24). The problem is that “the redemption of our body” is thought of as the rapture, but the Greek,

while in the possessive case and usually translated “of,” has other meanings which, because they are not frequently used, are often overlooked. The possessive case means “of him,” “of her,” “of our,” etc. If bluntly translated, this passage has the thought of “the *loosing* away of the body from us.” True, it is the genitive case, but here it is the genitive case of *separation* from the body, and not the word “of.” Authorities can be quoted to support this thought. Therefore, the correct thought of Romans 8:23 is “the redemption *from* the body.”

What is the real problem here? The difficulty is taking Romans 8:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:2-4 literally as they are rendered and not bringing in this other thought. The problem is not the Greek but man’s thinking of the Greek, and the soul is what is in question. The soul is not the body plus the breath but something separate. A number of Scriptures show that when a person dies, the soul goes to God, and the body goes into the grave. However, when the soul goes to God, it is not a living soul but a dead soul. At death, the soul ceases to exist, but it is held, for the dead will come back as they were in the present life. “If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Eccl. 11:3). As the individual (the tree) fell in death, so he will come forth in the resurrection; that is, he will have the same identity and a human body resembling somewhat the one that went into the tomb. Each person will come forth from the tomb with his own personality and with his memory of sin and disobedience, as well as of obedience.

We have likened the soul to a tape that is put in a recorder (a representation of the human body). When a person dies, the soul (the tape) goes into the archives of God. Then in the resurrection, all God has to do is to reactivate the soul by putting it in a new body, just as a tape is inserted back into a tape recorder for replay and additional recording. In other words, a soul must have a body in order to be alive. When the dead soul (tape) is in the archives, recorded material is on it.

When the soul is thus considered, we see that it has no body at death. When a person dies, the soul is *unclothed*, dead, and without consciousness. In speaking about the dead who loved God, David said, “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence” (Psa. 115:17). The soul must have a body in order to be alive. From this standpoint, the soul is clothed upon in resurrection not with the old body, the corpse, but with a completely new body. Griesbach, who translated a portion of the New Testament interlinear from the Greek into English, knew that the word means literally “unclothed” and “clothed upon.” Since he had a problem agreeing with the other scholars, his interlinear for the last half of 2 Corinthians 5:4 is interesting. “Indeed for those being in the tent groan being oppressed; in which not we wish to be unclothed, but to be invested, that may be swallowed up the mortal by the life.” Griesbach knew the Greek word means “clothed upon,” but he was aware of the common view. Therefore, in our estimation, he wanted to show that he had the correct thought, so he used the word “invested.” When one is invested into office, into a position of authority and regality, he does not have his old clothes on. The vesture is the new garment of glory and beauty. Therefore, Griesbach took the liberty of using “invested” rather than “clothed upon.” The thought is not of putting new clothes over old clothes. In the present life, the robe of Christ’s righteousness covers the Christian, but in the future life, each saint will have his own personal righteousness, which enables him to stand before God, in a complete change from mortality to immortality. The subject of the soul, as presented here, cannot be discussed with scholars because, as with the Trinity, we would not get anywhere unless an individual had an open mind and was not prejudiced from former training.

**Comment:** The Apostle Peter wrote, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me” (2 Pet. 1:14).

**Reply:** Yes. From another standpoint, it would not make sense for the resurrected, glorified Christ to come at his Second Advent with mortal wounds, bleeding hands, scars in his side, and

nail holes in his feet.

**Comment:** Supposedly, one of strongest identifiers of a cult is to believe that Jesus did not arise in the flesh.

**Reply:** Yet Paul said that the body we sow is different from the body we have now.

“For in this [present vessel, or body] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” Paul repeated some of the thoughts of verse 1, but he was comparing the groaning to being at home in the body (verse 6). Being comfortable with the present arrangement is not the best condition, for to not earnestly desire the change to spirit nature will affect the outcome, one’s destiny. Paul suggested that holding the standard high is like running the race. On the one hand, the Christian is to run as if there is only one prize, one winner (1 Cor. 9:24). On the other hand, the race is a marathon, not a hundred-yard dash. Those who run in a marathon need to have the desire and the conviction that they can win the race. The runner must pace himself and take advice, and endurance is a big factor. Instruction on running the race for the prize of the high calling comes from the apostles Paul and Peter, who said that we should add fortitude, knowledge, etc., to our faith. All of these qualities are pace-setting; that is, they regulate the manner in which we run.

“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” The thought is, “Being divested of the earthly garment and being clothed with the spiritual garment, we would not be found naked, that is, without the robe of Christ’s righteousness.” Other Scriptures show that if being so unclothed and then clothed, the former vesture would have no spot or wrinkle so that we would be worthy of the change. Incidentally, the white robe that the saints wear in glory is *actual* righteousness and perfection. Spots and wrinkles on the robes of the Great Company class will have to be removed. For that reason, the Great Company at the end of the age are spoken of as washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation. Through much anguish of spirit and heart in connection with their demise, the spots and wrinkles will be taken out with earnest conflict. Thus for many individuals, suffering induces the cleansing process. Just before death, some experience great anxiety with regard to their spiritual welfare, and that anxiety helps to wash their robes if cleansing is needed. No one will be given spirit or divine nature until the washing is effected one way or another.

Paul longed to receive the real clothing beyond the veil. He had a desire to be here to serve the brethren, but he had a greater desire to depart and be with Jesus. He did not have a desire to be in between the two conditions, that is, to be silent in the tomb. The Apostle Peter spoke of his “tabernacle.” “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me” (2 Pet. 1:13,14).

This topic is emotional rather than technical, even though Paul spoke with the voice of a scholar. The main point is that the Christian who is in a proper frame of mind yearns to be with God and Christ. We are struggling to increase our love for God and Christ so that we will have this ideal attitude, which the apostle was holding up as a standard for the Church.

Paul knew that if he was unclothed, immortality would not swallow up life right away. From the context of the second epistle, we see that Paul was not desirous of dying per se, for he knew that the swallowing up would not come until the Harvest period. In 2 Timothy 4:8, he said, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love[d] his appearing [at the First Advent].” At that time, Jesus revealed the love of God and gave truth. The name Immanuel, meaning “God with us,” signifies that if God were to assume the human form, which He cannot do because of His office, He would behave like Jesus. Jesus

manifested His Father's character to such a degree that the latter is proud of him.

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed [that is, made naked by the removal of the earthly vesture, the robe of Christ's righteousness], but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” In the removal of the earthly vesture, we do not want to be anxious about being unclothed because we are not ready. A development of faith is needed, for we do not know, as individuals, what lies ahead. The words of a hymn are, “So on I go not knowing; I would not if I might. I'd rather walk in the dark with God [as needed] than go alone in the [false] light [unclothed].”

**Comment:** Paul said, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53). The earthly is divested, and the new garment (immortality) is put on.

**Reply:** For those who get life, God gives the soul a body as it pleases Him—either in the Little Flock or in the Great Company. Those in the Little Flock will be vested with different degrees of honor and glory, in addition to their white robe of actual righteousness.

The instruction in verses 1-5 is rather sober. Because Paul was trying to make the instruction not only constructive but also uplifting, he concluded chapter 4 with verses 17 and 18, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Paul was a strong logician, but he realized that he could become heady from his power of speech if he was not careful. Therefore, in making comparisons throughout his epistles (as in comparing the heavy and the light, the temporary and the eternal, etc.), he often gave one cadence or sequence in the first comparison and then reversed the cadence or sequence in the next comparison, whereas he could have spoken almost musically, as well as logically. Stated another way, he could have spoken like an orator, but in voicing his logic, he purposely broke the cadence of sound so that no man would glory in his logic and consider him an orator. He intentionally avoided beautiful oratory lest people become mesmerized and forget the lesson. Paul earnestly desired to teach the nitty-gritty for making one's calling and election sure. He sacrificed far more than just money. His attitude was, “I would rather preach Christ crucified than to speak like those who use flowery language and multitudinous words.”

**2 Cor. 5:5** Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

In both 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul continuously emphasized the primacy of God, and then the importance of Christ. For example, he mentioned the Word of *God*, a man's conscience in the sight of *God*, Christ's being the image of *God*, that *God* commanded light to come out of darkness, and now the fact that Christians have a building of *God*. Verse 5 emphasizes God as the *Author* of the New Creation and the heavenly calling. Since there were many Greek gods, it was important to have the thought of the *one* God.

God has given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee, pledge, earnest, foretaste, and down payment of what we will receive beyond the veil if we are faithful. In the present life, we receive a part of the Holy Spirit to assist and encourage us. The Holy Spirit is the *parakletos*, the Helper. God channels the Holy Spirit to us through Jesus. A “down payment” is a *real* assurance, but it can be forfeited, for it is conditional based upon faithfulness. A parallel Scripture is Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his [*God's*] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which *God* hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

**Comment:** The Pastor said in *Reprint* No. 916, “In the fullest sense God will not recognize us as sons until our Lord shall present us *actually* perfect before the Father in the end of the Gospel age.”

**Reply:** Yes, that statement expresses the thought in a nutshell. Moreover, the Bride class will be individually presented to the Father by name.

As the Author of our salvation, God called us, He has given us the earnest of the Holy Spirit, He has wrought us, and we are His workmanship. Yes, we have to work out our own salvation, but to do that, we must allow God to come into us with His Holy Spirit, so that if we are obedient to His thinking and teaching and receive them into our heart, the glory will not be of ourselves but of God. The possession of the power of His Holy Spirit can change a life formerly steeped in sin and make it, little by little, more praiseworthy.

Paul was careful not to overstate Jesus’ role and thus put God in the background, even though many have probably made their calling and election sure down through the Gospel Age without having a clear distinction between the two roles. We think that God, in His mercy, has overlooked some misconceptions because, as Jesus said during his ministry, “Those who honor me honor the Father” (John 5:23 paraphrase). We are reminded of the picture of Joseph and the Pharaoh.

**2 Cor. 5:6** Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Our groaning, our earnest desire, for something future is proper. To feel comfortable and satisfied in the present life—to feel at home in the body of flesh—is wrong, and Paul was knocking those who had this philosophy. A minority of the Corinthians erroneously taught that the Christian should be content and glory in the flesh and not look for the resurrection. Their attitude was more along the lines of “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”

If we are at home in the body, we are satisfied. Some leave the truth because they long for the former pleasures of the world. If they come to their senses, they are plucked out, but the great majority who leave do not come back, for they get steeped in the pleasures, like an addiction. Stated another way, if we give up something and then play with it again, the addiction gets a second hold that is stronger than the first. The idea is to *flee* from the lusts of the world. Many Christians have had this experience, which is a struggle, a warfare. Of course prayer helps. We are to set our “affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2).

More literally translated, the thought of verse 6 is, “Therefore, we can be sure that if we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” It is dangerous to feel satisfied and complacent in the body. The spirit of complacency implies spiritual sleepiness.

**Q:** Could the term “at home in the body” also be the fact that now we are in the body; that is, we do not have a choice at present, so although we are not actually with Jesus, that is our real desire?

**A:** Yes. Stated another way, we sing a hymn about being a pilgrim wandering over the earth. We would like to be more than overcomers and thus be found worthy to enter a house of rest beyond the veil. All of us have made mistakes, and there is always hope of retrieval, growth, and God’s mercy with regard to any wrong steps, errant ways, or lethargy. While we groan to be clothed upon with the new nature, we also groan that we might be divested of our earthly weaknesses. It is essential to have that attitude if we are to have a degree of favor with God. There is so much understanding in the Harvest period but few results. It has already taken more than 120 years to finish the 144,000.

**Q:** The expression “at home in the body” seems to be out of place, for Paul’s emphasis over and over was on *not* being at home in the body. Why did he include it here?

**A:** The analogy would be like the doctor telling us what is wrong. Negative information helps us to examine ourselves, with honesty, as to our true situation. If we feel “at home in the body,” we will be awakened to our need for change. Thus the negative and the positive are both beneficial. We are instructed “what to do” and “what not to do.”

**Comment:** The “confidence” is not in self but in the Lord’s promises. “For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken” (Prov. 3:26).

**Reply:** Yes, the promises of God give confidence, and *faith* is the channel of that confidence in the promises and instruction of the Word of God.

**2 Cor. 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)**

Paul inserted this parenthetical statement because faith and trust in God are needed to walk the narrow way. God proves us to know whether we love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Deut. 13:3). In the present life, He examines us through Jesus, the Church’s High Priest, to see if we are walking by faith. Those who are justified walk, live, and pray by *faith*. The heart attitude should be trust in the invisible and unseen God. Through the understanding of His Word, we are obedient to His leading.

**2 Cor. 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**

**2 Cor. 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.**

Notice Paul’s use of the word “confident.” He had a reason for making these statements and drumming on the lesson, as will be seen later in the chapter. The *Diaglott* reads, “Therefore we are very ambitious ... to be acceptable to him.” In other words, our ambition, ideal, and goal are to attain the heavenly reward.

Now, in the Harvest period, we are in a different circumstance than Christians down through the Gospel Age. No longer does one who is faithful unto death sleep in the tomb. Of course Paul was thinking of the whole age and talking in particular to the Corinthians. “We” refers to Paul’s associates and, hopefully, those in the class in Corinth who had the same attitude of being willing “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Paul was describing the ideal situation and attitude. The Christian has a high standard. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but [only] one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24). We are in a marathon race. A hundred-yard dash would not provide the number and the variety of experiences that we receive in a marathon, which requires *great strength* just to keep going. In verses 8 and 9, Paul was saying that our goal “whether present [in the flesh] or absent [from the flesh], [is that] we may be accepted of [acceptable to] him.”

“We are ... willing ... to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” On another occasion, Paul said, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). He would rather be gone, but he felt a responsibility to help the brethren. Therefore, he thought that perhaps the Lord was postponing the finish of his course so that he could be helpful to others.

**2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.**

All of the consecrated must appear before the “judgment seat of Christ.” Hence they are under the scrutiny, inspection, and judgment of Christ in the *present* life, one proof being that those who go into Second Death will not be raised for future judgment. Conversely, praiseworthy acts done in the present life will be acknowledged and specially commended later. Jesus will confess and openly endorse the names of the Little Flock before the Heavenly Father and all the holy angels at a future date. Those who get special acclaim will be in the judgment seat of approval in the next age.

The Great Company will also get a resurrection but are not sufficiently good to be confessed before the Father. The “judgment seat,” the inspection process, goes on continually in the present life—whether for good or for bad. In the next life, decisions with regard to the destinies of individuals will be made public, especially for those of the Little Flock, and the Great Company will be apprised of the reason(s) they failed to receive the crown of life. The names of those who comprise the Little Flock and the Great Company, as well as the names of those who go into Second Death as complete failures, will be made known in the Kingdom Age.

It is helpful to view verse 10 in two ways. The usual explanation is that our appearance before the judgment seat has a *future* application, but actually the judgment is *present* tense. The judgment seat is not just the rendering of a verdict but also the scrutinizing of our faults. As High Priest, Jesus knows our problems. One reason God had Jesus go through his experience down here is that we will not be judged too harshly according to the flesh, and allowances can be made if the will to do what is proper and pleasing in God’s sight remains faithful (Heb. 2:17). Jesus examines the intensity of our desire to serve and please the Heavenly Father.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* reads, “We must all appear before the tribunal of the Anointed, so that each one may receive the things through the body, according to what was performed, whether good or bad.”

**Reply:** “*According to the deeds of the body*” is the thought, rather than “*through the body.*” Greek prepositions have variant forms. One who has been indoctrinated with “orthodox” theology is handicapped unless he becomes familiar with Scripture. Then, in God’s providence, the principle of “here a little” and “there a little” can lead one into truth. No matter whether one is in a teaching role or is being taught, God promises that instruction will be made available to all of His children so that they may survive in the experience of serving Him in the narrow way. The principle is stated in Isaiah 54:13, “And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

We should also think of verse 10 from the standpoint of when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Because we consider this text at the end of the age and are looking back, we subconsciously read in a fashion that is not quite what Paul was saying. Our appearance before the judgment seat of Christ is past, present, and future, not just future. We live for a number of years and then die. Meanwhile, we leave a record behind, and the question is, Have we been accepted by God as worthy of life in the Little Flock or the Great Company? The answer to the question is based on the observance (judging) of our life. In other words, the judging is not the verdict, the sentence. What about those who are not worthy of life? Will they hear a sentence? No. Those who go into Second Death will not appear before any judgment seat because their judgment took place while they were living, and they will not receive a resurrection. Paul was saying that all of the consecrated are on trial in the present age, and that trial is the period of time of each individual’s Christian walk. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). When one dies, he can no longer prove faithful because he has finished his course, whether good or bad. Thus the judgment of destiny is rendered at the conclusion of a person’s life—or in midlife if the individual departs from the Lord. Many who live what seems to be a nice and good life may not be worthy in the Lord’s sight. Perhaps they were too putty-like in



character, lacking backbone. The inspection process is ongoing: past, present, and future.

What clues help us to know that the appearance before the judgment seat of Christ is both progressive down through the age and at the end of the age?

**Comment:** Since “judgment must begin at the house of God,” the judgment of the consecrated takes place before the world’s judgment (1 Pet. 4:17). The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, pertaining to the world’s judgment, will occur during the Kingdom Age.

**Reply:** The final selection and judgment of the body of Christ has to be complete before the final judgment of the professed Church of Christ.

Notice that verse 10 does not say that “all must” appear before the judgment seat of Christ but that “we must all” appear, the “we” being the consecrated, all who have committed their life to serve Christ. Verse 10 harmonizes with other Scriptures that contrast the “we” class (the true Church of Christ) and the “they” class (a false professing Church of Christ) whether at the end of the age or during the age. Another point has to be taken into consideration, namely, that there are three classes of the consecrated: the more-than-overcomers (Little Flock), the overcomers (Great Company), and those who fail (Second Death). A logical question is, If this Scripture is meant to have its fulfillment only at the end of the age, will all three classes be on hand at that time? The answer is no, because the Second Death class will not get a resurrection. Therefore, for those who fail to get life to pass before the judgment seat of Christ, their judgment would have to take place during the Gospel Age. In other words, during the present life, all of the consecrated undergo a process of scrutiny by Jesus, who is a lapidarian. The chiseling, shaping, and polishing of Christians takes place during their lifetime. At the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was referring to future generations down through the Gospel Age, as well as to Christians then living. The point is that appearing before the judgment seat of Christ has been going on all down the age.

When we die, we do not know for sure whether we are of the Little Flock, the Great Company, or Second Death. Because those who go into Second Death do not get a resurrection, any of the consecrated who are awakened from death will know they made either the Little Flock or the Great Company. Those of the Little Flock will be given assurance that they did “good.” Those of the Great Company will realize they did “bad,” that is, “not so good.” When the Little Flock are raised, Jesus will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). When the Great Company are awakened, they will have spirit life and partake of the marriage supper, but they will not receive certain honors. For example, their names will not be mentioned before the Father in a special commendation (Rev. 3:5).

Those of the consecrated who die after the fall of the nominal Church will know they did not make the Little Flock, but they will be encouraged particularly by two Scriptures. (1) “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9). (2) “Although the fig tree [Israel] shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the [Little] flock shall be cut off from the [earthly] fold, and there shall be no herd [Ancient Worthies] in the stalls [installed in office]: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17,18). This class of the consecrated will find themselves in between the completion of the Little Flock and the setting up of the Kingdom. Not only will they be made aware of the fact that they did not make the high calling, but they will be given some assurance. While at first, they will sorrow and weep, yet they will see that the Lord will give good things to them because they made a commitment to serve Christ and are overcomers. Although not *more* than overcomers, they are overcomers.

**2 Cor. 5:11** Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The RSV reads, “Therefore, knowing the fear [Greek *phobos*] of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.” Paul knew those who either morally or doctrinally deflected from the doctrine of Christ. “For [we know that] if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26,27). To “sin wilfully” is not necessarily one act but a continuum in the evil. Sometimes the willful sinner becomes obvious because he goes out of the truth in a flagrant manner. However, we must be careful in judgment, for sometimes one we may judge to have gone out of the truth has not done so. If we do not know where the individual is or what he is doing, we cannot make that judgment, unless he committed known grievous deeds without repentance. A tree is judged by its fruits (Matt. 7:17-19).

**Comment:** Fear of the Lord might be something we do not fully appreciate. The problem lies with us if we dismiss the Word too easily. Without sufficient reverential fear, we could lose our standing with the Lord.

**Reply:** Verse 11 could be paraphrased, “Knowing the high standard of God, knowing the fear of Him and what reverence for God implies, I feel a necessity to persuade men.” Or, “It is essential for Christians to have an awareness of the high standard of reverence if they are to be deemed acceptable to the Lord.” Paul was energized into activity by the necessity and urgency of stressing this reverential fear to the brethren. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). He wanted the Corinthians to realize the danger in being careless and/or indifferent, and his sense of urgency made him even more zealous. He said, “I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” Benefits accrued to those who understood and properly observed Paul’s spirit of urgency—to those whose consciences told them that Paul was doing a good thing.

In trying to counteract indifference to the realization of true reverence, Paul was leading up to another point. The lesson was about those who were criticizing him and thus were manifesting the opposite attitude.

“We persuade men.” That was Paul’s office, and he was doing his utmost to help the Corinthians. In a marathon race, there is admiration for those who finish, even if they lack speed and capability. The fact that they finish and do not give up is what matters, for one who gives up is out of the race. There is no merit in giving up. Some spectators of a marathon race will stay for hours just to see the last runners struggle across the finish line.

“But we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” The Corinthians were a mixed group of individuals. The different translations do not seem to get the point as powerfully as the Living Bible, which reads, “God knows our hearts, that they are pure in this matter, and I hope that, deep within, you really know it too.”

Verse 11 is a follow-up to verse 10 about the judgment seat of Christ. Paul was saying that the inspection we are undergoing in the present life is a sobering thought, but he gave an encouraging slant in adding, “We persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” The “we” in verse 11 was used in an editorial sense because Paul was referring to himself and also to his collaborators, who were serving the Corinthians with him and were experiencing persecution as a result. The brethren should have been encouraged by the fact that they had the Apostle Paul before them not only as an example but also as an instructor to enlighten them in regard to both their good and their not-so-good points. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul showed a lot of their shortcomings, and the brethren made considerable progress, especially with regard to purging out the fornicator. In this second epistle, he told them to receive the individual back. Evidently, the

Corinthians woke up to his counsel, so now he was encouraging them. “Look at us. Look at my ministry and that of those who are with me—and how the Lord has helped and strengthened us.” Paul was trying to put a good slant on his sober advice, for he did not mean to discourage the brethren through faultfinding.

**2 Cor. 5:12** For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

“For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf.” In the first epistle, Paul showed that while the false teachers reigned as kings in their attitude and behavior, the mark of his apostleship was what he suffered for Christ. His various experiences were proofs of his likeness to Jesus rather than marks of disapproval, as the others taught. Therefore, Paul commended his own conduct in the first epistle to offset the argument of those who were trying to refute his ministry. Now he would speak again—and even more strongly—in order to help the brethren. Paul could easily have remained silent, but he was interested in the welfare of the brethren and hence spoke out so that they could rebut the minority false teaching element. This rebellious faction did not accept his reasoning about the apostles’ suffering for Christ, but Paul asked, “Isn’t the Christian called to suffer?” Every time they brought up something to discredit Paul, he gave reasoning to counteract their criticisms of him and his ministry. In verse 12, Paul was saying, “We do not commend ourselves again for the purpose of honoring ourselves but to give you ammunition against the false teaching.”

Earlier Paul used a similar expression: “Do we begin again to commend ourselves?” (2 Cor. 3:1). Those who came with letters from Jerusalem felt their written commendation was more authoritative than Paul’s ministry. Their attitude toward Paul was, “Where is your letter of commendation?” Paul replied, “You, the church at Corinth, are our letter, written in our hearts. God called you through Christ, and I was the instrument God used to enlighten you and found this church. Do I need to come with a letter to you?” (2 Cor. 3:2). Paul was trying to fortify those who followed his instruction.

The other element, the false teachers, gloried in external appearance, such as flowery speech and rhetoric, stature, and fine clothing. By these means, they put on an act of superiority to Paul. They assumed an attitude of dignity and spoke with an oratorical voice and authority, but their words were empty. They were so desirous of creating a good impression on the church at Corinth that they lacked the substance of the Holy Spirit. Their heart, their character, was not developed. They put more emphasis on outer appearance than on transformation of character.

What did they minimize with regard to the heart? They felt a Christian should be serene and majestic with nothing perturbing him. They considered zeal to be immaturity and madness. The principle was illustrated when Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” (Acts 26:24). At least Festus gave a more polite answer in regard to “much learning,” whereas the false teachers did not give Paul even that much credit.

Paul commended himself to the Corinthians in the first epistle by giving the signs of his apostleship and his suffering and by telling what he did for Christ as being in marked contrast to their leaders, who did not suffer, were popular, and were recognized and given honors of which they were not worthy. Paul continued, “I humiliated myself by telling you the signs of my apostleship so that you could reason with those leaders and have confidence not only in my apostleship but also in refuting those in the ecclesia who differ with me and consider me devious.” In view of all the suffering Paul endured, it is almost unbelievable that the false teachers thought he was a man-pleaser. They twisted his words and did not balance them against his deeds, which were anything but pleasing to man.

Paul was saying, “I am not going to list again, as in the first epistle, all my sufferings as credentials for being an apostle. I am beyond reproach with regard to the ministry.” For example, he was not looking for filthy lucre from the Corinthians. When he advised them to be liberal in helping the suffering brethren in Jerusalem, he made sure that one of their own elders accompanied him. The Corinthians were thus assured that he did not dip his hand in the till.

As mentioned in the first epistle, what are some ways the brethren gloried “in [outward] appearance, and not [inwardly] in [the] heart”? (1) Some displayed vocabulary, elocution, and oratory, but their words lacked substance. (2) The Corinthians gloried in their love for the brotherhood to the extent that they tolerated the grievous sinner in their midst. To be so forgiving violated principle. It is nice to forgive—and we should always have the spirit of readiness to forgive—but if forgiveness is not in harmony with the principles of God’s Word, we make ourselves more loving than God or Jesus. (3) Some of the Corinthians who had seen Jesus and heard him speak felt they were superior. (4) There was a tendency to glory in the ability to speak in an unknown tongue. (5) The Corinthian brethren were prosperous because Corinth, being halfway between Rome and Asia Minor, had a good harbor and was a center of commerce. (6) At the time of the Memorial, some of the wealthier brethren offended the poorer brethren by eating lavish meals in front of them. (7) Sisters gloried in their appearance, adorning themselves with rich clothing, jewelry, and elaborate hairstyles.

These practical examples of glorying in appearance make Paul’s words more meaningful to us in knowing what to do and what not to do. Paul probably wore simple attire but was neatly dressed when attending meetings or preaching to others. Some people like to walk with a stiff backbone, almost studiously. In contrast, Paul was probably bent with work, fatigue, and persecution.

**2 Cor. 5:13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.**

The expression “whether we be beside ourselves” referred to Paul’s great zeal and animation. When giving a talk, he was not calm and collected in his message but spoke with authority, emphasis, and distinction. Oratory was secondary.

One time when crowds were thronging to hear Jesus, he went into a house for seclusion, but the people were at the door, practically inundating the house. A man who was crippled had to be let down through a hole in the roof because the door was blocked by the multitude. Jesus was so zealous and busy preaching that he neglected to eat. Friends tried to reason with him to partake of food, feeling he was “beside” himself in neglecting personal needs. Just as Jesus’ zeal was misunderstood, so the false teachers in Corinth misunderstood Paul’s zeal. They thought that he was crude and without decorum and that his zeal was a puerile manifestation of lack of development and maturity. His rebuttals provide insight into what his critics said.

In verse 13, Paul was saying that God was the reason for his zeal. If “we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” In other words, “God has given us this message, and we feel a responsibility and an urgency to preach it. That is why we are so earnestly contending on your behalf.”

“For whether we be beside ourselves” has the signification “for whether we appear as religious fanatics.” Those who realized why Paul was suffering for Christ thought, “Yes, he is beside himself, but that is godly zeal.” Jesus stated the principle, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up [consumed me]” (John 2:17). From the world’s perspective, the true Christian is a fanatic and/or a Bible worshipper. Paul was saying, “If I am crazy with my zeal and the sufferings I have endured, they were done on your behalf, so that I might help and benefit you.”

“Whether we be sober [serious], it is [also] for your cause [sake].” In other words, “If I am

crazy or if I am sober—whichever mood I am in—it is because of my loving care for you. You should be able to see that my concern is sincere, for I receive persecution for my time and efforts on your behalf.” Those who accompanied Paul also suffered persecution to some extent.

Sobriety implies earnestness, zeal, honesty, straightforwardness, and being direct and to the point. However, the false teachers thought Paul was being overly serious, too “sober.” The implication, then, is that they were the opposite. He had just spoken soberly about the “terror of the Lord” (verse 11). His point was, “If we talk with great earnestness, it is for your sake; it is for your salvation.”

In fact, brethren today have incorrectly said there is no fear in love. They overemphasize that Christians should be calm in all of their experiences, emotions, and reactions and that calmness manifests maturity. They maintain that Christians should rejoice and not speak sternly or be too serious. The Apostle Paul himself said to “rejoice,” but that rejoicing was in his sufferings for Christ and in his self-denials (Phil. 4:4). He did not rejoice in complacency, and he did not reign as a king, allowing brethren to wait on him hand and foot. The false teachers accepted praise and financial support in their ministries, whereas Paul worked with his hands. His rejoicing was based on the principle that the more we deny ourselves and properly suffer for Christ, the more marks we have of God’s approval and of our future destiny of glory and happiness in the Kingdom. The false teachers taught that one should be happy, not sober. However, we should not say, “Be happy,” to one who is going through a searching trial that is tearing the heart. We are to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15). The false element were careless with regard to morals and lax in Christian living, as will be seen. Just as there was an example of an individual in the first epistle, so there was the tendency to overlook morals problems under the guise of “love” in this second epistle. The false teachers looked at Paul, with all his zeal, warnings, and exhortations, as not behaving the way an apostle should. They felt an apostle should be more dignified and reasonable.

**2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:**

**2 Cor. 5:15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.**

“The love of Christ constraineth us”—that is, there is a reason to be urgent and zealous—for “if one [Jesus] died for all,” then all were hopelessly lost. If it was necessary for Christ to die for our sins, those sins must have been bad, and we were really dead in our trespasses and sins. If Christ died for us, we should respond accordingly and be up and awake. Paul was giving all kinds of arguments to show that the false teachers were way off base on Scripture. If Christ died for all, we should realize that we were bought with a price. Henceforth we should live for Christ, but those who opposed Paul denied the resurrection and were living for pleasure. The doctrine of the resurrection is very important, for it influences our conduct in the present life.

Paul was trying to establish a common-sense view for those who were aware of the life of Christ and his terrible death on the Cross. He reasoned, “If that death was necessary for man’s salvation, then we must really have been dead. Jesus had to die in order to redeem us and give us a standing. The God of *love* sent Jesus, but it was necessary for Jesus to *die*.” Paul was not emphasizing the technicality of the Ransom here, a perfect life for a perfect life, but was speaking in a more pragmatic sense. In seeing the excruciating death of Jesus, which was necessary in order for man to be saved, the Corinthians (and we) should realize that we were hopelessly dead otherwise. Paul was saying, “In appreciation for our knowledge of why Jesus died, the love of Christ should constrain us to serve and obey God with all our heart. We should feel that we are no longer our own but that we were bought with a great price—the precious blood of Christ. Therefore, we should henceforth no longer live unto ourselves.”

Incidentally, the Romans, to whom Paul explained the Ransom, were given to laws. When a land was under Roman control, a Roman citizen could rely on the laws being rigid and not corrupted. For that reason, the Roman Empire is pictured in Scripture as “iron,” and Jesus will rule in the Kingdom with a rod-of-iron rule, in harmony with God’s law (Dan. 2:40; Rev. 2:27).

In verse 14, Paul was saying that if one died for all, then it is reasonable to conclude that all were dead. What was the manner of our Lord’s death? On the Cross, he endured great shame, ignominy, pain, and suffering to offset the sin of the world. God would not have sent His Son to die such a death unless there was a good reason. Paul also said that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin (Heb. 9:22). It is like an effect related to a cause. For Jesus to *willingly* leave his exalted position in heaven and allow himself to be made flesh down here and to die on the Cross for the sin of mankind tells us that the gospel message associated with Christ must be true, for who would do such a thing on behalf of humanity unless it was truly necessary as a cure for the human race?

Suppose someone is drowning, and a person risks his life to dive into the water and rescue him. The rescued party would know he had been saved from death. In gratitude for the rescuer having risked his life, the saved individual usually feels an indebtedness and makes every effort to maintain a friendship and association. In proper thanksgiving, the rescued party feels he should keep the rescuer in remembrance. With Christ having paid the price with his life, not only should we keep his sacrifice in remembrance, but also we should feel that we owe him an indebtedness by hearkening to his message and submitting ourselves in consecration to the cause he represents. Verse 14 embraces all of these thoughts.

Verse 15 expresses the thought behind duty love for Jesus. Because of his sacrifice, we should love him and commit ourselves to him. The step of consecration is the start of the Christian life. At that point, Jesus begins to instruct us with the reason why he willingly died for us according to the Father’s instructions. We should develop the same spirit in our own lives, especially for the brotherhood, for those of kindred spirit, loving one another and making sacrifices. We are to follow the Golden Rule with all, even our enemies. Toward those who oppose us, we should manifest fair play and have a principled (but not necessarily an emotional) love. As Jesus was instructed by the Father, so we should keenly desire instruction from Jesus.

**2 Cor. 5:16** Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Why did Paul introduce this verse into the argument? He was counteracting the sectarian spirit in the class by saying that outward show and personality are not important. Instead of following a particular leader and being exclusive (“I am of Apollos,” etc.), the Corinthian brethren should have had the attitude “We are *all* of God in Christ Jesus. We are all Christians.”

Unfortunately, especially in the past in the movement, verse 16 has been grossly misapplied by some. The thought has been, “Why study the Bible? Why study the Gospels, for all nominal Christians have sermons on the life of Christ? Bibles have been around for 2,000 years, and what do the church systems know? Where has a study of the Bible gotten them?” They belittled the study of the Bible as a waste of time. Those who made such foolish remarks will be held accountable, for they undercut the authority of God’s Word and His chief representative. The life of Christ is vital to Christianity; it is the essence of Christianity, for it exemplifies how a Christian should behave and meet certain experiences of life. Jesus gave the words of life as well as the example of life.

Jesus was made flesh, and the four Gospels narrate the details of his life. Certainly Paul was not discouraging the reading and study of Jesus’ gospel ministry, but what was his emphasis?

**Comment:** We do not even know what the man Christ Jesus looked like. Some of the Corinthians had walked with him, but they were no longer to think of Jesus as a human being, for he had been raised. Therefore, his doctrine, instruction, and example are the emphasis, not his physical appearance.

**Reply:** Although Paul did not specially express the thought here, he saw deeply the importance of the resurrected Christ, his new life. The Roman Catholic Church thinks of Jesus either as an immature babe in the lap of his mother or as dying on the Cross, that is, as the dead Christ on a crucifix. To the contrary, Paul said not only that we should consider Jesus as the risen Christ but also that the rise started with his baptism. The water was the symbol of his new life, the new creature, the development of the higher life, as illustrated by his ministry of 3 1/2 years.

As Christians, we should focus on what motivated Jesus. For example, he put less emphasis on his natural family and more on the Father and the Father's will, as exemplified by his walk (Matt. 12:46-50). Also, we are to esteem one another better than ourselves.

Not knowing a person after the flesh means that we recognize those who are in Christ as a New Creation. As far as possible, we try to detach our affection for the old creature, which may or may not have a positive influence on us, and view a person according to his commitment to serve Christ, as we also have done. Thus we are all in a new family, and all are in need of being taught and in need of growth.

Why did Paul bring in the thought "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more"? In a discussion many years ago, an individual felt that studies were too much oriented to service and witnessing activities. A response was that the Scriptures also speak of character development, and the Christian was likened to a three-legged stool, one leg being prayer, another being character development, and the third being works. The party who was leading the meeting belittled the study of the Gospels. The reason given was that "henceforth know we no man after the flesh ... [even] though we have known Christ after the flesh." The leader continued, "Those who study Jesus' life and conduct are out of focus, for attention should be more on doing service work for the truth." His answer was exactly the wrong reasoning. We should study the four Gospels, which give an account of our Lord's life, not only to see how and why he did and said certain things but to see the new creature in Christ. The Gospels purposely record nothing about Jesus' appearance, hair color, facial features, height, whether he smiled or gave a hearty handshake, etc., so that we will pay more attention to his words and teachings than to his outward characteristics. The only statement along this line is that "Jesus wept" near the end of his ministry in connection with raising Lazarus from the tomb. The Heavenly Father told us that man shall not live by bread alone but by *every word* that proceeds out of His mouth (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). And Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are not my own, but as the Father taught me, so I speak" (John 8:28 paraphrase). The apostles also spoke the Word of God. And so it is with the New Creation—we can perceive the thinking and actions of a new creature by the things that are written for our admonition.

The preceding is one reason why "henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Another reason is that Jesus is our perfect example. As disciples, we call ourselves Christians. Therefore, we have a personal responsibility to deal along spiritual rather than fleshly lines.

A third reason is conjecture, but we think it is reasonable. As stated in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, some in the class questioned whether Paul was an apostle because he was never present when Jesus gave his parables and sermons. They felt that in order to be an ambassador of Christ, Paul should have had a more personal acquaintance with him. He then told of his personal, private experience on the way to Damascus, when he saw Christ in a way that the

other apostles did not see him—as a bright light from the heavens. Imagine what being in the ecclesia in Corinth was like. Some liked to tell little details about Christ—what he looked like, what he wore, how he walked, etc. They described his outward appearance to endear themselves to the other brethren, but the Christian is to be more interested in what Christ *taught and did*. Those who described Christ and different incidents during his ministry provided information that is not in the Bible—as though they had *superior* and *more* information than the Apostle Paul. But these details were cosmetic and superficial garnishments. Therefore, we think Paul brought up this subject to scotch the teachings of those in Corinth who thought they were apostles. They were not appointed by God to be one of the Twelve. Now verse 16 takes on a deeper meaning, and we can see why Paul brought up the subject seemingly out of nowhere.

**2 Cor. 5:17** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Once we appreciate the truth and dedicate ourselves to serve the Lord, we have a new perspective on life. We begin to view everything from a different standpoint. For example, a career becomes just a means of earning a salary to provide things decent and honest in the sight of all men. We do not first pursue a career to see how high up the ladder we can go and then serve God, for such priorities are dangerous to the new creature. Consecration puts a new slant on everything we think and do, and all things are done to the best of our ability to please God. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

“If any man be in Christ [that is, if a man is consecrated], he is a new creature.” The depth of our consecration is determined by how deeply we sink our will into the will of God. The greater the depth, the more immersed we are.

When we consecrate, past sins are cast behind us. Of course we should try, as reasonably as possible, to clear matters of the past. Not only do we repent of our former sins, but we try to have a clean slate by making amends for any injuries we can assuage or cancel. Once we receive the robe of Christ’s righteousness, our sins are covered, but it is reasonable to expect that we should do what we can.

**2 Cor. 5:18** And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

**2 Cor. 5:19** To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Notice the emphasis on God in verses 18 and 19. Paul frequently showed the primacy of God, with Jesus being the one through whom we have access to the Father. The Father is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Spiritual gifts are ours if we ask for them in sincerity and in truth (James 1:5). In the beginning of our consecration, we are constrained because of Jesus’ life, ministry, and teaching. As we develop, we begin to see the Father as the Author, the Origin. We can then appreciate why Jesus so loved his Father that he committed his life to the ignominious death on the Cross. That love came from familiarity with the Creator. Hear the words of the Father through the prophet: “By his [prehuman] knowledge shall my righteous servant [Jesus] justify many” (Isa. 53:11). Jesus’ prehuman knowledge tided him over to go through the excruciating death on the Cross and still maintain his faith and perfect obedience toward God.

One of those who came from Jerusalem with a letter of commendation said he had been with Jesus, although the veracity of the statement is questionable. Paul was alive during Jesus’ ministry, but he was not a disciple and may have been elsewhere when Jesus was preaching in



Galilee and Jerusalem. The point is, if one was in Israel and had seen Christ, surely the Master was handsome, dignified, and majestic in appearance, but Jesus *exemplified* the Son of God by his message, deeds, and comportment. The false teaching element was trying to imitate Jesus' nobility. Imagine looking at Christ and then trying to enact his stature and appearance—exterior qualities! They were neglecting the kernel of the matter—Jesus' *message and principles of instruction*. They admired and gave priority to his external appearance (and that of others), whereas they should have paid attention to his message. Paul was denigrating those who talked about Christ after the flesh.

“God ... hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” Of course Paul was speaking, but the implication is that the “ministry of reconciliation” becomes our responsibility too as hearers of the Word. The ministry of reconciliation grows. First, we are the recipients of that ministry, and then, in appreciation, we reciprocate to the best of our ability.

**Q:** Does the term “ministry of reconciliation” also relate to the world of mankind?

**A:** Yes. The church at Corinth was composed of consecrated Jews and Gentiles, but there were also interested believers in attendance who had not yet taken the full step. Therefore, in addressing the consecrated, Paul chose his words carefully so that they would encourage the others to come into the body of Christ.

**Comment:** For verse 19, the NIV reads, “That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”

**Reply:** The reconciliation of the world is yet future, but Jesus has already paid the price and put the merit in the bank, where it is held in escrow, as it were.

“Not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The world is dead in trespasses and sins but is not in perdition (Second Death), from which there is no awakening. The world is guaranteed an awakening from the tomb, but what each person does with the resuscitation is another matter. A famous Scripture that many in the Christian world love to use is, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in[to] him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). There is a salvation at present, and there is also a future opportunity, which is usually omitted from the gospel message in the nominal system.

“All things are of God.” It was God who called us to, hopefully, be of the spiritual Bride of Christ. Jesus came to us, but he did so because the Father directed him. While Jesus said, “I knew you before you knew me,” so did God first know us. The reality is that God sent Jesus to call us. Usually the circumstance of the calling is peculiar to each of us. We realize that something miraculous happened whereby we got the truth in spite of all the evil and false doctrines surrounding those who seek after God.

What is the “ministry of reconciliation” that God has given to us? (1) God gave us the opportunity to consecrate and thus get life. (2) Out of appreciation, we want to be used in doing the same for others. Stated another way, we received the ministry of reconciliation, and now, if God so wills, we would like to benefit someone else by becoming a minister of reconciliation on God’s behalf and calling attention to the importance of Jesus Christ, whose death makes reconciliation possible.

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” In addition to the fact that we can be reconciled to God in the present life, there is also the hope that those who either never heard of Christ or heard but did not respond will have an opportunity for life under the better conditions of the Kingdom Age. The hope of restitution is part of the gospel message,

but the more important part is the privilege and opportunity to become identified with Christ in the present life.

**2 Cor. 5:20** Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Paul was saying, "As apostles, we have a reason to beseech and to be so earnest and zealous. Now that Christ is no longer on the earth as a literal man, we are his representatives, or ambassadors. Forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation can be obtained through Christ and his instruction." We can appreciate the feeling and heart that Paul put into the message in this epistle. His inner feelings come out more in this second epistle, as will be seen.

In contrast, the false teachers preached themselves, not Christ. Their attitude was, "We have a letter of commendation. We have seen Jesus." There was no urgency with regard to Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior. Incidentally, there are "Christian" sects, such as the Unitarian Church, that look on Jesus not as the Redeemer from sin but as a principled and noble leader.

The false teachers were trying to emulate the *man* Christ Jesus instead of the *new creature* Christ Jesus, who, in the days of his ministry in the flesh, taught and did certain things for our edification. They viewed him externally instead of internally (his motivations).

Notice that the word "you" is italicized in the King James and thus supplied twice in verse 20. The first part of the text should perhaps read, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [others] by us." In other words, the beseeching would be not of those already consecrated but of those who are still in the world.

The second part of the text should read, "We pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"; that is, we talk to the unconsecrated about Christ, saying, "Be ye reconciled to God." In witnessing, we should deflate our own importance and magnify the necessity for Jesus and his message.

The term "ambassadors for Christ" carries much responsibility. The Pastor placed considerable importance on this role. If we really feel that we are ambassadors for Christ, it should affect not only our inner man, the new creature, but also our outer person, for we are claiming to be followers of Christ. Having learned of Christ, we can speak with a little authority. Thus a certain amount of decorum is expected—in the workplace, at home, in the ecclesia—with regard to dress, appetite, and behavior. Qualities of modesty, humility, listening to others, and making ourselves approachable should be part of our character and conduct. Of course it takes time to develop these qualities. Without realizing it, many have probably forfeited their election as elders because of neglect along these lines. People say, "God does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart," but here Paul was saying, "As an ambassador for Christ, the new creature has a responsibility for modesty of behavior and dress." The following poem is appropriate:

I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day.  
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.  
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,  
Fine counsel is confusing, but example always clear.

**2 Cor. 5:21** For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

"That we might be made the righteousness of God in him." While Christ's merit covers the consecrated in the present life, so that they have a standing before God, we know that if they

are faithful unto death and become part of the Little Flock, that imputed righteousness will become *actual* righteousness on behalf of the world in the Kingdom. If faithful, this class, who now have justification by faith, will become the representatives of God's righteousness. In other words, if really appreciated, the loan of Christ's merit, while efficacious in covering our sins in the present life, will be the basis upon which we get actual righteousness as ambassadors in the Kingdom Age. Paul was saying that we should practice as ambassadors in the present life so that in the future life, we might be the real ambassadors, not just ambassadors of hope.

The Pastor almost invariably quoted verse 21 a little differently; namely, "For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be a *sin offering* for us, who knew no sin." Jesus, who knew no sin, was made a sin offering for us (and for the world). However, to use the term "sin offering" limits this Scripture in its application. When we think of Jesus as a sin offering, we see him as the sacrifice on the Brazen Altar in the Court. That sacrifice had a sweet, pleasant, fragrance—like a cooking aroma—but 90 percent of each sin offering was burned outside the Camp. Only a small fraction of the animal was offered on the Brazen Altar. The dung, hooves, hide, and hair were all burned without the Camp, causing an offensive odor. Therefore, if we leave the Word of God as stated in the King James, both thoughts are included. We can then say, yes, Jesus was made a sin offering in the Court and a stench outside the Camp. Numerous Scriptures then come to mind that we might otherwise overlook. For example, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). On the Cross, Jesus was treated as though he were a sinner. This aspect was prophesied, for "as Moses lifted up the [brazen] serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up [as a serpent upon the Cross]" (John 3:14). Back in the type, the vipers, the "fiery serpents," that bit the children of Israel were rather small but had powerful, deadly venom. Of the Israelites who were bitten, only those who looked on the serpent on the pole received a miraculous cure and did not die.

Now we will consider again the first half of verse 21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." While Christ was made a curse, he did not sin. He was not a sinner, but his experience was as though he were a sinner. To pay the Ransom price, Jesus had to die as a perfect man. To redeem Adam, who was perfect but sinned, Jesus had to not only be perfect, knowing no sin, but also experience what Adam experienced—the shame of nakedness. Adam hid behind a tree. The Logos, walking through the garden, representing God, called, "Adam, where are you?" Adam gave the excuse, "I hid behind the tree because I was afraid." After sinning, Adam and Eve sensed that they were naked. A perfect man for a perfect man was one perspective. The other perspective was to be an offset for sin. In other words, Jesus had to have both experiences. For example, Jesus' crown of thorns was an offset for Adam's being a king before he sinned. Seeing both perspectives gives a deeper appreciation for what Jesus did for us when he died on the Cross. Not only did he die as a perfect man, but he suffered great shame and humiliation—and so much so that he cried out in surprise, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The feeling of being forsaken was part of the penalty Adam experienced when he sinned. Adam experienced a separation from God when he disobeyed and ate of the fruit of the tree. Jesus did not anticipate that corresponding experience.

"For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This part of Paul's logic would have been powerful, bringing conviction to the hearers of how deplorable the sin in them was. On the day of Pentecost, Peter likewise gave a powerful sermon when he addressed devout Jews from the various provinces of Rome, saying "You have crucified the Son of God, the Savior, the very Messiah, whom you were looking for!" Peter spoke *bluntly* in that sermon, of which only a few words are preserved in Holy Writ, bringing conviction. These Jews were not at Calvary at the time of the Crucifixion—they did not put the nails in Jesus' hands and feet—but they were of the Jewish race, which had a responsibility. These hearing Jews were so convinced by Peter's sermon that they asked, "What should we do?" The sin of the Crucifixion was on them as a people. Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Thousands obeyed.

“Your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:22). The purpose of being convicted of sin is to bring repentance. The conviction is of short duration, but the joy should be for the rest of our Christian walk. The realization that past sins have been forgiven and that now, if we pray daily to the Lord for forgiveness, there is no unrighteousness he will not forgive, brings joy. Although the relationship starts with repentance, we are not to be repentant all our life but are to rejoice in the truth. Forgiveness is predicated upon repentance and reformation. From then on, the righteousness of God, supplied through Christ, is newness of life.

**2 Cor. 6:1** We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

**2 Cor. 6:2** (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

What did Paul mean when he said in verse 1, “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain”?

**Comment:** Paul was beseeching those who were already consecrated not to receive the grace of God in vain. Having consecrated, if we draw back and do not make our consecration full and sincere, we will not receive the prize—or, even worse, life at all.

**Reply:** Yes, that would be the main thrust, but Paul’s words were expressed in a way that the lesson can also apply to the unconsecrated. If individuals who have considerable knowledge about God, Jesus, and the plan do not go on to consecrate but draw back instead, they receive the grace of God in vain. Little clues here and there throughout the epistle suggest that Paul had a mixed audience.

Frequently, throughout this epistle, Paul commended many in the church at Corinth, but the implication is that a few individuals were not as responsive to his ministry as he would have liked. Being a little recalcitrant, they were in danger if they remained too long in that attitude. If they turned away from their consecration, they would lose all hope.

**Comment:** Another example of a mixed audience is Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

**Reply:** The lesson is one of expediency, when a person hears truth, to respond as quickly as possible and not to procrastinate, for then the devil’s birds come along and carry away the seed of truth. (See the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:3-6,18-21.) Many receive the truth with joy but then forget. This forgetting can be true of those who are not consecrated but are sympathetic to truth, and it can also be true of the consecrated, for they can slip away by not keeping the things always in remembrance (Heb. 2:1). If *now* is the day of salvation and we make our consecration *now*, we have to make our calling and election sure *now*, not in the next age. Many do not consecrate because they feel they cannot fulfill the requirements. They believe the truth, but they reason that they will get another opportunity in the Kingdom Age. They fail to realize that God was calling them, and they do not respond because they are debating on their *own* capabilities. But it is *impossible* for any of us to fulfill consecration vows in our own capabilities and strength. Only by exercising *faith* can we please God. He will give us the understanding and the power to overcome if we fully open our hearts and respond to Him. Of the 12 spies, only Caleb and Joshua brought back a favorable report, and the Israelites chose to believe the majority report of giants in the land. Many who debate consecration think of all the problems that lie ahead. The majority do not consecrate because they reason, “I do not think I can give up this or do that.” We should keep in mind, however, that the chief lesson of

verse 1 in regard to receiving the grace of God in vain applies to those *already consecrated*.

In verse 2, Paul was quoting from Isaiah 49:8, “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” Isaiah was speaking prophetically to Jesus, but in a secondary sense, Paul applied the text to the consecrated as prospective members of the body of Christ.

“(For he [God] saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation [the Gospel Age] have I succoured thee....” The use of past tense proves that verse 2 refers to those who are already consecrated. The verse gives an assurance: “I have accepted thee.” Paul brought in the Isaiah text to show that God can deal marvelously with an individual, and then the person can forget and go into a period of quiescence instead of being energized by the dealings. If the individual properly reflected on the matter, he would be active in the Lord’s service in some capacity.

When the parentheses are inserted as follows, the meaning of verse 2 is clearer. “(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee): *behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*” The consecrated know that the Lord previously heard them, but Paul was saying, “The Lord did not just bless you in the past, for He hears you *now*. Therefore, activate your faith. Be up and doing. Be workers together with him in seeing that the gospel message goes to others.” The point is that when we are moved to do something good and worthwhile, especially with regard to consecration, we should not procrastinate until “tomorrow,” for tomorrow never comes.

**Comment:** David also mentioned an “acceptable time.” “But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation” (Psa. 69:13).

**Reply:** Yes. There are additional Scriptures in the Psalms.

The nominal system uses verse 2 to justify the view that now is the *only* day of salvation. The belief is that if one does not accept the gospel in the present life, there is no further opportunity for salvation. Paul countermanded that type of reasoning in various ways. He referred to Isaiah 49:8, which was directed to the nation of Israel. God said to the natural seed, “If you accept my Word by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, you will be granted the opportunity of a special salvation.” Normally we think of this salvation being opened up at Pentecost, but an opportunity has existed ever since the Exodus. When the Israelites left Egypt and came into covenant relationship with God, they could have become a nation of priests and kings if they had pleased Him as a people (Exod. 19:5,6). However, during the 40 years in the wilderness, they forgot the Word of God and lacked implicit faith in His promises and thus forfeited the opportunity. Paul reasoned that the door was still open for other generations of the Jewish nation. And so it is today. The initial promise has remained open and exists up to the present time, although it is no longer exclusively proffered to the natural seed but is also open to the Gentiles. If any individual Israelite now accepts Christ, he will have the same opportunity of being blessed with this peculiar salvation to the high calling. What has been overlooked by both natural Israel and nominal spiritual Israel is that there are two opportunities of salvation, a spiritual calling in the Gospel Age and a natural calling in the Kingdom Age.

**2 Cor. 6:3** Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

**2 Cor. 6:4** But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

**2 Cor. 6:5** In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

Paul was urging the brethren to be active in their faith, and now he added, “[But] giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.” If the Corinthians were not zealous and active, they would miss out on the high calling and thus receive the grace of God “in vain.”

In verse 1, Paul used the pronoun “we,” the emphasis being on his ministry and on that of Timothy and Titus, who were outsiders coming in and trying to help the church at Corinth. In verse 3, Paul was saying that the three of them were not receiving the grace of God in vain, and neither should the Corinthians. He was careful not to give offense in whatever he did so that the ministry would not be blamed, even though some criticized him and found fault. For example, when he collected money from the Corinthians to help the brethren in Jerusalem, he suggested that they appoint an individual to accompany him. He did not want them to impute evil motives that he was acting for his own aggrandizement.

**Comment:** Paul spoke from personal experience.

**Reply:** Yes. Notice his powerful reasoning in verses 3-10. In giving the qualifications of a true minister of God, he kept repeating the prepositions “in” (verses 4 and 5), “by” (verses 6-8a), and “as” (verses 8b-10) and followed them with nouns that described his experiences. Not only did the varied prepositions break up the monotony, but Paul was a mastermind in his thinking and just *filled* with information.

**Comment:** Paul’s responsibility was sobering. “We are ambassadors for Christ ... giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed” (2 Cor. 5:20). Who could live up to that responsibility in filling up the afflictions of Christ that are left behind (Col. 1:24)?

**Reply:** Yes, Paul expressed the ideal. Of course we are imperfect, but as ambassadors for Christ in an alien country, we become a spectacle. When a person consecrates, the neighbors look even more carefully to see if he is walking according to his profession. Others are not ashamed or bashful about calling attention to a slip. Thus it becomes important, to the best of our ability, not to give offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be blamed.

The two words “blameless” and “faultless” are a study in themselves. “Faultless” means “without fault,” but “blameless” has a different signification. As imperfect creatures, we cannot always do the things of a perfect creature. However, we are not worthy of blame if we are really trying and are leaning on the merit of Jesus Christ to cover our sins. “There is none righteous [faultless], no, not [even] one [of the consecrated]” (Rom. 3:10). From the standpoint of being blameless, one’s sins are covered.

**Comment:** The Apostle Peter said, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]” (1 Pet. 1:15). One who is blameless fulfills this Scripture.

We are to be ministers of God “in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.” To be faithful in “much patience” implies fatigue. One’s patience can be worn to a frazzle, but perseverance in trying to help others pays off in the development of character. It is hard for a person who is impatient to deal sympathetically with others. Our judgment should be based on a person’s development. We do not put the head of a scholar or the understanding of principles on a baby. We deal with a babe as a babe, with a youth as a youth, with a teenager as a teenager, and with an adult as an adult. In other words, we make allowances for one’s development in the truth, and all are babes when they consecrate. A minister of reconciliation must have patience with the consecrated and make some allowance for their problems and try to help them. Sickness may be a factor, for example. A judge needs to know all of the facts, and in the

Kingdom Age, the facts will be known.

While all of these categories can be given a spiritual twist and made applicable to us today, to be really honest requires a soul-searching examination on the part of the minister of God. Even though there has been no physical persecution in this country in the Laodicean period thus far, there are mental battles and judgments. In these areas, the Scripture “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” is applicable even now (2 Tim. 3:12). In other words, those who are faithful to truth will have enemies who persecute in word and/or deed. Elsewhere Paul described these categories in more detail from a personal standpoint. For instance, he told how many times he received stripes. Paul was educating the Corinthians to understand how to properly judge a true minister of God. The judgments today are skewed with the result that people do not know how to judge what may be obvious character.

Paul was saying that in our various experiences, we should be “approving [proving] ourselves as the ministers of God” (verse 4). The disposition of the minister of God should be one of patient endurance both in our dealings with others and in God’s dealings with us; that is, we should try to control ourselves.

“Afflictions” would be bodily ailments and disease that are not the result of faithfulness in the truth. How do we regard our afflictions? Do we accept them as of the Lord, whether they are of a temporary or a permanent nature? Evidently, Paul was ill for a while with a fever, and he was afflicted with poor eyesight. He accepted the experiences and did not chafe under them. He rose above them, not allowing them to deter or subdue his ministry. We, too, should have patient endurance in all our bodily afflictions. One might be lame, for example. Our *attitude* in how we take an experience is important.

Patient endurance is also needed in “necessities.” There were times when Paul was hungry, and there were times when he was rich (abounded). He accepted each experience as of the Lord, whether much or little.

An example of Paul’s “distresses” was when he was not considered an apostle and was criticized by others. Mistreatment by the brethren caused him anguish and distress of spirit, but he learned to control himself up to a certain point.

“Stripes” referred to beatings Paul received from the unconsecrated, from persecutors in the world. “Imprisonments” also came from outsiders. An example of “tumults” occurred at Ephesus, where the mob chanted and yelled for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:28,34).

“Labours” would be Paul’s working with his own hands to make tents, which was not an easy job. Another example was writing epistles to help the brethren, which required much thought and energy and resulted in fatigue. Thus Paul physically relieved the brethren of a financial burden by supporting himself while also laboring in the Word.

“Watchings” were Paul’s care of the churches, which showed his anxiety over the welfare of the brethren. Not only did he expend energy in writing letters, but he diligently inquired about their spiritual welfare. He rejoiced when he received favorable information, and if he got distressing information, he tried to help the brethren in their need. His desire was for them to be faithful. Accordingly, we are to watch and pray both for ourselves and for others. With regard to “fastings,” Paul fasted frequently.

Thus Paul experienced discomfiture in various ways, but the spirit in which he received the experiences and his desire to be of help were commendable. The question is, How do we react? For example, when others differ with us, do we patiently try to reason with them? When Paul

met opposition, he could easily have gotten offended, saying, “I am an apostle. I will leave this place and go elsewhere.” Instead he stayed and patiently took the criticism in the hope of finding the faithful few. He was patient in his experiences because he wanted to serve the truth.

**2 Cor. 6:6** By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

**2 Cor. 6:7** By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

**2 Cor. 6:8** By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

Paul was now speaking in terms that the Corinthians could understand, even if they were not wholly spiritual but were carnally minded. The qualifications or evidences of a true minister of God are stated in simple, to-the-point language.

“Pureness” is purity in moral conduct. “Knowledge [of the Word of God]” refers to Paul’s carefulness in handling and teaching the Scriptures and his accuracy of interpretation.

“Longsuffering” pertains to opposition and misunderstanding. If a person does not have a spirit of bitterness but with a proper motive honestly differs with us because of a lack of understanding, we try to help him by taking the time to answer his criticisms and explain. As a result, his eyes are opened, and he is benefited. An opposite experience is where one is determined and adamant in his viewpoint and criticisms, and we know an explanation will not benefit him. However, even when the person persists in his disobedience or opposition and does not change his attitude, we are long-suffering for the sake of others who might benefit.

“Kindness” is manifested toward others. “By the Holy Ghost” should not be capitalized in this context, for the thought is “with a holy *attitude*.” (The definite article is not in the Greek, so the article “a” is proper.) We are to meet opposition with long-suffering and kindness, not rendering evil for evil but being patient with another’s teaching and having a spirit of holiness. The opposite would be a spirit of malice, wickedness, envy, bitterness, jealousy, etc.

“Love unfeigned” is a love that is genuine and honest and not hypocritical. Those who flatter and praise a person to his face and criticize him behind his back show an inconsistency of character. Frequently the individual is a person of authority, so others are polite and gracious when speaking with him, but they mutter afterwards. While brethren may not act in this manner with each other, the same principle can occur. For example, one may be gracious to another brother’s face and even flatter and honor him but actually be his enemy. This type of love is feigned, or put on. All of us should search our attitude, for we are all fallen by nature. Love is the supreme fruit we are trying to develop, and it is not based on emotion but on obedience to God and the principles of His Word. To be faithful, we have to love in the way He would have us love. From another perspective, “love unfeigned” is genuine love and concern for the welfare of the brotherhood in this “day of salvation” for the consecrated (verse 2).

**Q:** What should be our reaction if an ecclesia holds a “love feast” after a convention and one or more brethren present have violated Scripture by refusing to rebuke, reprove, or disfellowship one who has committed grievous, unrepented-of sin?

**A:** We should show a measure of reserve by not giving a hearty handshake or speaking exuberantly to the person or persons.

We are to approve ourselves ministers of God “by the word of truth.” Jesus said, “Sanctify



them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Therefore, in meeting the objections to his teachings, Paul answered the various arguments as far as possible with Scripture, the Word of God. He either did not use human reasoning or kept it to a bare minimum. In his first epistle, he said he was determined, when in their midst, not to speak with great (worldly) wisdom but to preach Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 1:20-24). He thus eliminated the Greek oratorical style of reasoning with the Corinthians and was more blunt and direct and backed up his statements with Scripture as much as possible. Of course sometimes it was necessary for him to say, “Doesn’t common sense tell you?” Paul spoke the wisdom of God.

“By the power of God” indicates that by the authority of the Word of God, we can speak with power. In the first epistle, Paul said, “I *command* you, as though I were in your presence, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 5:3,4 paraphrase). When necessary, he used the authority of his office to speak with power. It is often said that we should not raise our voice but should speak calmly and reason on a matter, but there are times when we must raise our voice in order to be faithful. Jesus did not always speak dispassionately, with no special emphasis, but sometimes spoke with animation.

“The armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” is like a shield. The sword is an offensive weapon, whereas the armor and the shield are for defense. Thus the expression means to make the truth our own as we try to develop a character pleasing to God. In developing that character, we become stronger and better able with the help of that part of the armor of God (Eph. 6:11-17). The mention of the right and left hands conveys the thought that we should use the armor ambidextrously. In hand-to-hand combat in ancient times, soldiers were frequently trained to use both hands to hold the shield as well as the sword. The reason was that if one lost or injured an arm in battle, his survival might depend on the ability to change hands. Accordingly, the minister of God, in connection with the armor of righteousness being on both hands, should be able both to speak the correct understanding and to show the error of the other view. The right hand enunciates the proper teaching of Scripture, thus showing favor, the “pro” side, and the left hand points out the fallacy of the opposition’s reasoning, thus showing disfavor, the “con” side.

“By honour and dishonour.” Any true minister (servant) of God will be appreciated by some brethren but not by others. In other words, there will be brethren both for and against him. Therefore, it is not a good sign if either everyone or no one appreciates a brother or sister. An elder should be esteemed for faithfulness in the Word, and he should be disesteemed if he handles the Word of God deceitfully.

“By evil report and good report.” Although similar to “honour and dishonour,” which is done *to one’s face* and thus is more direct, this characteristic concerns words *about* someone. A true minister of God experiences both evil reports and good reports. To never have had a bad report indicates a diluted message.

“As deceivers, and yet true.” The characteristics of verse 8—by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true—are all somewhat along the same line. The word “deceivers” implies bad motives, a wrong heart condition. Not only will faithful ministers of the Word be honored and dishonored and have favorable and unfavorable reports, but they will be accused of having wrong motives.

Consider the contrasts, or appositions, in verse 8: “[1] By honour and dishonour, [2] by evil report and good report: [3] as deceivers, and yet true.” While we know we are honest and trying to do God’s will, those who behold us may misunderstand. They see our efforts in a completely different light and thus misconstrue them. Even the Lord Jesus Christ, who *perfectly* obeyed God, was misunderstood in many things that he did. For instance, because he was young, the attitude was, “Does he know more than the scribes and Pharisees, who are aged

and have studied for years and years?” Many felt he was an upstart and proud, and they did not like the fact that he was strong and positive in his statements. However, the trumpet of God should be blown with definition, not with uncertainty. A lot has to do with the heart condition of the beholder.

These verses help us to see the experiences of a true messenger of Christ, particularly as exemplified by the Apostle Paul’s own life. Paul was referring primarily to the experiences of himself and those closest to him. Inferentially, he was telling the Corinthians that if they were faithful, they would have somewhat similar experiences themselves.

The last phrase in verse 8, “as deceivers, and yet true,” should be the first part of verse 9 to bring it into harmony with the prepositions.

**2 Cor. 6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;**

**2 Cor. 6:10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.**

Verses 9 and 10 seem like a list of contradictions, but they are not. For example, “as unknown [by the brotherhood], and yet well known [by the angels, Jesus Christ, and God]” is not a contradiction. Although others knew about Paul, he was not recognized as a faithful child of God. Warnings were sent in advance to watch out for him because he was regarded as a troublemaker. Even in Corinth, Jews lay in wait to seize him, but Paul evaded them. Paul was unknown in the sense that he was not of the synagogue. He was unknown in the favorable sense but well known in the unfavorable sense by the public. The Jews who came with letters of commendation to serve the Corinthians and who had seen Jesus and thus claimed to personally know him looked down on Paul. They considered themselves to be authorized and Paul to be unauthorized.

With regard to “as dying, and, behold, we live,” the thought is that in proportion as we are responsible for the death of the old creature, for the perishing of the outward man, the new creature becomes increasingly successful and is built up. We are laying down our lives for the brethren. On another occasion, Paul was stoned and left for dead until the Lord awakened him.

“As chastened, and not killed.” From the literal standpoint, Paul was flogged and beaten but not killed, whereas many people died from receiving stripes. In the figurative sense, many regarded Paul’s experiences as punishments from God, but he did not let misunderstandings and sufferings discourage him. Paul was very much alive in that his ministry was not deterred in the least. He remained active in spite of what others thought of him. The principle is that if we are rightly exercised when chastened and disciplined, we grow stronger.

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” For example, Paul suffered with other Christians in their experiences. He agonized over their spiritual development, praying and fasting for them in his grief, sorrow, and concern, yet inwardly he rejoiced. In other words, he did not rejoice over Christians who were going astray, but he rejoiced over his own relationship with the Lord.

The old man that is denied the pleasures of this world is sorrowful. The old heart is exceedingly wicked and deceitful, so the old creature feels the pain, but the new creature rejoices in overcoming or suffering for Christ. When a Christian recognizes that he has been faithful in a certain situation, even though it brought sorrow, he sees the value of the experience and rejoices. Thus the rejoicing is an attitude. The new creature is to be given the priority.

**Comment:** We do not feel joy at all times, but we can “count it all joy” (James 1:2). Christian joy

does not necessarily mean that we always have a happy expression on our face. We look forward to the day when we will be relieved of all sorrow in the sense of distressful things that happen.

**Reply:** Paul said, “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

“As poor, yet making many rich.” This expression is an anomaly too, for how can we make someone rich if we are poor? Paul was talking about two different levels—poor according to the world’s standard in earthly possessions, yet making others rich in spiritual things. Although poor in this world’s goods, he made others spiritually rich. He sacrificed earthly reputation, as did Jesus. Paul could have been recognized as a great teacher, but instead of studying to be a renowned dignitary, he resorted to the meek and the humble.

At times in his life, Paul was poor. For example, he lost all of his possessions in a shipwreck. At the end of his life, he apparently came into money, as manifested by the way he was treated as a prisoner in Rome. When arrested under Nero, he was placed under house arrest, where he could have guests, give lectures, and conduct studies. Prior to consecration, he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and he purchased Roman citizenship at a great price. Therefore, at both the beginning and the end of his ministry, Paul was evidently a man of means. When he became a Christian, this one who had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees was considered a heretic and lost his associates. He had ups and downs, knowing how to be abased and how to abound from both material and religious standpoints (Phil. 4:12).

“As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” In his first letter, Paul said, “All things are yours” (1 Cor. 3:21-23). Even death and life are the Christian’s. The principle is that godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6). The Christian is satisfied with the meager things he has. When he looks into store windows and sees all the goodies, or looks at nature, he is not jealous. He gets pleasure in seeing these things but never thinks he should possess them. Instead he is laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20).

As will be noticed, the appositions in verses 9 and 10 are “as ... yet” combinations. (If the “yet” is not expressed, it is implied.)

As unknown, yet well known	As dying, yet living
As chastened, yet not killed	As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing
As poor, yet making many rich	As having nothing, yet possessing all things

These categories can also be considered from the standpoint of all the consecrated rather than just Paul. For example, “as unknown, yet well known” indicates that we are unrecognized nobodies, yet we have the opportunity to inherit the high calling. Our experience is unique. The contrast goes back and forth. Those who behold us misconstrue what they see and do not realize that even if we sorrow, we do not sorrow to the extent that others do who have no hope. With our sorrow, we have the hope that eventually conditions will turn out all right.

The attitude in which we experience the providences that come into our life—sicknesses, accidents, persecutions for righteousness’ sake, etc.—is one of hope and encouragement, for even if we are chastened for wrongdoing, at least God is dealing with us as sons. He loves us and is trying to correct us with disciplinary chastening. Paul used not only rhythmic reasoning but brevity. His effective method of short, abrupt, to-the-point, clear, sharp reasoning goes into our memories in a more focused manner than verbosity.

The Apostle Paul was so brilliant in his reasoning that he could have excelled as an orator, but he purposely refrained. In his first epistle, he said to the Corinthians, “You are looking for an

orator—for someone with flowery words who compliments you, speaks honeyed words, and has a wonderful vocabulary—but I would rather speak just a few words about Christ on the Cross, which is a stumbling block to many, than philosophize on Scripture.” In another place, he said, “I have the ability to speak in many tongues, so I could flaunt them in front of you. But I would rather speak five words with simplicity than 10,000 words that are mechanical and meaningless.” Paul intentionally curbed his exceptional capabilities. He felt that the terse, abrupt manner used here in chapter 6 was far more effective for those who had a receptive heart and wanted to retain the instruction. Many people like to be emotional and dramatic in delivering speeches, but the words do not always match.

**2 Cor. 6:11** O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

**2 Cor. 6:12** Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

Verses 11 and 12 are emotional. Earlier Paul said he was encouraged by the way the Corinthians received his advice, instruction, and counsel. He had asked for drastic measures, and their wholehearted compliance was deeply gratifying. Sometimes when advice is given, the recipients are robbed of acting of their own initiative, but the Corinthians were so lacking in understanding that their wholehearted response to Paul’s instruction was like acting on their own initiative. Thus Paul was giving the brethren credit for what they had done predicated on little understanding. All that Paul, Titus, and Timothy did was in the Corinthians’ best interest and because Paul loved them.

“Our mouth is open unto you.” Paul spoke confidentially to the Corinthians in a manner that was approachable. He felt relaxed in their presence, and he hoped that they, in turn, felt relaxed and open toward him. For example, he complimented the Bereans for not just accepting everything he said. Instead they received his teaching with humility and an open mind, and then went home and searched the Scriptures to see if his advice harmonized with the Word of God. Here Paul said he felt at liberty to speak to the Corinthians. He hoped they would listen to him with an open mind, an honest heart, and humility and then reason upon his instructions.

“Our heart is enlarged.” Since Paul was using an editorial “our,” he could have said, “My heart is enlarged,” which was really the case. However, he wanted the Corinthians to see that not only he but also those who cooperated with him in this ministry of danger, suffering, and want were compatriots. He generously included the others. Paul was compassionate toward the Corinthians, yearning for their prosperity in Christ, hoping they would make their calling and election sure. Therefore, he tried to use pithy words to help them remember.

“Ye [Corinthians] are not straitened in us [in me, Paul], but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” Paul’s concern, love, and labor on their behalf were not appreciated by some in the class. Although he labored hard and sacrificed for them, these individuals were not responsive. One of the problems was that they did not recognize him as an apostle. In the first epistle, he went into great detail about his sufferings in connection with preaching the gospel of Christ. Not only did the persecutions and deprivations not discourage him from continuing on, but Paul used this list as a proof of his apostleship. The element that did not recognize him as an apostle was a little nervous, for they knew that he had power, but they were critical because he had not seen Jesus at his First Advent. Later he said, “Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you” (2 Cor. 13:3). Even after they received the first epistle, doubts lingered. Thus the more he labored, the less they seemed to appreciate his ministry because of the quandary that existed in their minds.

**Comment:** In 2 Corinthians 12:15, Paul said, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”

The word “straitened” means “narrowed” here. Though the hearts of this minority element were not enlarged and receptive to what Paul was saying, even the majority in the class needed to be informed, for they did not fully realize the love he had for them. They were narrow-minded in their perception of Paul because of bigotry along several lines, including his appearance—his height, weak eyes, and baldness. While he had terrific knowledge, he did not seek to win them over by flattery, show, and other superficial methods. Therefore, Paul was saying, “Your heart is not enlarged toward me, but my heart is greatly enlarged toward you. I look at you with a different perspective than you look at me. Some of you look on me with askance, and many do not realize that my great sacrifices show how much I love you.” For one thing, since they knew about his poor eyesight, they should have considered the length of his two epistles and the concentration, time, and attention that went into them. To even get the parchment was difficult and expensive. All of the factors, let alone the content of the letters, were evidences of Paul’s love for them. They were “straitened” in their “own bowels” in not accepting him.

**2 Cor. 6:13** Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

The supplied word “my” should be omitted. “(I speak as unto children,) be ye also enlarged.” The response of the majority of the Corinthians was favorable, so Paul was saying, “Continue in well doing. Be ye enlarged.” He wanted the spiritual fetus in the womb to grow naturally in preparation for the spiritual birth.

**Comment:** The RSV reads, “In return—I speak as to children—widen your hearts also.”

**Reply:** Paul’s heart was enlarged toward the Corinthians; he freely spoke to them out of his heart. In response to his love and concern for them, he hoped they would reciprocate by responding in similar fashion as a son would to his father. He hoped there would be an open line of communication between them with free interchange of thought and instruction.

In verse 13, Paul was saying, “Consider that with me, the situation is the opposite. As your father in understanding, I speak to you as unto children.” Paul was a mature individual, and he was trying to say, “When I speak strongly, my instruction is for your good. I speak to you as my children. Your hearts should also be enlarged.” If they would regard Paul as a father in understanding and concern, then their hearts would be enlarged like his.

**2 Cor. 6:14** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

**2 Cor. 6:15** And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

**2 Cor. 6:16** And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Paul gave sound advice—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”—and then categorized the unbelievers as infidels, those who were living in unrighteousness, and idol worshippers. But if the consecrated were already unequally yoked, he was not advising them to forget their marital responsibilities by loosing themselves to do colporteur work and preach as if they were single. Paul was speaking to brethren who were possibly considering marriage. It was foolish to allow themselves to be attracted solely on an emotional basis without giving consideration to the new creature. A new creature who wanted to marry should be compatibly yoked with another new creature. When someone consecrated deliberately marries someone

who is not consecrated, the marriage often becomes shipwrecked. “Be ye not unequally yoked” can also be stated in a positive fashion: “Be ye equally yoked.” Being equally yoked is a more balanced marriage.

**Q:** Does being equally yoked apply to fellowship as well as to marriage?

**A:** Yes, it applies to any close relationship, marriage being the closest. For example, it is unwise for one who is consecrated to become yoked in a business relationship with one who is not consecrated. Paul was using sanctified common sense.

**Comment:** Paul’s admonition to not be unequally yoked is often minimized as “advice that we can take or leave.” But the seriousness of what he was saying is indicated by his subsequent words: “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” And verse 17 adds, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.”

**Reply:** Yes, he was not simply giving “advice” but was stating a commandment. The central core of his advice pertains to the marriage contract, but the principle is broader to include other matters of life. As far as possible, the Christian should try to stay separate from the world.

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial [another name for Satan]?” The Corinthians must have had some familiarity with the word *belial*, as names for the Adversary usually have a signification. In the Greek, *belial* means “senselessness” or “worthlessness.” To use as an illustration, young people today have rock music for entertainment, but that type of music is senseless confusion. Belial represents the Adversary in the sense that he entertains his followers according to the flesh. They become addicted to this type of pleasure so that it is like a drug which leads to *progressively worse* senseless behavior. Mesmerized and intoxicated by this spirit, they become a son of Belial. The music, singing, repetitious words and phrases, flashing lights, beat, and dancing are “belial,” the god or the pleasure of reckless abandonment. “Belial” is the New Testament translation of the god Baal, and in back of Baal is Satan.

In an unequally yoked marriage, the unconsecrated spouse is more subject to these influences. The danger is that the unbeliever will lead the believer into such practices. “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” This language is strong.

**Comment:** The Israelites were commanded to be separate from other peoples. The principle of separation was given to the nation in regard to not marrying foreign wives. After the return from Babylon in 536 BC, Ezra commanded the Israelites to put away the strange (heathen) wives they had married in captivity.

**Reply:** What a strong leader and character Ezra must have been for the nation to obey in this matter! Generally speaking, he has been underestimated in favor of Nehemiah, but Ezra had to do the more distasteful things. His course of reproof would have been utterly unpopular, but the people obeyed him. Evidently, the element that returned to Israel, forsaking Babylon and going into the land of ruins, had strong characters. Therefore, they were willing to go even further and cut off all ties to the heathen. In addition, Ezra was largely responsible for codifying the Old Testament. The books of the Bible were separate until he compiled them into one canon. When he found the writings in the archives of Babylon, he took them out of oblivion and had them published, as it were, for the benefit of his own people.

**2 Cor. 6:17** Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

**2 Cor. 6:18** And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

“Wherefore come out from among them.” The Christian is to come out, or separate, from worldly associations he had prior to consecration. These could include false religion and loose living, for example. However, verse 17 could be misunderstood. Paul was not saying that the marriage yoke should be broken. Nevertheless, as stated in the first epistle, if a believer was yoked to an unbeliever prior to consecration, there was an allowance for a separation done on a relatively amicable basis. Spiritually speaking, at the end of the age, “wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate” can apply to coming out of Babylon.

“Be ye separate, saith the Lord [Jehovah], and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you.” Here we can see the close relationship of God as our Heavenly Father. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him by Jesus Christ (James 1:17).

“Touch not the unclean thing” can mean several things. For instance, it can be unclean habits. We are to look ahead and make straight paths for our feet. If we see a murky, muddy situation, we should walk around it. In staying on the straight and narrow way, the new creature is to be careful not to submit to harmful influences. From a natural standpoint, if a person wants to give up smoking, he should avoid, as far as possible, a smoke-filled room. And an individual who is giving up drinking should avoid any closeness to the bar. The new creature should set his own rules and regulations as to how to best keep a safeguard. Blinders are put on a horse so that he is not distracted from the route ahead. In other words, we are to stay focused on the straight and narrow path of God’s will. To do this requires a lot of effort, but every bit of that struggle is pleasing to God. In the effort of trying to separate ourselves from harmful influences, we draw nearer and nearer to God. The ongoing reciprocal principle is, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). As we try to please God as new creatures, He is very touched and will reward us in some way. The “separation” costs something, but the Heavenly Father thinks of the individual as a son or a daughter.

Not only is the Christian to separate himself from the unclean thing, but obedience brings the reward of closer fellowship and communication as “a Father” to a child. “I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” The mention of “sons and daughters” is very tender. Elsewhere Paul likened himself to a father. “As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:11,12). Paul was saying to the Corinthians, “O how our mouth and our heart are open unto you. I would that you respond similarly. If you do, you will get the benefit of a closer communication with Jehovah based on the Scripture ‘Come out from among them, ... and I will [then] ... be [as] a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters’” (2 Cor. 6:11,13,17,18).

**Q:** In the expression “touch not the unclean thing,” what is the thought of “touch not”?

**A:** The Greek word is used in several ways in the New Testament according to context. Essentially, it can mean to literally touch, to figuratively touch, or to embrace. Here Paul was saying, “Do not embrace that which is unclean; separate yourself from what you previously had the desire to cling to.”

Verse 18 is lovely from the standpoint that Jehovah, the Lord Almighty, is a *Father* to the consecrated. Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ, but Jesus is an apostle of God. The expression “sons and daughters” (male and female) is also nice.

**Comment:** Paul gave a lot of correction, but now he summed up in such a tender way. God

would be their Father if they would hearken to the instructions.

**Reply:** Not only were the Apostle Paul and Jesus Christ concerned, but also the Heavenly Father. Verse 18 is another way of saying, “The Father himself loveth you” (John 16:27).

Paul said earlier that his attitude toward the Corinthians was that of a father, but here he was showing that God is the Father in the highest sense. It is permissible to describe another person as “fatherlike,” but God is the real Father.

**2 Cor. 7:1** Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Verse 1 refers to the promises at the end of the previous chapter; namely, God is the Father of those who come to Him, He is concerned for His children, nothing can hinder Him from doing what He wants, and the Church is the “temple of the living God.” The Phillips translation, which takes liberty in using more understandable words, captures the thought: “With these promises ringing in our ears, dear friends, let us keep clear of anything that smirches body or soul. Let us prove our reverence for God by consecrating ourselves to him completely.”

Paul advised the Church to perfect holiness in both body and spirit. As was said centuries ago, we are like the lame man with the withered hand. We cannot perfect ourselves in the present life, but we can reach out for or toward perfection, toward Jesus. Just as the lame man reached out his hand and it became whole, so it is with us in our infirmities, even after consecration. If we diligently strive to do God’s will, His will is perfected more and more in us. In proportion as we stretch forth in our desire to obey the apostle’s counsel on holiness in flesh and spirit, we will be helped by God’s Spirit to attain more and more toward that goal, or objective. Although it is impossible to perfect holiness in our own strength, we can strive to do it.

“Filthiness of the flesh” refers to our *outward* imperfections, such as appearance and deeds, which others can see. “Filthiness of the ... spirit” is *within* and hence cannot be seen. Jesus said, “Out of the *abundance* of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). If a person is given to filthy thinking, that trait will be manifested because of its abundance, whereas some infractions occur only occasionally, are secretly done, or cannot be seen. The cleansing from all filthiness is a process.

Trying to perfect holiness is a lifetime effort. In examining us, the Lord observes our efforts in this direction. If we strenuously attempt to obey His instructions, our relationship with Him will be closer and our understanding will increase. Contrition when we make mistakes, as well as the deeds themselves, is a factor in making our calling and election sure. “Perfecting holiness in the [reverential] fear of God” is a process.

**Comment:** When a serious subject is being considered, it is wrong to interject humor or jesting.

**Reply:** Yes, the improper use of humor is distracting and can change the nature of the study, undercutting the atmosphere. Humor has its place but should not be used inappropriately.

**2 Cor. 7:2** Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

**2 Cor. 7:3** I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

Paul’s mathematical mind is again seen in verse 2. Three times he used the words “no man.” “We have wronged *no man*, we have corrupted *no man*, we have defrauded *no man*.” He was



trying to convey a tremendous amount of information in as few words as possible. The implication is that Paul had been falsely accused, and now he was defending himself.

Verse 2 reads as follows in the RSV: “Open your hearts to us; [for] we [Paul, Timothy, and Titus] have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.” And the word “together” is inserted in verse 3: “to die together and to live together.”

The end of verse 3 can be paraphrased as follows: “You are in our hearts to die for, and if we live, we want to live for you.” If Paul did not deace but was spared to live longer, he would gladly live and suffer on behalf of the Corinthians. He was totally focused on their spiritual welfare. He was deeply involved in their spiritual growth and progress in the truth.

Paul seems to have been saying, “I am so appreciative of your heeding my advice and taking the right stand on the fornication issue by putting out that wicked man [1 Corinthians 5] that I would live and die in your midst for the rest of my ministry, if that were God’s will.” As far as his heart and feelings were concerned, he would gladly have sacrificed his life and died in their midst on their behalf, serving them, but duty, a higher service, called him to other places. What a remarkable statement to make!

Just as he was strong and authoritative in giving advice in the first letter, sternly admonishing the Corinthians, so now, after they had taken the proper course, he just as affirmatively stated his joy. He spoke with strength in a loving and commendatory way. He had some of the characteristics of the apostles Peter, John, and James in his thinking and actions; that is, he was impulsive, loving, and wise along practical lines, respectively.

**Comment:** Paul was saying, “We have opened our hearts to you, so why not reciprocate and open your hearts to us?” It is good to see how much Paul cared for those who had committed their life to Christ. We, too, should feel a sense of loss and sorrow if one leaves our midst and abandons present truth.

**2 Cor. 7:4** Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

**2 Cor. 7:5** For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

Paul had started out from Ephesus, but instead of sailing from Ephesus to Corinth direct, which was the southern route, he took the more roundabout northern route up the coast of Asia Minor to the seaport of Troas, where the Lord blessed his ministry. From Troas, he went to Macedonia, of which Philippi was the chief city. Paul had expected Titus to come to him earlier. Evidently, when Titus did not come to Asia Minor to bring the news, there was an agreement as to what route Paul would take so that he could be intercepted and thus get the news of Corinth before he arrived there. Accordingly, Titus came to Paul in Macedonia. Timothy was sent to Corinth earlier, but Titus seemed to have a more successful rapport with the brethren there. The Corinthians had a greater affection for Titus as the representative of Paul, whereas Timothy was held in higher esteem by the apostle.

If the apostles had not been able to do miracles, they would not have been recognized as apostles. If their ministries had been based on just their pure message *without the authority to back up their words with great signs and wonders*, they would not have been successful. Even if Jesus Christ himself had not done many marvelous works in conjunction with his ministry, his wisdom alone would not have carried as much weight down through the centuries.

“Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you.” Paul praised the

Corinthian brethren where he could. He praised and complimented when actions merited such words. Why did he add, “I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation”?

**Comment:** Titus informed Paul that the Corinthians had taken the correct action against the unrepentant fornicator.

**Reply:** Yes. Also, by example, Paul showed the importance of suffering for Christ and being in want. Even though he felt the sufferings, he counted it a privilege to suffer for Christ. By inference, he was saying that the Corinthians should do the same and not exalt as leaders those who had pleasing personalities but did not suffer for Christ. It is enjoyable to talk to brethren who are sweet and affable, but nice dispositions in themselves are not a proof of spirituality. Neither is oratorical ability necessarily a proof of one’s relationship with the Lord. All of Paul’s “down” experiences were really “plus” experiences, or credits.

“For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.” Even the great Apostle Paul had fears within and fightings without. What were some of his outer fightings? He was openly opposed and persecuted by Jews, Gentiles, and false brethren. Also, he had physical discomforts, including a sickness nigh unto death in Asia Minor that briefly affected his physical strength, body, and thinking, so that he became disconsolate in spirit and “downcast” (verse 6, RSV).

Paul was not immune to feelings. At the time of the early Church, Greek philosophers included the Stoics, who did not show any pain or distress. They believed that a wise man should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief. Not only did they get themselves hyped up into a condition where they had no feelings at all, but they taught that others should likewise get into this state. An illustration along another line is the state of Nirvana, which is achieving a blank mind by supposedly being in a paradise condition. Of course one is especially vulnerable to suggestions by the Adversary when the mind is vacant. Jesus pointed out the danger of demonic suggestion by teaching about a “house” that is “empty, swept, and garnished” (Matt. 12:44,45). The house must be filled with new furniture lest “the last state of that man is worse than the first.” Paul was saying that in suffering untold things, he was not a stoic.

“Within were fears.” What inner fears did Paul have? For one thing, he did not consider himself to have apprehended the prize—to have proven faithful unto death—until the *end* of his life (Phil. 3:13). He warned others not to boast as if they had put off the armor, for in the present life, the Christian should always feel he is in a fight (Eph. 6:13). In addition, he might have feared that the technique of his ministry was not the best or the wisest, and perhaps he was concerned that his advice to the Corinthians could have been presented better. In other words, he feared that the brethren at Corinth might not react favorably and obey. Proof that these were his thoughts is the fact that as soon as he learned of their obedience, his spirits were lifted, and he regarded the news as God’s answer to the needs of his present struggling circumstance. He might have feared whether he was properly conducting his ministry, let alone his own personal salvation. Hearing the news boosted his morale, for then he knew not only that the advice he had given was rightly received but also that God had blessed him. In other words, it was like a twofold commendation—of his method and of God’s dealing with him. The news from Titus provided both comfort and assurance.

**Comment:** With Jesus, Paul, or any other Christian, to be considered a blasphemer or an unfaithful minister of God is an unpleasant experience.

**Reply:** Yes, ups and downs are part of every Christian’s experience.

**2 Cor. 7:6** Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

**2 Cor. 7:7** And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

“Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down [that is, the downcast], comforted us by the coming of Titus.” The arrival of Titus was comforting to Paul, who had been longing patiently for him. With Paul feeling that the burden, or care, of all the churches was on his shoulders, we can appreciate how anxious he was to hear from Titus what the results were with the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:28).

Titus told of the Corinthians’ earnest desire, mourning, and fervency of mind toward Paul’s ministration to them. In the first epistle, Paul had said with regard to tolerating the presence of the sinner in their midst, “Your glorying is not good” (1 Cor. 5:6). Instead of glorying, they should have been *mourning*. First, the brethren had to see that they were wrong, for if they were not in a contrite attitude, they could not begin to make steps of progress and retrieval. Before they listened to Paul’s counsel, they had to see that their glorying was wrong. The majority of the Corinthians heeded Paul’s advice and saw that he was a true minister of God. Likewise, if we realize we have a wrong view of an important subject and are sorry, we should appreciate the one whom God used to point out the wrong, open our eyes, and give us understanding. Most of the Corinthians now appreciated Paul’s ministry as that of an apostle, and they had a fervent mind toward him.

Evidently, too, Titus had a rather upbeat disposition. When someone of that nature comes into another’s presence, the atmosphere becomes buoyant and cheerful. The good news he brought from Corinth was particularly comforting to Paul, who not only rejoiced when Titus came but “rejoiced the more.” Paul was twice as happy, as it were.

Initially, the Corinthians were pleased with Paul’s ministry because he founded the class, but they had a change of mind when others came in and demeaned his ministry. Their respect for him tended to diminish because of the influence of these others in their midst. When Paul’s first letter arrived, the majority once again esteemed him as an apostle and true servant of God.

“He [Titus] was comforted in you [in his visit to the Corinthians].” Paul was downcast because of his own experiences, but he rejoiced to hear from Titus the good news about the Corinthians and their concern for him. Paul then knew that his ministry had been meaningful to them.

The Corinthians’ “mourning” could have been of two types—(1) their repentance and (2) their concern for Paul because of the persecutions they had heard he was undergoing. Their “fervent mind” toward him especially boosted his spirit, so that he “rejoiced the more.” When a person is in a “down” period, there is a greater contrast when the “up” period comes than if he just lives a placid life. The experience is more memorable.

**2 Cor. 7:8** For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

At first, verse 8 seems to be a contradiction: “I do not repent, though I did repent.” The point is that Paul had some second thoughts as to the wisdom he had used in his stern first letter, but now he rejoiced and no longer had any regrets, for the desired results were achieved. He had expostulated and given the Corinthians a tongue-lashing and commanded them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to take action. Subsequently, he questioned the propriety of the way he had expressed the advice, asking himself, “Did I handle the matter correctly?” But now, having heard the results, he was assured not only that what he had done was right but that he had done it in the proper manner.

**Comment:** The meaning is clearer in the RSV, which uses the word “regret” instead of “repent.” “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while.”

**Reply:** Christians sometimes have a similar experience, with second thoughts about a letter they mailed. No matter how a subject is stated, it can be misunderstood at times.

Paul was happy that the sorrow produced by his first letter was only temporary (“for a season”). Because the brethren rectified the matter by following his counsel, the sorrow was removed. Stated another way, the sorrow was constructive, for Paul’s instruction was helpful and the Corinthians obeyed it.

In verses 8-11, the words “sorry,” “sorrow,” and “sorrowed” are used eight times. Observing this repetition helps us to understand what Paul was saying. He provided a great deal of information with brevity of words.

**2 Cor. 7:9** Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

Paul rejoiced not in the Corinthians’ sorrow but in the results, and he was glad he had sent the letter. Of course there were other discouraging moments, but as of that moment, the ending was happy. God blessed Paul with an assurance that he had done the right thing. However, the ultimate value in the final analysis was another matter, for the obedience of others was in the hands of Providence. More information is given later on in this second epistle.

“That ye might receive damage by us in nothing.” Sometimes a letter is carefully written and meant for good, but with human nature being what it is, the wording can be inadvertently garbled and even taken the opposite way by the recipient. Paul rejoiced that everything worked out all right, for he certainly had not intended to damage the Corinthians in any way. His desire was to recover and develop them as new creatures.

**2 Cor. 7:10** For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

“Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation ... but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” There are two types of sorrow: (1) godly sorrow, which brings repentance, and (2) worldly sorrow, which brings death. To determine which type of sorrow is being experienced, we see that sorrow has three aspects:

1. *Cause*—what produced the sorrow?
2. *Characteristics*—what characterizes the sorrow?
3. *Consequences*—what are the results or effects?

*Worldly* sorrow is caused by the loss of fame, money, friends, business, health, or natural family; by the failure to achieve a worldly goal; etc. In other words, it is a *personal* loss. In contradistinction, *godly* sorrow is caused by displeasing God in some manner and/or the fear of not making one’s calling and election sure. It is a loss along *spiritual* lines.

*Worldly* sorrow is characterized by peevishness, anger, fretfulness, malice, envy, bitterness, etc. The disappointment is manifested in outward social behavior. Others can see that the individual is disturbed. *Godly* sorrow is characterized by repentance. The individual feels a loss in his relationship with God and thus wants and makes efforts to come into closer contact with Him. The person expresses the desire for forgiveness either privately or publicly (to the brethren), or both. In one way or another, the desire for rectification “worketh repentance.”

The consequence, or end, of *worldly* sorrow is death through sickness, degradation of morals and character leading to a premature death, or suicidal tendencies. In one way or another, worldly sorrow leads to destruction. The effect, or end, of *godly* sorrow is fellowship with God and salvation—in other words, life. Notice how mathematical this subject is: worldly sorrow ends in death; godly sorrow leads to repentance and life.

Both Judas and Peter were sorry, but by contrasting them, we have examples of worldly sorrow and godly sorrow, respectively. Judas realized he had done wrong, he manifested some sorrow, and he tried to return the money, but the startling thing is that he did not go *directly to Jesus* and ask forgiveness. Because the one he betrayed was Jesus, he should have made an attempt to contact the Master and ask his forgiveness. Instead, in a roundabout way, he went to the priests, but the damage had already been done. After Judas had betrayed Jesus, what good was done by returning the money? That act was not restitution or repentance, for he did not go to the one he had wronged and try to make amends. Judas felt he had made a mistake in judgment because his act did not produce the results he had anticipated. Jesus did not miraculously free himself and set up his Kingdom but was apprehended, put on trial, and would be crucified. Realizing that crucifixion was now inevitable, Judas committed suicide, taking his sacrifice off the altar.

When Peter realized what he had done and the Master looked at him, he went out and wept bitterly—and no doubt prayed to God for forgiveness. Evidently, he also made an effort to contact Jesus after the third denial, but the trial was over and Jesus would be brought to Pilate the next morning for execution. The chief priests, scribes, and elders had already questioned him, found fault, and judged him. Therefore, we do not think Peter could have gained access to Jesus and yelled out, “I’m sorry!” The moment passed too quickly as Jesus was being led away and gave Peter a searching look. Then the cock crowed, and Jesus was gone. However, Jesus knew what would happen, for he had told in advance that before “cock crow” that night, Peter would deny him thrice (Matt. 26:34). When the resurrection took place, Peter was recognized and retrieved, and Jesus had a private audience with him, the details of which are not recorded (1 Cor. 15:5).

Peter’s deep sorrow and regret were also evidenced in an incident after Jesus’ resurrection. Peter was in a boat naked when he recognized the Master on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He girt his fisherman’s coat about him, jumped in the water, and swam to shore (John 21:7). Two feelings were involved: (1) Even though the coat would hinder his speed in getting to the shore, Peter put it on because he felt his nakedness before the Master. (2) He compensated for the drag of the coat in the water by expending extra energy to get to shore and show his affection for the Master.

**Comment:** Judas premeditated the betrayal, whereas Peter’s denials occurred on the spur of the moment and thus were not planned in advance.

**Reply:** The premeditation of Judas was a large factor in the judgment, but he also tried to circumvent the issue by returning the money to the chief priests instead of going to Jesus direct and pleading for forgiveness.

Many feel that a brother (or sister) can commit suicide and still be a member of the Little Flock. This belief manifests erroneous thinking on the magnanimity of God’s love, which teaches that one can sin unto the uttermost *after consecration* and still get life. However, there is a limit to sin, beyond which there is no return, even with a form of repentance.

There are different types of sorrow. For example, a politician may say he is sorry he made a mistake, but that sorrow is not remorse, or real repentance. If sorrow is genuine, the first thing

a person does is try to make amends. A slip of the tongue, which is injurious and is noted as a mark on one's record, may not be unto Second Death even if not repented of, but in a course of conduct over the years, these acts accumulate, forming a character. All of us are battling the world, the flesh, and the devil.

**2 Cor. 7:11** For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Paul described what accompanied the Corinthians' godly sorrow: earnestness, eagerness to clear themselves, indignation, alarm, longing, zeal, and punishment of themselves (see RSV). They fully rectified the matter in the proper manner. The balanced wording with the use of "yea" six times reminds us of the previous chapter, in which Paul repeatedly used the words "in," "by," and "as." He had a mathematical mind, the mind of a genius, yet he was impulsive, open, and fervent—qualities that generally do not accompany an analytical mind. For an individual to be emotional, zealous, and analytical is almost an impossible combination. Paul's character was well rounded out. Not only was he remarkably analytical, as many of the saints will be, but in addition, he had the fervency of Peter and the warmth and love of John. Indeed he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). No doubt he is the chief of the apostles in honor—but sufficiently way below Christ to make Christ the Head.

**Comment:** Earlier, following the incident on the way to Damascus, Paul experienced godly sorrow with regard to his persecution of Christians before he accepted Jesus.

Paul had advised the Corinthians to excommunicate the man who had committed fornication. Now the report came back that the man was so sorrowful over his excommunication that he was almost at the point of suicide if he was not received back into fellowship. Paul was moved at the individual's repentance, but he saw that something even more important had happened. With the Corinthians' earlier behavior, not only would the individual be lost, but all those who tolerated the grievous sin and thought that love was a covering would be damaged. Therefore, now that the man had responded properly and repented, Paul addressed the more serious matter of the class. Normally, because of emotion, one would think of the individual more than the group, but with Paul it was otherwise because more brethren were involved. The Corinthians "sorrowed after a godly sort" and took expeditious action. Paul said, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." What a wonderful commendation!

The Corinthians obeyed Paul's command with fervency. They were shocked into obedience by his first letter, which really packed a punch. The letter caused them to sit up, take notice, and bestir themselves to obey. Once awakened to their *false* idea of love, they *acted*, not wanting to displease God. Not only were they aghast at what they had done, but they realized how culpable they were for their behavior. As a result, their repentance took a frenzied form, and they did not let anything stop them from obeying Paul's advice. They were not merely sorry but also determined to excommunicate the individual regardless of the thinking of a minority in the class.

After receiving the first letter, the Corinthians realized the necessity to act. Paul had to speak strongly because they lacked an understanding of carnality. When we live in a carnal world, our values are surreptitiously eroded. Our standards are brought down inch by inch by what is happening around us. If we succumb and do not fight the deterioration in morality, then after a while, the old man, the old heart, rationalizes that everyone else is doing the same thing.

**Q:** Does "revenge" in verse 11 mean "punishment"? One translations has, "What readiness to mete out punishment!"

**A:** Yes. That was true in regard to following Paul's advice. The end of 1 Corinthians 5 reads, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

**2 Cor. 7:12** Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Verse 12 is important for showing where Paul put the emphasis. The *main* reason he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians was on *their* behalf. *Secondarily*, he wrote the letter for the fornicator, who purported to be a brother, and for his father, the one who had suffered the wrong. Evidently, this method of reasoning was employed when Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel so that the chief thrust of a subject could be discerned. Many people speak on a topic and give a lot of detail, but the main point of the discourse is never known, for the valuable motive is lost in the detail. Therefore, by this line of reasoning, Paul was saying, "I did it *not [merely]* for his cause that had done the wrong, nor *[merely]* for his cause that suffered wrong, but *[primarily]* that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you." The welfare of the ecclesia was his utmost concern.

Paul had been fearful that the example of the class in this matter might cause many others to suffer spiritually, which would be a more dangerous condition than just the individual who had sinned. In our day, Satan has changed almost every standard of righteousness. Because there is a wrong slant on many matters of righteousness, we, as brethren, have to overcome and try to obtain God's thinking. Certainly the death penalty was taught in the Old Testament, but the death penalty is not enacted today for fear that an innocent person might die. God's laws are to be our laws. However, we are not to judge the ultimate destiny of others, for only in very rare cases would we know what it is.

The implication is that when Titus was sent to Corinth, he was familiar with Paul's thinking on the immorality matter. Just as Paul did not know how his letter would be received, so Titus did not know what type of reception he would get. In time, Titus brought back word that the Corinthians had obeyed Paul's command. Both Titus and Paul rejoiced. The Bible was purposely written low-key so that our obedience to God will not be done on an emotional basis. However, when we reason on the content, we can see that the Bible is high drama.

**2 Cor. 7:13** Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

Titus was also refreshed by the repentance of the Corinthians. No doubt his supplying Paul with the details of the zeal of the ecclesia prompted Paul to say, "What carefulness it wrought in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire," etc. (verse 11). Paul was summarizing what Titus had told him.

"Therefore we were comforted in your [the Corinthians'] comfort." When we do something wrong and are able to correct the matter, there is some comfort. Conversely, when we do something injurious and cannot correct it, a nagging guilt follows us. The Corinthians were relieved after they saw their error and took the proper stand. And then, when they saw the godly sorrow of the individual who was put out, they realized that Paul's advice was effectual. They were comforted by seeing the retrieval of the lost soul who had had the illicit relationship. They were comforted in that the matter could be corrected, in that they had acted, and in that, as a result, he came back into the fold.

"Exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all." Paul liked to hear Titus boast about the brethren in Corinth for having taken the right

action. In fact, he rejoiced exceedingly.

**2 Cor. 7:14** For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.

How would Paul have “boasted” of the Corinthians to Titus? From one standpoint, Paul’s words seem to be a contradiction. He had had doubts, but now he was happy to have his doubts evaporate by the knowledge that the Corinthians had complied with his advice. When Paul first founded the church at Corinth, there was a good response. His preaching had borne a lot of fruit among both Jews and Gentiles, and their zeal was evident. Several leading characters even forsook their worldly pursuits to accompany Paul in his ministry. Then, in his absence from Corinth, he received a disturbing letter telling of multiple problems including divisions among the brethren. He wrote a strong letter of admonition, which was followed by a time lapse before the second letter. Therefore, he was waiting to hear from or about the Corinthians. Earlier, perhaps even before the first letter, he had boasted to Titus of the zeal of the Corinthians. Now, after waiting for a length of time, Paul rejoiced to hear from Titus that his much earlier boasting was ultimately justified because of their favorably receiving his hard-toned letter. Otherwise, without this background information and understanding, the “boasting” would seem to conflict with Paul’s reasoning since writing the first letter.

The RSV reads, “For if I have expressed to him [Titus] some pride in you [the Corinthians], I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus has proved true.” If this rendering is the correct thought, there is another additive here. It would seem that after Paul wrote the first letter, he had some misgivings about what he had written—and thus some anxiety as to how the letter would be received. But he evidently thought on the effect of the letter for a while and felt a little optimistic at one period in the interim before Titus came with his report. Paul must have had confidence that certain individuals in the class at Corinth would react favorably to the letter. When Titus arrived with the wonderful news that the majority had so responded, Paul replied, “Didn’t I tell you before you left that some would heed the advice?” Now his joy and enthusiasm were real.

At the time, Paul had probably told Titus it would be worthwhile for him to take the dangerous and arduous trip to Corinth, for he felt Titus would be blessed because of the zeal of the Corinthians. Now Paul was saying, “I told Titus that you would react favorably after getting the correct instruction. Now he has come back with good news.” We are given an insight into both the nuances of the trials in the church at Corinth and the growth of the brethren.

**2 Cor. 7:15** And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

The Corinthian brethren feared and trembled after getting Paul’s first letter. He wrote, “I am pronouncing judgment as though I were right there with you. My advice is what you must do.” They took the corrective measures, but they were afraid that perhaps more needed to be done. When something is done after the fact to make a correction, it is natural to wonder if the action will be accepted. However, Titus felt so confident upon seeing the obedience of the Corinthians that he did everything in his power to reassure them Paul would rejoice.

Timothy, who was younger, was not accepted by the Corinthians in the sense that Titus was. The appearance and personage of Titus were much more impressive than Timothy’s, so when Titus came with an august mien and exterior forcefulness, the Corinthians were fearful. They did not have the same respect for Timothy because of his outward appearance, culture, training, and background. Moreover, Titus, knowing the whole story, might have been indignant about how the Corinthians had treated Paul. But to his happy surprise and realization, he found that many appreciated Paul as a true and faithful minister of Christ.



In the first epistle, Paul said he had more gifts than any of the other apostles. Therefore, the “fear and trembling” of the Corinthians was partly due to the realization that he could use those gifts with *power* as, for example, Peter had done with Ananias and Sapphira. The brethren in Corinth knew Titus was coming as a representative of Paul, and perhaps they even saw the second letter (scroll) in his hand as he approached. How apprehensive they would have been!

**2 Cor. 7:16** I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

Chapter 7 concludes with Paul’s rejoicing over the Corinthians’ response to his advice. What wonderful news he had received from the mouth of Titus!

When there are stable characters in an ecclesia, good things are generally portended. Christians have many trying experiences in the trials of life, and some are very critical. In the present life, we do not know how near the brink we come, and how many times we narrowly escape. Of course we are conscious of some overrulings but not all of them.

One lesson from this seventh chapter is that there are certain priorities with regard to principles. Of course our conscience needs to be educated on God’s principles. In verse 12, Paul showed that the majority are to be given more priority than the few. He knew that the matter had to be corrected and that the Corinthians’ inaction could not be condoned. He did not say, “We should forgive the fornicator because he did not know what he was doing when he consecrated. His consecration was not accepted.” Paul was more concerned that the class be not mortally wounded. There are different degrees of sin. With adultery, for example, the thought is not equivalent to the deed. The thought might momentarily come into the mind, but carrying out the act is far worse. In addition to different degrees of sin, there are different levels of righteousness and overcoming. There are overcomers and more-than-overcomers.

**2 Cor. 8:1** Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

**Comment:** Verse 1 reads as follows in the Revised Standard: “We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia.”

**Reply:** In other words, “Moreover, brethren, we wish to remind you of the grace of God that was bestowed on the churches [plural] of Macedonia.” These churches, which were way north of Corinth, were Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Philippi was the chief city of Macedonia.

The implication in chapter 8 is that the “grace of God” was shown in the churches of Macedonia. The grace of God is usually considered from the standpoint of benefactions we have received from the Father—what He has done for us, how His Son died on our behalf, that God called us out of darkness, etc. However, this grace should trigger a responsive action on our part to exercise to others, as opportunity affords, the same grace that God has manifested toward us. Stated another way, since we have been the recipients of God’s grace, we are expected to manifest this grace to others. In this chapter, the grace of God pertains to the liberality (the “grace of God”) of the churches of Macedonia to others, specifically to the Lord’s poor in Jerusalem. As recipients of God’s grace, the Macedonian brethren manifested their appreciation by turning around and being benefactors to others. They manifested the grace of God in their hearts by extending to others in their limited way according to their capabilities.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to be aware of what the churches in Macedonia had done. He was saying, “Take their actions to heart so that you will know your privilege and do likewise.” Paul had a purpose in calling attention to the liberality of the Macedonian brethren, and it certainly was not because they were so replete with this world’s goods. Rather, their condition was to

the contrary, but their lack did not stop them from contributing to the cause of the brethren in Jerusalem and also to the Apostle Paul's ministry.

**2 Cor. 8:2** How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

**Comment:** The RSV reads, "For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part." The churches of Macedonia gave abundantly, considering how little they had and how much affliction they were in.

**Reply:** We are starting to get into the important subject of liberality, which is misunderstood in two directions.

What was the "great trial of affliction" in Macedonia? When those in Thessalonica heard Paul and accepted his message, they received severe persecution almost immediately. The Jews felt that Paul was a heretic and that he was preaching sedition. His reputation preceded him, and it did not take long for persecution to happen. In Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned.

Paul used contrast as a basis of reasoning: poverty versus riches. Contrary to what might be expected, the Macedonians gave liberally out of their poverty. They gave of their own substance, not of their excess and superfluity. We are reminded of the widow with her two mites (Mark 12:42-44; Luke 21:2-4). She sacrificed out of her own living, whereas the scribes threw fistfuls of coins in the treasury to be heard and seen of men and thus impress others with their supposed generosity. Noting the widow with her two mites, Jesus said that with all the scribes cast in, they did not begin to give what this woman did. Incidentally, a slang expression, used derogatorily and thus from the opposite standpoint, is that someone, as a buttinsky, put in his "two cents' worth."

The churches of Macedonia were not just in poverty but in "deep poverty," yet out of their deep poverty came liberality, a large contribution, for the brethren who were undergoing famine in Jerusalem. Acts 11:27-30 gives the background:

"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

"And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

"Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

The famine predicted by Agabus was widespread, but apparently, conditions were even worse in Judea. And there was another concern. By this time, Jerusalem had become the nucleus of Christianity in Israel and the headquarters of the apostles. During the famine, when people were concerned with feeding their families and where their next meal was coming from, the activity of the Church could cease. Therefore, if the brethren of the other churches could each contribute a little, the combined effort would sustain the essential needs of the brethren in Jerusalem. In helping those in Jerusalem, they would be helping themselves in the sense that the missionary work and other efforts could continue. Thus it behooved all other ecclesias to help the brethren in Jerusalem to keep going as the center of Christianity.

Out of the Macedonians' *deep poverty* came *abounding liberality*. In their zeal and concern, they gave of their necessities, and in addition, they endured much persecution for the truth's sake. Moreover, these brethren were fresh converts. Paul used these factors as leverage to make the brethren in Corinth realize their need to give. They were advanced in knowledge, but they needed an awareness of their lack.

**2 Cor. 8:3** For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

**2 Cor. 8:4** Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

“For to their power,” that is, “to their credit,” the Macedonians laid up treasure, or bounty, for the brethren in Jerusalem. In other words, when they heard of the situation of the poor in Jerusalem, Paul did not have to urge them to loosen their purse strings, for they immediately gave a generous freewill offering. God honors and greatly appreciates such offerings.

The Revised Standard reads, “For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.” Not only did the churches of Macedonia give more than their means and of their own volition, but they earnestly besought, or begged, to be able to contribute relief to the saints in Jerusalem. Knowing their circumstances, Paul was reluctant to readily accept the gift, so they pressed the donation upon him. The word “praying” in the context of verse 4 does not necessarily mean a formal prayer but an entreaty.

How outstanding! Evidently, Paul was embarrassed to see how generous the Macedonian brethren were out of their deep poverty. They emotionally responded to the condition that existed in Jerusalem. Not only did they not need Paul to urge them to give, but they urged him to take their donation to the Jerusalem brethren.

**2 Cor. 8:5** And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

“And this they did, not as we hoped.” In other words, the Macedonians gave, but not as Paul had expected. Because of their circumstance, such liberality was far from his thinking. He was trying to make allowance for their situation and thus soft-pedaled the issue of contributing, but they wanted to participate.

Those in Macedonia “first gave their own selves to the Lord” in consecration—and under unusual circumstances, for they were persecuted from the start. Therefore, to consecrate truly meant something. Even more important than giving money was giving themselves *thoroughly* to the Lord. Paul was saying, “While it is good to give, one must not take an inordinate view of liberality and necessarily equate it with spiritual growth.” One might consider generosity a proof that some were more spiritual, more highly developed, and more in favor with God. However, with the Macedonians, the generosity could very well be a proof because it was done as a freewill offering, they entreated for the privilege of giving, and they gave of their necessities. Nevertheless, giving is just one aspect of God's grace, for generosity is not the whole will of God. More importantly, the Macedonians gave themselves to the doing of God's will, of which the grace of generosity was one outgrowth they significantly manifested. There are other outgrowths as well.

Incidentally, famine and dearth in the land are very serious. Should conditions in the future occur to this degree, which we foresee will happen, this spirit of help for the brethren,

particularly for those who are truly carrying on the Lord's work, should manifest itself.

“They ... first gave their own selves to the Lord [in consecration], and [then] unto us [in thorough support of Paul's ministry] by the will of God.” How remarkable! When Paul preached in Macedonia, those with a hearing ear quickly repented of their sins and consecrated. Most take time for the step of consecration, and the Lord does not disapprove of soberly counting the cost first. However, these individuals were so joyous that they gobbled up the truth and quickly consecrated and suffered for it. And in spite of all these factors, they were so glad to contribute for the brethren in Jerusalem that it was almost as if they had appointed Paul to do what he intended to do anyway. He could see that God's Holy Spirit was residual in the Macedonians when they consecrated so soon and became willing participants in the effort for the brethren at Jerusalem.

**Q:** To whom does the pronoun “us” refer?

**A:** Timothy had Erastus as a companion, so when he joined Paul, Erastus was there, even though his name is not mentioned. Titus also had companions at this point, although he was sent to the church at Corinth as a private representative of Paul. Subsequently Titus came from Corinth and met Paul at Philippi to give him the good news of the Corinthians' response to the counsel in the previous letter. He then turned right around and went back to Corinth, taking Paul's second letter with him, but this time he had a couple of companions. The Macedonians recognized and encouraged Paul in his ministry, but only the church at Philippi personally supported him financially (Phil. 4:14,15). By freeing him from working for a living for a time, they gave him a wider opportunity of service.

**Comment:** Paul's Epistle to the Romans tells of the money being taken to Jerusalem. “But now I [Paul] go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are” (Rom. 15:25-27a).

**2 Cor. 8:6** **Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.**

“Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also [the work of liberality, the work of providing for the poor saints in Judea].” Titus had begun the collection of money by establishing a poverty fund particularly for the brethren in Judea (1 Cor. 16:1-3). In his first letter, Paul had given advice on how to collect money for the fund. On the first day of the week, that is, on Sunday, the day of the meeting, the Corinthians were each to lay aside money in the collection box for the poverty fund. In those days, people were paid at the end of each day for the number of hours worked. Since they did not work on Sunday and hence did not get paid on that day, they knew how much money was left over after meeting their necessities. What remained was put in the collection box, not only to defray the expense of the meeting but also for this fund for the poor.

When Paul was at Corinth prior to writing the first letter, he evidently had Timothy come in right afterwards as his successor so that there would be no time gap in follow-up. However, Timothy was not as well received as Titus was later. When Paul gave instructions in his first letter, Titus made sure they were carried out because he felt they were important. Some money was subsequently received, but the amount was limited, for, as will be seen, the Corinthians did not give as generously as they should have, considering their much better circumstance. In his joy of meeting Paul in Philippi and telling what had happened in regard to other matters—the Corinthians' judgment of the sinner and the majority reception of Paul when Judaizing preachers tried to alienate his ministry—Titus temporarily suspended his oversight of the poverty fund. Now he would finish that work, making sure the instructions

were carried out.

Evidently, the Corinthians had made professions that they would participate, but they did not fully follow through on their promises. Paul was gently reminding them that their mouths were bigger than their actions. In contrast, Christians in Macedonia did little talking and had little of this world's goods but contributed liberally.

“As he [Titus] had begun [to preach concerning the needs of the brethren in Jerusalem], so he would also finish in you the same grace also.” The first epistle showed that the Corinthians liked Titus. However, when he broached this matter, they did not respond as quickly as the brethren in Macedonia. When Titus returned to Corinth, the brethren contributed generously, and he was able to “finish” the work. Since Ephesus and Corinth were commercial cities, the brethren living there were more prosperous.

**2 Cor. 8:7** Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

Paul continued the same theme. This whole chapter, as well as the next one, is more or less a dissertation on the need for this work to be accomplished, both as a grace in their lives and in fulfilling a need of the brethren in Judea.

“Therefore, as ye [brethren in Corinth] abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.” Paul commended the Corinthians for excelling in faith, utterance (public speaking), knowledge, earnestness, and love for him, Titus, and Timothy, but he wanted them to also excel in *generous* giving. Evidently, a number of brethren in Athens and Corinth were talented in public speaking, for these cities dealt more with the business world than the rural districts. The Greeks prided themselves in their oratorical capabilities and fluency of expression. The church at Corinth excelled in that they had a number of talented brethren along this line. And they had a deeper knowledge, for in connection with their learning and understanding, they were more favored with a knowledge of the truth and its various components.

**Comment:** Paul seemed to be saying, “Do not fall back in the matter of liberality, which you have begun.”

**Reply:** Yes, that thought will be supported later. The Corinthians excelled in other areas, but at this time, they had not brought liberality to full fruition.

**Comment:** The Phillips translation ends verse 7 with a question, which might have been the reason Paul made the suggestion. “Could you not add generosity to your virtues?”

**Reply:** The question form harmonizes with the type of tactful reasoning that Paul was trying to use in speaking graciously. A blunt expression used today is “tightwad.”

While the Corinthians had progressed more in knowledge and expressed themselves well, the Macedonians were also faithful to the truth but testified and witnessed in the simplicity of Christ. In doing so, the Macedonians brought problems and persecutions upon themselves, whereas the Corinthians witnessed in relative comfort in a city that allowed more liberties of expression. Since the Corinthians were in an area that was not helpful to them as new creatures, Paul was suggesting that they add generosity to their list of virtues.

Bible maps show four journeys of the Apostle Paul. Actually, there were five, but the maps show only four. The fifth missionary tour was a shuttle, an in-between journey back and forth, between Ephesus and Corinth.

**2 Cor. 8:8** I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

“I speak not by commandment [but by the example of other brethren].” If Paul spoke by commandment, their giving would be mandatory and not a freewill offering. However, he could make suggestions. Paul was not giving the Corinthians a tongue-lashing but simply wanted them to prove that their love for the brethren was genuine. The Macedonians contributed *promptly and generously*.

Indeed the beauty of a contribution is its being a freewill offering, which is far more pleasing in the Lord’s sight than a donation resulting from pressure. Nevertheless, Paul was being a little forward because he would approach the Corinthians with the following reasoning. “When I come to you, some of the brethren from Macedonia will be accompanying me. I do not want to embarrass you, so I am giving you advance warning that they will ask questions and make comments about the poor brethren in Judea.” Thus Paul was prodding the Corinthians to a certain extent—but not so much that he would interfere with their freewill giving. He wanted them to “prove the sincerity” of their love by benefiting those in need.

At the most, two years separated the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians. The two epistles were written relatively near the end of Paul’s ministry, which was about 30 years long. Of those 30 years, about 75 percent of the time was now in the past.

**2 Cor. 8:9** For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

The implication is that the brethren at Corinth, a business center of the Roman world, were affluent. In contrast, Philippi was more of a traveling center.

Paul characteristically mentioned Jesus and a Scripture wherever possible. Jesus was the supreme example of giving. As the hymn goes, he left the ivory palaces of heaven to come into a world of woe in the form of a man. By humbling himself and coming down here at the First Advent, he made the world rich with his presence and doctrine. Jesus brought to light life and immortality (2 Tim. 1:10). Although he was rich, yet for the Corinthians’ (and our) sake, he became poor, so that they (and we) might become rich.

**2 Cor. 8:10** And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

**2 Cor. 8:11** Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

**2 Cor. 8:12** For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

In purposing to contribute to the poverty fund for the relief of the brethren in Judea, the Corinthians preceded the churches in Macedonia, but the response of the latter was more immediate in that they carried it out, making the contribution at once. The church at Corinth could not be blamed fully because Paul had given instructions not only to lay aside money on the first day of the week but also to retain the money until he came. Some believe that Titus set an example by personally donating liberally when in Corinth, but the money was not taken immediately to Jerusalem. Paul was nervous about another matter, which will come up.

With regard to the willingness of the mind, God accepts the *will* for the deed. The motivation in

giving is very important. Giving should be “according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” In other words, the *amount* given is not necessarily proportionate to spirituality, for some cannot give as much as others.

Paul was beginning to introduce another principle. He commended the church at Macedonia for their readiness of mind, for the promptness with which they performed that which they purposed to do, and for giving generously and abundantly out of their deep poverty, but he was not saying to the church at Corinth, “Since the Macedonians gave until it hurt, you at Corinth, being wealthier, should do same and thus impoverish yourselves.” To so conclude would be drawing the wrong example. To their credit, the Macedonians gave wholeheartedly of their own volition. However, Paul was telling the Corinthians to use discretion and judgment in supporting the ministry at Jerusalem, the principle being “according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

Human nature is fickle. Sometimes we are so inspired by a certain speaker or theme that we intend to do something praiseworthy, but if we do not act quickly, the mood evaporates. The Corinthians overextended themselves in their expressions and then did not follow up. This is true even with the Lord’s Word. The problem with the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai is that they were forgetful hearers. They “forgot his [God’s] works” (Psa. 78:11). As Christians, we have to go over and over the Scriptures to maintain not only our integrity but also our enthusiasm for the principles inculcated therein. Evidently, the Corinthians were effusive when Paul and Titus were there a year earlier, but their good intentions did not translate into actions. Thus Paul was saying, “Now therefore *perform* the doing of it [your intention]; that as there was a readiness to will [that as I believed you meant your profession of generosity], so there may be a *performance* also out of that [the riches] which ye have.” In other words, “What happened? Where is your donation?”

**2 Cor. 8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:**

**2 Cor. 8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:**

“For I mean not that other men [should] be eased, and ye be burdened.” Paul felt the Corinthians should perform their promises, but he was saying, “I am not suggesting that you should overextend yourselves. Do not give so much that the Judean brethren will be in luxury, and you will be in poverty. However, if you shed some of your liberality, not only will there be a great blessing to others, but you yourselves will become the recipients of grace.” More than the basic necessities were not to be given, for brethren were not to be pampered. The welfare system in the United States is wrong, for example, in that it provides more than basic needs. The principle is that the system caters *more* to those who contribute *less* on a wage scale.

The church at Corinth was a learning and a teaching center, for these brethren traveled and thus had more contact with the world. Several brethren traveled with Paul as helpers—like a pilgrim service—benefiting brethren in outlying areas. Therefore, larger classes were to be outgoing centers of spiritual work, witness activity, teaching, and ministering to the brethren. The smaller, isolated rural ecclesias were more the recipients. There was to be an “equality” in one sense, but to equally distribute the temporal goods of this world among the brethren—and hence give to others beyond their necessities—would impoverish the ministry and thus curtail the spiritual work.

Paul advised the Corinthians to give out of their “abundance,” not out of their necessity, as the Macedonians had done. They were not to “ease” others and “burden” themselves. It is wrong to preach a social gospel, making the temporal area more important than the spiritual. Today

some urge others to expend their time and energy primarily in social and temporal work; the result is a neglect of the spiritual. The real gospel is the ministry of the Word of God.

**Q:** Why did Paul commend the Macedonians for giving until it hurt and then advise the Corinthians not to do the same?

**A:** Paul did not want to deprive the Macedonians of their freewill offering. They had given on a *one-time, spur-of-the-moment* basis of extreme generosity. That was one type of giving, but the Corinthians were to give on a *regular* weekly basis. We can certainly see the good motivation of those who spontaneously give generously, but sometimes we question their wisdom, especially if they impoverish themselves. In other words, it is not wisdom if, in helping others, we place ourselves in a position to then need help from the brethren. An example would be helping others temporally to the extent that we are then unable to use—and thus have to sacrifice—talents along spiritual lines. And it is wrong to give abundantly to others if in doing so, we make our own family suffer. Discretion should be used.

**Comment:** Jesus stated the principle that we should love our neighbor as ourself; he did not say *more than self* (Matt. 19:19).

**Reply:** Yes. We are to do good to others as we have opportunity.

The idea of a social gospel has been utilized by evangelists to get people to sacrifice for their movement. They want tithes and more tithes. The donations build up them and their ministries, but what about the spirituality of the movement?

In verse 14, Paul was saying, “Some day the scales may be reversed. You are rich now and the Judeans poor, but the time may come when the Judeans are rich and you are poor and become the beneficiary instead of the benefactor.” Another point: If in need, we should not be ashamed or too proud to accept help. The Lord measures our zeal and enthusiasm, and He knows what prompts actions on our part. Nevertheless, we need wisdom and discretion in some matters.

What could the Corinthians give to the Macedonians? And what did the Macedonian brethren have that could benefit the Corinthians? In other words, what could they give to each other? With their abundance, the Corinthians were able to afford a much larger (but reasonable) contribution to benefit others. The principle of observation is to be aware of the wants and needs of others. Jesus was a perfect example, for he observed people, actions, nature, etc., and drew perfect lessons.

**2 Cor. 8:15** As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Verse 15 refers to the Israelites’ gathering of the manna. “This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating” (Exod. 16:16-18). *Every family* was expected to gather according to the size of the household, that is, according to *what they needed*. When each family, large or small, returned, they put the manna in a common pile. Then the manna was meted out with each person getting an omer. For example, if a household consisted of five persons, that household received a total of five omers. By means of this system, all were fed equally, and no manna was left over.

Of course some were able to gather the manna with more alacrity than others. Although these



individuals could gather more than just an omer, when the quantity of manna was measured to each family, the amount was equally distributed so that each person received the same amount. Those who could work faster, and thus gather more than an omer, benefited all by adding to the common pile so that the total amount was collected in less time and all could return to their tents sooner. With each person getting the same amount of manna each day, the principle was, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil [or daily bread] thereof” (Matt. 6:34). If some got greedy and took more than their share of manna, the supply did not provide for all. Evidently, the “bread [manna] from heaven” came down in just the right quantity to provide for each person if distributed justly (John 6:31). God did not rain down an excess of manna that would either spoil or satisfy the greed of others.

From the gathering and distribution of the manna, Paul drew a practical lesson in regard to Christian giving. Some might contribute more heavily from either an individual or an ecclesia standpoint, but when the donations were put in a common fund, the distribution was according to need. Paul was referring to the needs of the brethren in Judea. A common fund was to be used so that only the Lord would know how much each individual contributed.

In summing up verses 10-15, Paul was saying that he did not want to embarrass and pressure the Corinthians beyond their means. In fact, he did not want to pressure them at all in regard to giving, for there should first be a willing heart. If the heart is willing before the deed, then that deed becomes acceptable to God, and He appreciates what is given. A freewill offering given cheerfully adds to one’s treasure in heaven. In other words, a donation should not be given primarily out of duty-love. The Lord expects the rich to give more and the poor to give according to their ability. God does not expect the poor to give of their necessities of life. Stated another way, giving should be *proportionate to one’s ability*. Paul’s use of the word “equality” in verse 14 did not mean that rich and poor alike should give the same amount, but that each should give in proportion to his income. Giving of one’s surplus, or abundance, to supply the needs and wants of the poor would be doing justly.

**2 Cor. 8:16** But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

**2 Cor. 8:17** For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

Knowing of the circumstance of the church at Corinth, Titus was so interested in the brethren that he not only looked forward to accompanying Paul on a journey to visit them but also, of his own initiative, apparently volunteered to go ahead by himself with Paul joining him later.

**Comment:** Then Titus was “more forward” in a good sense.

**Reply:** Yes, but even though Titus was a little “more forward,” or persuasive, the Corinthians still did not respond immediately. Eventually they responded.

Titus was somewhat excited by the growth of the class at Corinth and the number of brethren. Evidently, the class was fairly large, and the response in numbers was perhaps more than in other churches despite the fact that differences of opinion were causing somewhat of a tumult. Some preferred Paul, some favored Peter’s interpretation of Scripture, some liked Apollos, and some even felt they (and not the others) were of Christ. For this sectarian spirit to develop suggests the class was large.

**Q:** How long was Paul at Corinth?

**A:** He spent more time with this church than with any of the others except Ephesus. However,

if the length of his two visits is combined, the time was somewhat comparable to that with Ephesus.

**2 Cor. 8:18** And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

“We have sent” means “We are sending,” for Titus carried this second epistle to Corinth. He volunteered for this service because of his care for the brethren. Therefore, he returned to Corinth.

A brother was sent with Titus “whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.” That brother was apparently Luke, as identified elsewhere. Although sometimes purposely left behind, Luke accompanied Paul on many missions. However, he always recontacted Paul and was with him near the end of his life. Luke was trained as a physician in Pergamos at one of the leading schools of that day.

**2 Cor. 8:19** And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

Luke also had “this grace.” With the additional function of treasurer, he was designated both secretary and treasurer in accompanying Paul. Luke was in charge of the liberality, the funds, and was so appointed by other “churches” (plural). Thus Paul was not burdened with all the details of collecting the money. Paul had asked the Corinthians to tell him whom they wanted to be in charge of the poverty fund so that he would not be blamed for (accused falsely of) putting his hand in the bag. By inference, certain individuals with an evil mind thought Paul was siphoning off some of the funds for his own benefit. Therefore, Paul was glad that the churches of Galatia, Corinth, and several other places had appointed Luke as treasurer.

Here we see a little of Paul’s makeup. Evidently, he did not appoint Luke to write, to be his secretary, but Luke felt the importance of recording what Paul said and did. Hence Luke recorded the Gospel of Luke and later the Book of Acts. One reason Paul mentioned Luke’s reputation here but not his name is that Luke was not a teacher. However, Titus was named because his doctrinal influence was great. It was necessary for Titus and Timothy to be noted as personal representatives of Paul. Other churches were thankful for Luke’s service, for evidently, he told them on the side about Paul’s activities. As recorder, he could give many details that Paul either would not have mentioned or did not have time to relate because he was busy preaching the gospel and establishing classes. Paul was a man of *action*, being more concerned with immediate dangers to the new creature and the care of all the churches. Later on, as Paul grew older, Luke’s ministry assumed larger and larger importance. We believe he was mostly responsible for the canonization of the New Testament. Apparently, he was a meek and quiet individual who did not put himself forward but was quite a worker. The brethren recognized and liked Luke not only as a physician but also as a recorder of Paul’s activities. For instance, by his recording the Book of Acts, brethren of different churches became more familiar with each other.

**2 Cor. 8:20** Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

Paul had a lot to say about the administration and the disbursement of the funds, but Luke was the actual caretaker of the money in the sense of collecting and holding it. The word “abundance” indicates the size of the collection. With Luke being the custodian of the funds, it should have been apparent to all that Paul had not put his hand in the till, as falsely accused by some. Also, a brother from the class in Corinth accompanied them to Jerusalem with the

money, so that when Paul eventually went to the poor in Judea, the Corinthians had a personal testimony from one of their own who had volunteered to go. Thus there were two or three witnesses of Paul's honesty.

**2 Cor. 8:21** Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Paul was saying that it was good to keep to a minimum anything that might look questionable in connection with receiving all this money. He knew that he was honest in the sight of God, but for the benefit of onlookers, prudence dictated that he share the responsibility with others. That way criticism would be kept to a minimum.

**Comment:** Phillips translates verses 20 and 21 as follows: "Naturally we want to avoid the slightest breath of criticism in the distribution of their gifts, and to be absolutely above-board not only in the sight of God but in the eyes of men." Although brethren should trust each other, this arrangement was a good precaution because money was involved.

**Reply:** Paul was reassuring the Corinthians in writing that the funds were collected in the sight of God. The Heavenly Father was observing Paul's fidelity and would see that the collection was handled properly. Nevertheless, criticism came.

In certain areas of life, it is sometimes helpful to observe how unfruitful the critic is. One who is filled with negatives is very good in giving advice to others. We are not talking about honest criticism but about hypocrites, who have a beam in their own eye but always seem to see the mote in their brother's eye. Criticism is in order when principles can be drawn properly, but one has to be careful. We should be critics but not hypercritical. Where to draw the line is a delicate balance.

**Comment:** The Phillips translation contains a nice dedication: "I dedicate this translation to Vera my wife and finest critic." Of course the criticism was constructive.

**2 Cor. 8:22** And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

Titus, Luke, and another unnamed brother accompanied Paul. Both unnamed brothers (Luke and this third brother) were commended, but they were not endorsed as highly as Titus, who was named. The third brother was probably Trophimus. Paul expressed himself as an optimist in the responsibility of handling the funds. Incidentally, the Book of Acts, plus one or two other epistles, helps to determine who accompanied Paul. Wherever he went, usually two to five other brethren were involved.

**2 Cor. 8:23** Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

Titus was Paul's "partner and fellow-helper" with the Corinthians. Of the three brothers, Titus had the highest commendation. However, the other two could be trusted as "messengers" of Christ, for they were sincere, consecrated individuals, wholly dedicated to the Lord. But Titus was the representative of Paul's thinking. For instance, someone might ask, "What does Paul think on that subject?" and Titus could reply. Here Paul again endorsed Titus because time had elapsed between trips and newcomers would not know him. Paul regarded as an evidence of zeal the fact that Titus and the others sacrificed money, employment, and friends to accompany him on this missionary journey.

It was important for Paul to give these commendations, for elsewhere he said, “Lay hands suddenly on no man” (1 Tim. 5:22). If a person gives evidence of consecration and enthusiasm for the Lord, the tendency is to go overboard and endorse him. Paul said to be careful in this matter.

**Comment:** Paul also cautioned against electing a recently consecrated brother as elder. “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6).

**Reply:** Timothy was an exception, for he was elevated as a novice. Although young, he was to be respected as sound in his advice, logical, more advanced, and very spiritual. He had a good foundation through his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). As a general rule, however, we should allow sufficient time after consecration to see if a brother is trustworthy in the Lord.

The Corinthians did not receive Timothy as well as Titus, probably because many liked oratory and show. The same principle is seen when one with a worldly title and college degree is given more respect as a teacher than a brother without that background who is far more advanced in his thinking on the Scriptures.

Paul commended Titus and those with him as tried-and-true faithful brethren who were not parasites, or spongers, in any sense of the word. They acted zealously out of love for God and wanting to glorify Christ, not themselves. By accompanying Paul, they were doing everything they could to forward his ministry. Therefore, the Corinthians should not be nervous about these unknown individuals. Paul was putting his reputation on the line by endorsing them.

From remarks made elsewhere, we learn that Titus was a big hit with regard to some in the church at Corinth, more so than Timothy. However, Paul seemed to think, and we are led to believe, that Timothy was a more stable and beloved brother than Titus. At this time, Titus was faithful and zealous, and Paul commended him lest those at Corinth have any suspicions about his being forward in coming to them.

**2 Cor. 8:24** Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

While in Macedonia, Paul had praised the Corinthians. Now he was afraid that some from Macedonia would go to Corinth. If they arrived and saw that the wealthy Corinthians had not contributed for the brethren in Jerusalem, he would be highly embarrassed after having boasted about the Corinthians. Therefore, he urged the Corinthians to prove their love by contributing more to the poverty fund. Earlier he had advised them to lay aside money each week so that when he came, they could give him the money. Paul loved the church at Corinth, which he had founded, so he wrote this letter to them out of concern.

Paul was especially concerned with the *immediate* circumstances of the church at Corinth. Later in life, he dealt with future concerns too. Jesus dealt with both present and future concerns at his First Advent. His immediate concern was for the instruction of the apostles. Later, shortly before his death, he prayed not only for those who had heard his word but also for those who in the future would hear and believe (John 17:20).

The two letters to the Corinthians probably reveal more about Paul’s character than any other part of the New Testament. They give intimate insight into his thinking, whereas other books show his scholarly mind, which was mathematical, precise, balanced, intellectual, and practical. We believe he is one of the Lord’s great jewels because he possesses wisdom, love, justice, and power in principle like the Father. On the high priest’s breastplate, he is of the Judah class.

**Comment:** Phillips states, “So do let them, and all the churches, see how genuine is your love, and justify all the nice things we have said about you!”

**Reply:** Some of the variant translations give proper insights, although at times they take liberty with the Greek.

Paul was now leading tactfully into another aspect of contributing to the collection fund, as will be seen in the next chapter.

**2 Cor. 9:1** For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

**2 Cor. 9:2** For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

“Ministering to the saints” refers to the collection being taken for the poor brethren during the famine in Jerusalem. It was “superfluous” for Paul to now write to the Corinthians about the collection, for when he had made them conscious of the need a year ago, they had, of their own volition, responded immediately to his suggestion. However, because the response was only partial, Paul was now reminding them that they needed to complete the collection. Luke was handling the funds, his role being that of both secretary for Paul and treasurer.

The zeal of the Corinthians “provoked very many.” In other words, when Paul boasted of their zeal in what they had purposed to do a year ago, others thought it would be a good idea to also participate in this ministry. Thus the action of the Corinthians influenced many other ecclesias to give of their liberality to the saints in Jerusalem.

Achaia was a region of Greece, Corinth being its capital at this time. Sometimes converts are more numerous in a sin city than among the conservative element, for the latter feel self-righteous. Jesus, the Physician, comes to those who are “sick,” that is, to those who feel their need.

The Corinthians did finally respond wholeheartedly in the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, but meanwhile Paul had boasted of them to others, even from the standpoint of knowledge. They were very much interested in Paul’s doctrine and teachings and evidently had a fair grasp of the truth, but they lacked in certain other matters. Now Paul suggested that he would visit them a third time. Since he had bragged about the Corinthians in so many other ways, he did not want to be embarrassed when he came by having to bring up the subject of the collection. Instead the matter should be taken care of beforehand. Incidentally, Paul never went to Corinth the third time, for he ended up going to Rome as a prisoner instead.

**2 Cor. 9:3** Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

**2 Cor. 9:4** Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

**2 Cor. 9:5** Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

Paul reiterated much of what he had already discussed in the previous chapter. Earlier he had boasted of the Corinthians’ zeal, desire, and promptness to participate in the ministry of giving to the brethren in Jerusalem. However, while they had purposed to contribute methodically a

year ago, they had not finished the work. Therefore, Paul wrote this second epistle, which was sent at the hand of Titus, who was accompanied by two other (unnamed) brothers, one of whom was probably Luke. Paul's strategy was to have the letter arrive in advance of his next visit to Corinth in the hope that the collection would be completed prior to his arrival.

Paul included this advice in his letter because he was afraid that if he came to Corinth a couple of months later and their donations were not ready, he would be embarrassed in view of all his previous boasting. It would appear that he had exaggerated their goodwill, for his enthusiasm for them was not carried out. In addition to Paul's embarrassment, not having the collection ready would embarrass the Corinthians if some brethren from Macedonia accompanied him.

Why did Paul say, "That the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness"? The Revised Standard makes a distinction between an exaction and a willing gift. Paul made a suggestion, not a command, for he hoped the Corinthians would act in his absence with spontaneous giving. He wanted the giving not only to be done in advance of his arrival but also to be a freewill offering—and not an exaction made in his presence out of shame, a feeling of compulsion, or peer pressure.

Thus Paul was suggesting that the Corinthians have the bounty ready so that when he arrived with the Macedonians, there would be no cause for embarrassment. That way, also, the bounty would not be "as of covetousness," that is, the collection would be done in quietness and without show or seeking the approval and praise of others. Those who display their generosity lose the potential blessing. Covetousness takes many forms.

Paul was trying to alert the Corinthians to their defect, although his wording was tactful. If they were stirred up with the conviction of giving, they would go to a higher level of spiritual development. The importance of this subject can be gauged by the fact that Paul devoted two chapters to it.

Some have felt that Paul's two epistles to the Corinthians are more revealing of his character and temperament than any of his other epistles. Here the characteristics of concern, sympathy, and tenderness for others were manifested. He felt the care of all the churches both spiritually and temporally.

**Q:** Was Paul using a little natural psychology here in saying, "We bragged about you to many of the other churches because of your zeal"? Hearing these words, the Corinthians would not want to be turned into liars.

**A:** Yes. Inferentially, the Corinthians had been prosperous in witnessing and getting converts.

**2 Cor. 9:6** But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

The principle of "sowing sparingly," or giving meagerly, is as follows. A meager sower reaps meager fruitage. A bountiful sower reaps more bounty to himself and for others.

**2 Cor. 9:7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

The Christian should give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity. Paul spoke very carefully with regard to the free moral agency of the brethren, for to embarrass one into giving robs that individual of the meritorious aspect and spontaneity of giving and thus kills the atmosphere. The lesson is not to deprive others of the joy of giving as they wish.

Probably the best Old Testament illustration of the statement “God loveth a cheerful giver” is the Israelites’ generous giving of materials for the construction of the Tabernacle. In fact, so much was donated that the people were asked to stop.

In review, the previous chapter told that the Macedonians gave richly out of their deep poverty. Like the widow with her two mites, they went overboard out of their poverty and need. Paul did not suggest that the Corinthians, who were wealthy, do the same. The difference was that the Macedonians gave spontaneously of their deep poverty on a *one-time* basis, and the Corinthians were to give of their superfluity and liberality on a *regular* basis.

Sometimes brethren are moved emotionally and spontaneously to give a large amount, but there is unwisdom in giving liberally on a regular basis for several reasons. One reason is that the object of poverty comes to depend on the money as a source of income, and the giver is burdened with a financial yoke indefinitely. It is better to give clandestinely and quietly and not contractually. The point is that to the Corinthians, Paul moderated his advice about giving.

Subconsciously Paul may have had the Tabernacle in mind. The Israelites, who picture the consecrated of the Gospel Age, contributed their skills and talents. For example, seamstresses and artisans in metal work helped in the building of the Tabernacle. Just as with the Christian, God was looking at the spirit with which the Israelites contributed their efforts.

The condition of the poor in Judea must have been dreadful for Paul to bring up this sensitive subject matter with regard to temporal matters. Today in the nominal Church, much preaching is done about the collection box, and the solicitation is ostensibly done for evangelization—to get new converts by, for example, establishing schools and hospitals. Then, secondarily, the evangelists try to win the people’s hearts by preaching the gospel, but the emphasis should be the reverse. The gospel should be preached and then, for those who respond, there is a special attachment. The poor in Judea, who were suffering want, were already in the faith. Funds were solicited for the needs of the *consecrated* poor.

**2 Cor. 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:**

An illustration in chapter 8 was that the collected manna was all put in a common pile. Then each person came through the “breadline” and got an omer of manna (Exod. 16:15-18). One lesson is that the needs and necessities of the poor should be taken care of, not their comforts. We should give for the needs of the brethren, not for their overabundance. Also, we should not become overcommitted to temporal things so that we are curtailed along spiritual lines.

**2 Cor. 9:9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.**

“As it is written” in Psalm 112:9, “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.” Paul linked this text in Psalms, which pertains to a righteous man’s habits, to that of a sower and dispersing abroad. What is the parallel? In those days, a sower sowed seed from a bag. Of course he wanted the seed to go in certain rows, but by opening his hand as he sowed and swinging his arm, some of the seed spilled out and missed. Thus in doing the work, the sower was *generous*. He did not parsimoniously, as some directions state today, literally put two or three seeds in each hole. Psalm 112 alludes to sowing: “He hath dispersed [seed].” Having reasoned deeply on this Scripture, Paul drew the lesson with the Corinthians that a sower dispersed “abroad,” that is, liberally. Thus even in Old Testament times, the principle existed with regard to giving financial aid to those in need.

**2 Cor. 9:10** Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

**2 Cor. 9:11** Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

In quoting from Psalm 112 and showing the allusion to a sower, Paul drew the lesson that one who sows seed in a field is sowing for himself. However, the seed that is scattered in the corners of the field is available for others, that is, for the poor. Ruth is an illustration of this principle, for she gleaned in the corners of Boaz's field. A requirement of the Law was as follows: "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.... thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger" (Lev. 19:9,10). The fields were not to be meticulously reaped out to the corners to gather every grain of wheat, for the scattered grain was to be left for the poor.

Paul was saying that when a sower labors, not only does he get food for himself, but others are benefited as well. Accordingly, the one who sows, the one who gives of his liberality, is blessed and refreshed, for God rewards that individual, and the recipients of the sowing are also blessed. The recipients "increase the fruits of your [the sower's] righteousness." The result is more praise to God on the part of both giver and recipient.

We can be sure that the brethren in Jerusalem, the recipients of the bounty, who were in dire want, had prayed about the matter. They truly meant the petition in the Lord's Prayer "Give us this day our daily bread." Today we spiritualize that part of the prayer because we live in a land of plenty, but many Christians in the early Church and down through the age literally needed food to eat. To the brethren in Jerusalem, it appeared that their prayers were miraculously answered when donations seemed to come out of the air. How abundantly their praise and thanksgiving would have ascended to God for supplying their want! God has promised bread and water for the Christian in a dire circumstance but not necessarily dessert.

Of course there was no government welfare or assistance program back there. Therefore, it was expected, where possible, that a family member would support the indigent. Survival was difficult for many.

**Q:** What was Paul's thought in the clause "he that ministereth seed to the sower"?

**A:** He was saying that one who contributes financial support to an individual who sows the gospel seed to others benefits himself in addition to the individual he is helping. Thus one who gives a helping hand to the sower also does a great work.

Those who provide financial support to a sower of the seed, such as Paul, receive tenfold, for the givers are benefited, as well as the recipients. Those who minister to the sower get the approval of the Lord for recognizing the good being done by the sower. Incidentally, the Scriptures do not indicate that the Corinthians gave any financial support to Paul.

Paul was setting up an axiom. If some supported him in his ministry, they would be doing a very good work, for the support would give him more time to sow seed to others. Under present circumstances, he spent many hours working to support himself. For example, he had worked with his own hands when ministering to the church at Corinth.

The principle of sending out emissaries of truth into areas where the gospel has not been previously sown boomerangs benefits back to the ecclesia that supports, and thus makes possible, this extensive work. The zeal in giving administers to character development.



**2 Cor. 9:12** For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

**2 Cor. 9:13** Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

Paul was saying that the Corinthians would find “the experiment [experience] of this [ad]ministration” to be a blessing. If they followed the practice of sowing, the experience gained from their liberality would be a blessing to them, as the givers, and also to the recipients of the gift. The administration of this service would not only supply the want (or lack) of the poor saints in Jerusalem but would result in “many thanksgivings unto God.” Moreover, the giving results in glory and honor to God and His Son in furthering the work of the gospel. Evangelical work is certainly an important part of the development of a Christian.

Suppose that a person and his family were starving and did not have adequate clothing. Suddenly into their midst came a donation from unknown brethren a thousand miles away—Corinth, Macedonia, etc. When the Jerusalem brethren, who were poverty-stricken, arrived at the meeting, they found a pot of gold, a donation from distant brethren. What a blessing to know that other brethren were thinking of them and offering prayers for their situation! The poor saints in Jerusalem would have praised God with heart and voice. Hence the gift for *necessity*, for *genuine* need, causes the recipient to give much thanks to God, who likes to be recognized as directing the providence. In turn, the giver(s) will be blessed, even if not known as individuals. The fruitage redounds to praise to the Heavenly Father. And the giver(s) will find that what is given away is usually resupplied personally from another source because of the sacrifice involved. All around, there is a multiplication of the seed sown—a multiplication into other avenues of blessing—thanks to God and the prayers of the brethren. Also, giving brings a unity of the brethren. When Paul said in the previous chapter that the Corinthians were wealthy and could afford to give, he pointed out that someday the tables might be reversed and they would be in need.

Because of prejudice, some of the brethren who were in need in Jerusalem had a problem accepting Paul’s going among the Gentiles. Therefore, for the Jews to see that Gentiles were moved by the Holy Spirit to assist them helped them realize that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, ... bond nor free, ... male nor female” in the body of Christ (Gal. 3:28). They are all one family in Christ. Also, certain Jewish brethren in the church at Corinth had questioned whether Paul was an apostle and instead assumed they were the apostles. Paul’s doctrinal logic in regard to giving to the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem providentially helped with this problem too. The Pastor said that if the providences of God are properly recognized and obeyed, they are the means whereby we are progressively sanctified. He put the providences of God almost on a par with the Word of God in the development of the Church.

The necessity of the brethren in Jerusalem, which seemed to arise out of happenstance, was permitted by God for more than one purpose. For example, their need afforded Paul an opportunity to write on the subject of liberality, and thus his thinking became part of Holy Writ. It is unusual that this subject matter occupied so much of Paul’s attention. Solicitation for the poor in Judea covered almost two chapters in this second epistle.

**2 Cor. 9:14** And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Not only would the brethren in Jerusalem give thanksgivings to God, but also they would thank God for the Corinthians and their spirit of generosity. Paul was saying, “You will not lose anything by giving of your surplus, for you will get much more in return. Your giving will

both redound to God's glory and result in a benefaction to you." The principle is stated in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

**Comment:** First, the Jerusalem brethren would pray for the Corinthians. Then they would feel such a love that they would long to see and meet their Corinthian brethren.

**Reply:** The love was not on a personalized basis, for the same God moved the Jewish brethren to be interested in them. When Jesus had Peter, James, and John as intimate friends at the First Advent, that friendship was predicated primarily on their love for God and His Word. A fellowship based on that principle is even closer than that of a natural family relationship. Of course if one has both, that is better yet, but spiritual fellowship is superior.

**2 Cor. 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.**

Of course God's "unspeakable gift" to us is Jesus, and accompanying that gift is the gospel message. This well-known Scripture is often quoted and hung on walls as a motto, but most Christians are not familiar with the *context* in which it is found. We are blessed by analyzing Paul's reasoning that preceded this verse.

In the previous chapter in regard to giving, Paul used the sacrifice of Jesus as a basic tenet for the whole sermon. "He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9). The greatest example of giving was God's own Son, who left his home above and, out of the goodness of his heart, came down here to die for poor humanity. This basic spiritual principle should also be manifested in a practical and material way. Verse 15 is a summary of chapters 8 and 9.

**Comment:** By giving our little bit at times to help brethren, we show our appreciation for God's gift of His Son.

**Reply:** If the persecution of one of God's children is like persecuting Christ, so a benefaction to His children is a benefaction to Christ.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* adds the word "free": "Thanks to God for his inexpressible free gift!"

**Reply:** Especially at the Memorial, we remember that gift.

**2 Cor. 10:1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:**

**2 Cor. 10:2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.**

Chapter 10 is a change of subject. Why did Paul speak about the "meekness and gentleness of Christ" and his own presence in the Corinthians' midst? Paul was again defending himself, for some of the brethren still did not recognize or accept his ministry as an apostle but continued to have a factious spirit. Evidently, many now saw the error of saying, "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas," etc., but some still were not too favorably disposed toward Paul. Although the great majority were thinking clearly on this issue, he needed to strengthen and fortify them further with regard to certain particulars.

Paul introduced the new subject from the slant of the "meekness and gentleness of Christ." Since he did not have the flowery kind of oratory the Corinthians were accustomed to or a pleasing bodily presence with great physical size (apparently, he was about five feet in stature), those who judged by outward appearance disdained him. Hence he said, "Some ... think of us

as if we walked according to the flesh.” Probably his voice, though strong for speaking in amphitheatres, was not as soothing to the ear as that of the noted Greek orators. Moreover, he did not assume airs or use flattery or elaborate mannerisms but spoke plainly and boldly. Not only, then, was Paul short and his speech “contemptible,” but he had not seen Jesus during his earthly ministry, whereas some who had seen Jesus presumed to speak with authority (2 Cor. 10:10). Paul’s working with his hands was not considered appropriate for an apostle, and some in the class even accused him of taking funds. In addition, he was persecuted above and beyond the others, some of whom denied the sacrificial aspect of the Christian walk. Just as the Jews as a whole failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah because he did not act like a conqueror, use pompous speech, have a majestic appearance, and assume kingly authority, so the false teachers misjudged Paul. Jesus spoke gently (where possible) but with authority. Paul was direct, authoritative, and reasonable in his speech.

What were the “meekness and gentleness of Christ” that Paul was alluding to? Jesus taught the scribes and Pharisees with great authority, but generally speaking, he addressed his disciples with gentle but firm speech and in a calm manner, appealing to their reasoning faculties. Here Paul was beseeching the Corinthian brethren as Jesus had taught and spoken to his disciples—with meekness, gentleness, calm reasoning, and concern for their spiritual development. He spoke firmly but not with arrogance. Both Jesus and Paul did the *Father’s* will, whereas the false teachers spoke with their *own* authority.

“Being absent [I] am bold toward you.” Conversely, by implication, Paul was *meek and gentle* when *present*. He preferred to speak gently, to counsel the Corinthians as a father, but some in the class, the troublemakers, needed bolder admonition. He intended to speak boldly when he saw them but on an individual basis. Paul even had to reprove some of the apostles privately. However, when Peter dissimulated, Paul had to speak openly for the others to hear, lest the effectiveness of the lesson be undercut. The point is that where possible, he spoke privately to individuals and reasoned with them. Now he would speak authoritatively to some but not to the whole group. Incidentally, if Jesus and/or Paul had spoken boldly *without God’s* authority, they would have been in the wrong. Paul spoke boldly in certain portions of his letter and was very gentle in other portions of the same letter. Jesus did the same during his earthly ministry, but with the scribes and Pharisees, his words were strong and penetrating.

**Q:** The J. B. Davis *Bible Dictionary* states, “The last section of the epistle, chapters 10 through 13, is believed by many students of the New Testament to be a separate letter, or a fragment of it, written by Paul soon after his return to Ephesus from his unrecorded visit to Corinth. The mind of the apostle was not fully relieved by that visit. He had come back to Ephesus anxious about the Corinthian church, and in his sorrow, he wrote a letter. It is a letter of tears and anguish of heart....” Is it true that the last four chapters were a separate letter?

**A:** That thought is difficult to accept, but possibly they were a fragment of a separate letter.

**Comment:** The author of the *Bible Dictionary* added the following note: “And if the last four chapters ever existed as a separate letter, it is strange indeed that no traces of that have been left in the history of the New Testament.”

**Reply:** Paul wrote at least three letters. One reason the first letter was not preserved seems to be that it called attention to some very bad conditions that had to be clarified. Paul was partially successful in correcting those conditions, but Divine Providence overruled that the details not become part of Holy Writ. For that first letter to be read continuously by Christians down through the Gospel Age might have had a detrimental effect. However, any letter that was written has been preserved in its entirety, even if we do not have it at the present time. The letter will show up in due time to vindicate its existence, but it was not preserved for the Church to feed upon down through the age.

**Comment:** Scofield considered 2 Corinthians to be one letter but broken into three separate parts: “Paul’s Principles of Action” (chapter 1), “The Collection for the Poor Saints in Jerusalem” (chapters 2-9), and “Paul’s Defense of His Apostolic Authority” (chapters 10-13).

Paul admitted that his bodily presence was considered base by some. No doubt he was not the handsomest man or the most erect in stature, but some of these features could be attributed to all the sufferings and persecutions he went through.

There is another reason Paul said that being “absent,” he was “bold” toward the Corinthians. Some people can be more tactful in writing a letter of reprimand than in speaking in person. Because the one who is the object of verbal advice given in an ecclesia in the presence of others becomes more and more apparent, a problem is that his defense mechanism is aroused in opposition. When a reprimand is done by letter, the message gets across but is a little more palatable to the recipient(s). Although Paul could have been bold when present with the Corinthian brethren, he chose the method of disclosing his innermost thoughts by letter.

However, Paul implied that if his advice was not heeded, the brethren would see a different side of him than just his poor bodily appearance. They had noticed his weak points according to the flesh, but he would be bold if they did not follow his advice. Unfortunately, a severely handicapped person, no matter how noble or educated, subconsciously becomes a second-rate citizen in the eyes of many viewers.

In addition, some brethren judged Paul “as if we walked according to the flesh”; that is, they judged his motives. A worldly-wise person is prone to look upon another person as having wrong ulterior motives. Consequently, those in Corinth who felt Paul was a false apostle were making a judgment “according to the flesh.” “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” (2 Cor. 5:16). We are to judge one another as new creatures and to resist viewing a brother or a sister according to the flesh.

**Comment:** Later in this epistle, Paul said, “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction” (2 Cor. 13:10). Paul always had the well-being of the brethren in mind, their progress as new creatures.

**Reply:** In verse 2, Paul was saying that he intended to return to Corinth and he would rather have these matters settled so that the visit would be a joyful one.

Let us consider verse 1 again. “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am [now] bold toward you.” The expression “meekness and gentleness of Christ” reminds us of Jesus’ manner of speaking to the disciples in private conversation. In other words, Jesus was quite approachable to his disciples. They did not fear to ask him questions or to come to him because they knew his basic nature was as he declared, “Come unto me ... and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:28,29). The disciples knew that Jesus’ *general* disposition was one of meekness and lowliness of heart, but of course as the Lord, he could not let the disciples do all the talking. He came with inherent authority, but he used that authority only when it was proper to do so. Stated another way, his general proclivity was toward the gentle or quiet side—unless the situation required righteous indignation.

**Comment:** The fact that Jesus always gave glory to his Father and spoke only those things the Father instructed him to say shows meekness.

**Comment:** Paul's saying he was "base" referred to his small stature.

**Reply:** Sometimes people speak disparagingly of a short individual and call him a "runt" behind his back. We think there was a vociferous minority in the church at Corinth.

**2 Cor. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:**

The end of verse 2 and part of verse 3 are better in the Revised Standard: "Some ... suspect us of acting in worldly fashion. For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war."

When Christians meet and there are doctrinal differences, they have to resist warring "after the flesh." Paul used the illustration where one who differs in doctrine comes into the ecclesia and is in the minority. Of course the newcomer may be correct, but the tendency is to find ways and means to convert him to what is thought to be the proper understanding of Scripture. In this situation, one can destroy a new creature and not even realize he is sinning against Christ. For example, as soon as the individual comes in, it would be wrong to immediately change the subject to the doctrinal difference. Some seem to always take the occasion to bring up a point to support what they consider to be truth. If the spirituality of the newcomer is disrupted, he will think twice about attending the next meeting. As one changes from ecclesia to ecclesia for reasons such as new employment, the spiritual atmosphere of the class is preserved if the doctrinal difference is forgotten until the time that it is the subject matter; then the differences can be discussed in season, the purpose of a Bible study being to search the Scriptures.

**Comment:** In other words, we should let the subject come up naturally and not force it.

**Reply:** Yes, and in that way, if the newcomer is honest, he may consider the discussion to be providential.

For another example, some think that special holy days should be observed. Others feel that every day is a holy day. The person who wants to observe days is doing so because of religious compunction or conscience. Of course we are not saying to shun the truth, but the "warring" should be along other lines.

**Comment:** The Christian is to be in the world but not of the world and thus not be adversarial by nature.

**Reply:** Yes, it is wrong to be given to disputes and arguments and to override the judgments of others.

**Comment:** Romans 8:4,5 reads, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

**Reply:** Yes, that is another perspective of the same situation.

**2 Cor. 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)**

**2 Cor. 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;**

The "strong holds" that are pulled down are imaginations and human reasoning. These verses are usually given a particular slant that limits their meaning, namely, that "casting down

imagination” means we are to bring into captivity every thought in our own head to the obedience of Christ. In other words, we think of the “imagination” as being *merely* in our own head. But in this chapter, Paul was referring to the imaginations of not only our own head but also the heads of others. False teachers talked to the Corinthians about what God’s will is, but their instruction was of *human* reasoning. The lesson is that as Christians, we have to be careful of and to cast out from our minds *all* human reasoning. We must be sure that what a “teacher” says squares with the Word of God. We are to be wary of not only our own imagination but also the imagination of others—of “*every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,*” especially with regard to those in a teaching role. We are engaged in *mental* warfare—a war of the mind and thinking. The false teachers spoke with authority, assuming they were superior to Paul, and did not recognize him as an apostle. They were presumptuous in their thinking, and Paul told the Corinthians to be careful in accepting such human reasoning.

Each Christian should bring “into captivity every thought [in his own mind] to the obedience of Christ.” What a person says is imagination if it is not backed up with Scripture. The Bereans, who readily heard, or received, what Paul said and then searched the Scriptures daily to see if his words were true, had the proper attitude. We, too, are to test every word and thought against the Word of God, thus bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of God and Christ. Note: We must *hear* something in order to analyze, screen, and square it with the Bible. Only a fool answers a matter before he hears it. Then, after having heard a matter, we need to find out if it squares with Scripture.

With regard to the “pulling down of strong holds,” many things in our minds and characters need to be removed, and we do not have the strength of character to withstand all of them except by the Holy Spirit, the power of God. When victories come, the credit goes to God for working in us to His glory and honor, for we are a spectacle to men and to angels.

Some “imagination” are self-hallucinatory, self-indulged human reasoning; others are subjected on our minds by occult power. The RSV reads, “We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God.” These “arguments” can be of the old heart, the old mind, for the old creature reasons in the mind of the new creature. Also, there are pressures on the mind from without—from other people, associates, principalities, and powers.

“Casting down ... every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” We marvel that the martyr Stephen made his calling and election sure so quickly. He must have been a very positive character, dealing with all of the mental assaults right away. Paul had the same type of mind, but because God chose him to have a ministry and be a special angel to the Church, his life was prolonged for the benefit of others in both doctrine and Christian walk.

The old mind causes problems with imaginations and fantasies. In our development, we sometimes get in a stupor that must be fought over a period of time. As we assess ourselves, we find that we are not necessarily the best example. Stated another way, there is always room for improvement. Therefore, *time* is a factor in our development and mental warfare. This statement seems to be even truer of the days we are living in. Since the Laodicean period thus far has not witnessed Christians being burned at the stake for their beliefs, what makes us worthy or unworthy of being received into the Little Flock in glory is victory in mental warfare. In other words, our mental struggles are being closely observed to see if we are fit.

We need to search the Scriptures daily on all different issues in order to have the “knowledge of God” as a defense in our mental warfare. The Lord’s Word tells us what is evil and wrong and gives specific examples. Familiarity with the Word gives us knowledge of Him and His instruction. The “casting down” is based on both familiarity with Scripture and obedience to it. If we bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” if we meet this highest standard, we will make the Little Flock.

Since verse 4 is parenthetical, Paul's application connected verses 3 and 5. In verse 3, Paul said it was not his habit to walk after the flesh, for he was spiritually minded, always having a high level of thinking. Some people like to hear a dispute for the sake of a dispute, but Paul was not of that disposition. He was saying that the weapons of Christian warfare are not carnal. For instance, to punch someone in the nose to get a point across is the use of a fist as a "carnal" weapon. And of course the use of a literal weapon to impose one's will is another example of a carnal weapon. Paul was saying, "Though the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, nevertheless, the weapons we have at our disposal—those we receive through God's Spirit—are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." Paul did not war after the flesh, but he was not weaponless, for he had spiritual weapons.

In our Christian life, we often think upon verse 5. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We have a dual nature—a spirit nature in an earthen body—and much of the time there is a conflict between the two. In this exercise of the spirit presiding over the flesh, hindering the flesh in every way possible, we develop character and become stronger as Christians. This basic principle can be applied in another sense too.

Many people quote verse 5 in regard to various incidents in life. For instance, some try to use hypnotic power to cast others under a spell. The tendency of certain television ministers is to get audience participation from the viewers with words such as, "Look at me now," with the result that people look them in the eye. Another method is to put their hands on the face of the television camera and say, "Put your two hands where my hands are." Such ministers try to actually communicate with the viewer, whereas a viewer is normally like a disinterested spectator. To avoid coming under hypnosis or any other type of occult power, one should immediately either turn off the television or say something like, "In the name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I rebuke thee."

If a filthy thought or suggestion comes into the mind, we should do the same thing, that is, either verbally or mentally rebuke the thought. According to the flesh, we are inclined to rebuke by simply trying to resist the thought, but our own effort alone is usually not successful. The instruction is, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," but if we try to resist by just having a stronger will, we usually fail (James 4:7). However, if we say, "I rebuke thee, Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ," and thus make the rebuke personal, it is more apt to be effective. Another method is to ask someone to assist us in prayer to ward off such an attack.

For many years, we thought of and applied verse 5 in this way. While such positive resistance has great merit and value, Paul's application was slightly different. The principle was the same in action, but he applied the words "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself" to the erroneous doctrines and the higher critics in the church at Corinth. He was saying, "I am not accustomed to using Greek oratory but try to use plain speech and talk about the Cross rather than go into other theories." Paul implied that his "weapons" were more powerful than those worldly people employ against each other—and the Corinthians got the point. Certainly Peter used *power* against Ananias and Sapphira, and Paul was saying, "I have that same miraculous power. If some want to mouth against me in person to exalt themselves, I will be only too happy and ready to utilize power to put them under subjection and bring them to their senses." The false teachers felt that their logic was superior to Paul's and that they were apostles because they had seen Jesus. By his statement in verse 5, Paul was implying, "Do you want me to come to you and have a showdown?" When they reflected on his words, a showdown was the last thing they wanted, based on hearsay of other incidents in Paul's ministry and that of Peter. Paul had said, "I claim to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. You do the same, but let's see who is the real apostle."

**2 Cor. 10:6** And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Verse 6 is stated correctly, but the 1611 Old English of the King James might be misconstrued. What are some thoughts on this verse?

**Comment:** Part of Christian duty is to speak out or disfellowship as the situation requires.

**Comment:** The end of verse 5 has to be included: “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.” When our own thoughts are in obedience to Christ, we are not fearful and have the ability to “revenge all disobedience.”

**Reply:** Paul was writing a letter of warning to the Corinthians. When they received the letter, they would become responsible. Each of them had the choice of heeding or ignoring the forewarning, so that when he came to them later, it would be apparent who had obeyed and who had disobeyed. If they acknowledged and consented to the advice, then they became obedient. Paul would exercise his authority as an apostle to punish those who disobeyed.

Verse 6 tells what our attitude should be when we either hear or read in journals or letters an exposition of the supposed Word of God. There are certain responsibilities. Paul was ready to speak with authority and punish disobedience, but first, he gave the Corinthians *time* to respond and obey. He likewise gave the ecclesia time to act on his advice regarding the sin of fornication. When the brethren excommunicated the individual, he commended them.

Now Paul was admonishing the Corinthians regarding false teachers, hoping they would fully obey and heed his advice before his visit. If not, when he arrived, he would exercise judgment on those who opposed him. He would not just sit back and be quiet and gentle. Jesus’ general disposition was to be meek and gentle, but when occasion demanded, he spoke strongly. In other words, the expediency of the circumstance dictated how he responded. As individuals, we have a responsibility in this direction also. In proportion to the *danger* of the false doctrine or practice, we must speak out.

**Q:** Is verse 6 expressing the principle that “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” of God (1 Cor. 11:31)?

**A:** Yes, that is the way one develops character and pursues the knowledge of God. How do we judge ourselves? We have to use the Lord’s Word as a measuring standard. When character is developed up to a certain level, we must *act* at that level, or we will slip back. Because of multiple problems in the class at Corinth, Paul was indicating the need for development. We each have a responsibility when we see wrong doctrine or conduct. In order to maintain the standard in our own integrity, we must speak out. Otherwise, we are compromising principle.

**Comment:** If the order is transposed in verse 6, the meaning is clearer: “When your own obedience is fulfilled, then you are ready to deal with someone else.”

**Reply:** Yes. The technique of reverse order was quite prominent with the Apostle Paul.

**2 Cor. 10:7** Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s.

Paul was especially addressing his enemies, who thought that they were Christ’s and that he was inferior. Paul admonished this false teaching element to think the matter over carefully



before he came to Corinth because when he arrived, he would talk strongly to them face to face if they were not rightly exercised.

Several points come out. Paul was firm. In the first letter, he said that some in the class considered themselves to be of Peter, some of Apollos, and some even “of Christ”—and hence *above* Peter and the others. Stated another way, if this Judaizing element felt they were superior to Paul, then certainly they felt superior to Peter and Apollos as well. This thinking was carnal, for “we are *all* of God in Christ” is the right attitude. It was wrong for the brethren to polarize around a certain personality and not the Word of God, and it was wrong for the Judaizing element to think they were superior to the apostles. This element wanted to undercut Paul in order to bolster their *own* position. They connived to promote all factions, for a fragmented class, if unchecked, would work to their advantage by resulting in their *own* promotion.

**Q:** Didn't the Corinthians fear the power that the apostles had to effect judgments?

**A:** The tendency is to forget, and based on the Book of Acts, that power had not been used for a few years. Consider the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai. In spite of the tremendous miracles God did through Moses, they forgot, for they did not receive the Word mixed with faith. Certainly the Corinthians would have quaked if they thought Paul had the power currently. With us too, there is always the danger that we will forget God's goodness as time goes by. Therefore, reflection is very important. We should take stock of ourselves in order to avert a wrong direction we may unconsciously be pursuing. If the Corinthians had reflected on Paul's *general ministry* and especially on his *doctrine*, they would not have concentrated on his outward physical appearance, voice, and manner. Aptness to teach is an asset to eldership, but oratory is not as important as the *content* of the message. However, for *public* discourses, there should be some of both—aptness for teaching and oratorical ability.

When our motive is impugned, our self-defense mechanism sometimes goes into operation. We might say, “You consider yourself consecrated, don't you? Well, at least give me the benefit of the doubt and consider me consecrated also.” Paul was not disparaging those who were confident of their full dedication to Christ but was saying, “At least give me credit for the same. I am a Christian like you, but God has given me a particular authority beyond that of an ordinary Christian. Therefore, forgive me if I have to remind you of some of these qualifications.” If the Corinthians were still critics after considering Paul's many evidences of loyalty and devotion to Christ under suffering conditions, they should be ashamed.

Being in the flesh, we at times, at least for the moment, are influenced by appearances. Sometimes appearances are justified, and sometimes first impressions are misjudgments. Paul was saying, “Though you look on me as a nobody because of my outward appearance and judge accordingly, you may suffer for that misjudgment. You think you are a Christian, and certainly I think I am a Christian. When I come to you, we will see who really is Christ's.” For those Corinthians who were wrong, Paul intended to show them up in front of the whole class.

Isn't it true that we are influenced by someone who has a beautiful smile and charisma? If that disposition is natural to the individual and not put on, the influence is beneficial and helpful in company. However, we have to be careful in measuring thoughts, deeds, and actions by a stiff neck or a proud look, for example. We are not to prejudice by outward appearance.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Peter said, “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). And God said, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; ... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

**2 Cor. 10:8** For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath

**given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:**

Paul could have elaborated on his authority as an apostle, but he gave enough information in this second epistle to get the point across. Those who said, “I am of Christ,” implied they were *above* Paul in authority and questioned his apostleship. At the same time, they were confident of their own authority and even felt that others were not of Christ.

The authority of Paul and the other apostles was “for edification” of the brethren, not for their “destruction.” In what sense could Paul have destroyed his enemies? He could have forced a showdown in the Corinthian church and humiliated them. He could have *extensively* dealt with his enemies, but instead the only way we know about them is through the indirect reasoning in his letters. He made clear where he stood and the importance of his message, but we can read between the lines what was happening in the ecclesia with regard to the influence of other individuals. Paul could have struck his enemies dead, as Peter did with Ananias and Sapphira, or given a physical penalty of some kind to put them in their place, but his purpose was to edify and build up the Corinthians, not to destroy or shame them.

Paul felt the responsibility of the endowment that was placed on him as an ambassador for Christ, and he wanted to be as successful as possible. He was saying, “At least give me credit for my motive—that I am not seeking your destruction.” In fact, to do so would have been contrary to his mission as an apostle, which was to build up the Church, not to tear it down.

Paul “boasted” by calling himself an apostle at the beginning of both epistles to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1). To claim to be an apostle would seem to the false teachers to be an empty boast when they compared themselves with him, but their judgment was awry because of their high-mindedness. God gave apostolic authority for the edification of others, including the church at Corinth. Paul started the church at Corinth, for he went, as was customary, to virgin territory lest he take credit for someone else’s labors. The only exception, which he corrected, was to the Romans. He admitted that he had not brought the truth to them, for they were already an established church, but he longed to visit that church because it was the most prominent class in existence at that time and the city of Rome was the seat of the empire. The ecclesias at Rome and Corinth were probably comparable in numbers.

**Comment:** Paul seemed to be walking a fine line. On the one hand, he did not hide his apostolic authority and would exercise it where needed, but on the other hand, the Corinthian brethren were not to fear him. His apostleship was for their edification, not for their destruction.

**2 Cor. 10:9** That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

**2 Cor. 10:10** For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

“Say they [Paul’s enemies].” The opposition recognized that Paul’s writing was extraordinary and bold, but they found fault with his physical presence. They criticized his short stature, weaker voice, and partial baldness. Some of God’s other special servants were tall, handsome, and strong and had powerful voices. Had Jesus come without the miracles and appearance and with pure reasoning only, his ministry would have been greatly curtailed. Instead he must have been unusual. For example, he needed a strong voice to be heard in the fields, on mountains, and by the wayside. However, the Gospels do not mention the strength of his voice, for diction, speech, knowledge of grammar, and oratory were not important. What mattered was the *content* of his message.

With the word “letters” being plural, Paul may have been referring to his writings to other ecclesias as well. His epistles, which were written basically to the consecrated, were well

balanced, powerful, and to the point. In fact, the Corinthians felt his letters were better than his appearance and speech.

**Comment:** With regard to verse 9, Paul did not want the Corinthians to think that every time they got a letter from him, they had to cringe and say, “Oh, no!”

Verse 10 shows that God sometimes speaks through a person who looks very humble, and because of that appearance, brethren might not expect erudition and knowledge from that source. Paul’s bodily presence was “weak, and his speech contemptible,” but what learning and logic he possessed!

**Comment:** Paul said earlier, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Some are more prone to recognize a grievous situation in the proper manner. For example, how did the Galatians initially react to the Apostle Paul on his first trip with Barnabas? When they heard his logic, some of them—if they could—would have sacrificed their own eyes by plucking them out and giving them to Paul to help his eyesight. They realized that because of his appearance with his poor eyesight, others might be turned off and not listen to his teaching, whereas if they stayed awhile and heard him, many would be convinced. Thus outward appearances do have an influence. In fact, sometimes Satan uses those who have natural charisma to be his spokesmen.

**2 Cor. 10:11** Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

Paul said that if the Corinthians did not heed his advice, he would be just as strong when he was present with them through his righteous indignation and authority to execute punishment. However, to do so was contrary to the nature of his general disposition.

Paul threatened to be powerful with the Corinthians when present with them. In other words, he could be powerful either by letter or in person. Because he was an apostle, it would not be appropriate to allow himself to have the humble attitude “We are of equal stature.” Jesus had personally appointed him to be a teacher, so he could not allow those who were not apostles to have equal status with him, and he would not step down to their level and make the Church a democracy. Similarly, if Jesus had not raised the dead, healed lepers, etc., at his First Advent, how many would have become Christians? God gave Jesus this power so that the gospel message would get a proper start. Not until the end of Jesus’ ministry did God allow the permission of evil to overtake him. During his ministry, he was popular with the masses, the common people. Some came for the miracles, some came to hear him speak, and some came just to see the man who differed with the scribes and Pharisees or to hear a debate. Whatever the motive, thousands on occasion followed him from one place to another. The point, then, of verse 11 is that Paul would act like an apostle, if need be, and he was telling the Corinthians in advance that such was the case.

**2 Cor. 10:12** For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

The disobedient element compared and measured themselves by themselves. Paul said this

policy was “not wise.” As stated in the first epistle, all Christians are of God in Christ, so they should not be for one individual and against another. Those who said, “I am of Apollos,” were favoring one brother above another on a *personalized* basis, as though they were choosing a party leader. To listen to Paul’s message was certainly not out of order, but the comparison of pitting one against another was not a wise policy but a destructive one. The false teachers, the wrong element, undercut Paul as an apostle and glorified themselves. Feeling their truth was better than Paul’s, they elevated themselves and demoted him.

It is wrong to minimize the ministry of a brother by using a second brother as a comparison with the motive of pointing out the faults of the first brother. The faultfinder does not really respect either brother but just uses the second brother to undercut the first brother on a personalized basis. The exception would be where there is definite proof that the first brother is an enemy of truth.

**Comment:** If any today reject Paul’s advice and follow their own counsel instead, they are also erring and, in a sense, disparaging him.

**Reply:** There is great responsibility when one instructs in God’s name. For an individual to speak presumptuously or above the Word of God incurs culpability.

Paul preached the whole message and in a direct manner. He was saying, in effect, that the other preachers of truth belonged to a “club” and spoke the same language, commending each other. Along a similar line, frequent references to “the Pastor” rather than to the Word of God are a current example of improper commendation. Paul did not compare himself with the other apostles and said the brethren should not compare themselves with each other. He spoke what was on his mind and heart, all the while being thoroughly dedicated to God and Christ.

**2 Cor. 10:13** But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

**2 Cor. 10:14** For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

God gave Jesus the Holy Spirit in full measure, and to others He gave the Holy Spirit in part, to a greater or lesser extent. Of course the apostles received the Holy Spirit in greater measure than the other body members. Not only were the false teachers speaking beyond their category of authority, but they must have gone to great excesses for Paul to speak so strongly of his apostleship and what God’s Word teaches. He was implying that the false teachers were instructing *without* the Word of God, giving *human* reasoning, and then *justifying* that reasoning by saying they had had personal contact with Jesus. The principle is the same when popes put themselves above Jesus, claiming to be the substitute in his stead. They point to Jesus as a baby and to Mary, the beautiful Madonna, as the Mediatrix. One would not go to an infant for advice and leadership, but one would go to a mother for comfort and solace. Popes have changed, nullified, and spoken above the Word of God in certain places. Both Paul and John spoke of such actions as the mark of Antichrist; that is, the false system was changing “times and laws” and “forbidding [priests and nuns] to marry” (Dan. 7:25; 1 Tim. 4:3). The false teachers in the Apostle Paul’s day were the incipient membership of Papacy’s type of thinking, namely, the Nicolaitan spirit, for which Papacy lauded itself (Rev. 2:6,15).

Paul was saying, “We boast not of things without measure but according to the level of authority that *God* distributed to us.” This “measure [was] to reach even unto you [in Corinth]. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ.” What was Paul’s thought?

**Comment:** He had originally brought the gospel to the Corinthians and thus had a right to further instruct, correct, and nurture them.

**Reply:** Yes. Those with the Nicolaitan spirit tended to make a “god” of the ecclesia. This spirit could exist on either an individual or a group basis—the office of Papacy, the episcopacy, the orthodox Church, where a synod or council dictates. Supposedly consecrated Christians got together and deliberated and gave commandments regardless of how God’s Word was violated. The Nicolaitan spirit was progressive.

The attitude of the false teachers was, “Who is Paul? What is he doing here in Corinth?” They acted as if a stranger had come into their midst and started to speak with authority on the Word of God. However, Paul was saying, “God directed me to Corinth. I was providentially brought here to start this class. I am not going beyond my authority.” He did not overreach himself because God had set him as a minister of the gospel. On the road to Damascus, Jesus said Paul would minister to kings, rulers (civil and ecclesiastical), and nations. Paul did not presume to assume this honor, for *God* had placed him as an apostle.

Incidentally, an individual can be wrong, and a group (ecclesia) can be wrong. Or conversely, an individual can be a faithful minister, and a group (ecclesia) of servants can faithfully do a cooperative work. Each case has to be analyzed. To meet God’s approval, the words of individuals, as well as groups, have to square with a “thus saith the LORD.” We can serve and cooperate with an individual or a group to the extent it is scriptural and obedient to the Lord.

While Paul’s boasting might seem extraordinary, it was backed up by facts. The bottom line was the content of his message. For example, when Jesus came at the First Advent, he confessed that he was *the Son of the man* (Adam), the Son of God, and that he had come from heaven. He could have compromised these facts and tried to reveal them delicately over a long period of time so that the hearers might get indoctrinated, but he spoke as it was.

**Comment:** Verse 13 in the *Diaglott* reads, “According to the measure of the rule which the God of measure assigned to us, to reach even to you.”

**Reply:** That is a good rendering. In his sermon on Mars Hill, Paul told how God had marked out boundaries (Acts 17:26). Unbeknownst to Paul at the time, God had regions in mind when sending him out on his ministry. The apostle probably never dreamed that he would cover so much territory in three missionary journeys, but God had the geographic areas, or regions, marked out as with a tape measure. Stated another way, Paul’s path was marked out in advance, and he was saying, “I did not come to you by chance.” He also emphasized the distance of his travels. Therefore, he was saying, “I have gone out of my way to preach the gospel to you. You did not know the gospel until I came to you, but God appointed me as a messenger to extend my travels and reach even unto you.”

The word “measure” is mentioned four times in verses 13 and 14. The supplied word “our” should be omitted in verse 13: “But we will not boast of things without ... measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.” In other words, in God’s providence, Paul came to Corinth, and a blessing ensued in that some of the people heard the gospel message and responded.

“For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ.” In going on his missionary journey, Paul looked to the Lord’s providence to lead him. In one case, a man of Macedonia instructed Paul in a vision not to go toward Asia, toward China, but to come to Macedonia (Acts 16:9,10).

**2 Cor. 10:15** Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

Again Paul reminded the Corinthians that he had started the ecclesia years earlier. He did not build on "other men's labours," for he had established the class under God's providence.

"Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly." Verses 15 and 16 read as follows in the Phillips translation: "Our pride is not in matters beyond our proper sphere nor in the labours of other men. No, our hope is that your growing faith will mean the expansion of our sphere of action, so that before long we shall be preaching the gospel in districts beyond you, instead of being proud of work that has already been done in someone else's province."

Paul emphasized that Corinth had been virgin territory for the gospel and that he had not built on the efforts of others who preceded him. When the gospel was received there, he prayed that the class would grow and prosper.

**2 Cor. 10:16** To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

**2 Cor. 10:17** But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

**2 Cor. 10:18** For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Not only were the false teachers commending *each other*, but each one even had the audacity to commend *himself*. They exalted themselves as leaders—they built up a wrong, prefabricated position—and then, from that level, issued directives in advance of the Word of God.

**Comment:** Paul urged them to be humble and to go on and spread the gospel in regions beyond Corinth, always keeping in mind and being careful to give God the glory.

**Reply:** One can glory, but that glory must be "in the Lord," not in self. God uses the cooperative efforts of a group to bless His people, but brethren should be appreciative of Him and give Him the real credit for providentially providing the blessing. The same principle applies to an individual. If a person's life has been enriched in the gospel by the ministry of an individual, he should glory not in that individual but in the Lord. There is an additional benefit in giving God the credit; namely, if that individual should ever go astray, the person would be alert and thus less apt to follow him in that wrong path. A lesson for us is to be sure that what we are thankful for is truly of God.

Neither individuals nor groups should become angry and/or defensive when questioned. A common expression is that the "fur goes up." This reaction should not occur unless the one doing the questioning is hypercritical or suspicious or manifesting animosity. However, to have reserve is proper. Sometimes the criticism is valid, and sometimes the motive in questioning is only to get information. The motive should be sincere.

**Q:** What did Paul mean when he said in the end of verse 16 that we should not "boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand"?

**A:** The Revised Standard is better for verse 16, "So that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's field." When Paul first went to Corinth, the city was virgin territory in that there was no organized ecclesia. Thus he did not

enter into, or labor in, another man's work. Jesus said to his apostles with regard to the harvest, "The fields are already ripe for harvest. Other men have sown, and now you enter into their labor. God may be prospering you with regard to finalizing, maturing, and perfecting the work previously done" (John 4:35,36 paraphrase). In other words, sometimes we sow, and sometimes we have the privilege of finalizing what others previously sowed.

The Apostle Paul did both the sowing and the reaping in Corinth, and he was trying to perfect the brethren there by telling what they were doing wrong and what they were doing right. Many see only the outward, superficial characteristics of an individual and do not recognize that the Lord is using him in a particular way. However, we are to analyze the *effect* of one's influence and not the personality aspect. Of course it is nice to have both qualities, but of the two, having the Lord's Word is better than merely having an engaging personality. Paul had the message but not the appearance, whereas Moses had both. Only Christ is "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16).

Paul intended to go beyond Corinth into other virgin territory. Not only did he labor, suffer, cry, pray, and probably fast on behalf of the brethren there, but he wanted them to know he would go on to other fields. Hopefully, they would take advantage of his advice, but he was not rooted in Corinth. Stated another way, he would not cease his labors but would continue to preach the gospel. He did not intend to take over the Corinthian ecclesia, for he had other work to do.

In giving a sermon, people sometimes draw lessons from a fabricated premise. It is true that God and Jesus used parables, but as far as possible, we should base our statements and lessons on what is true. Caution must be used in narrating a story or manufacturing a parable. A whole theme or sermon is sometimes based on an earthly illustration with no mention of the Word of God. Such teaching can have value if it is done limitedly and occasionally, but to do so habitually can be dangerous and misleading.

Paul was explaining his own motives. He was not trying to wean classes over to himself as a personality. God had given him a stewardship, and he was trying to faithfully discharge that responsibility. Sowing in virgin territory was hard work that required real sacrifice.

"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you." Paul went beyond Corinth to Rome at the end of his ministry when he was made a prisoner. According to tradition, he even went to Spain before he died. He was released from prison in a two-year reprieve and then went back to Rome, where he was put to death by Nero.

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Although the enlargement of the gospel by extension into previously pagan territories seems to add to one's prestige, the glory really goes to God when others are enlightened with truth.

"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." Paul's commendation came later. Historically, we can look back and see his greatness—and thus have a better perspective than the contemporaries of his day.

For several verses, Paul dwelled on the same theme. Now that he had gone to Corinth, a new area, and established a class there, it was his intention to move farther westward and "preach the gospel in the regions beyond [Corinth]." In his epistles, Paul indicated that he had two objectives: Spain and Rome. Thus we can see how far-reaching his intent, or purpose, was—he intended to cover the Mediterranean basin. Gibraltar is the gateway to the Atlantic Ocean, the exit of the Mediterranean Sea. Paul's purpose was to preach the gospel starting at Antioch and go in a semicircle all the way over to Spain. He would thus cover all the provinces of the Roman Empire to which he felt the Holy Spirit was guiding him. While he was directed to go to

Macedonia, he was not told to go to Africa or to Alexandria, Egypt. He had many revelations, but most of them were not revealed to us. He did not boast “in another man’s line of things,” for he did not travel the normal beaten path where others had gone.

It took time for Paul’s greatness as an apostle to sink in. After his demise, many realized a terrific loss, but he left a wealth of epistles behind. Luke was his amanuensis to record and preserve the epistles in one fashion or another.

**2 Cor. 11:1** Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

**2 Cor. 11:2** For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Why did Paul approach the matter from the standpoint of counseling the Corinthians to bear with his foolishness for a moment? Sometimes when an issue has two sides, we assume the position from the outlook of the other party in order to bring out the fact that he does not have a sound basis for his reasoning. Then, by reasoning from the opposite side, we help others to see the subject more clearly. The particular standpoint here was the Corinthians’ outlook on Paul. They thought he was foolish. Earlier Paul said, “For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause” (2 Cor. 5:12,13).

The Greeks respected those with much knowledge, dignity of bearing, oratory, fluency, manner of delivery, and cadence of expression. Paul purposely forsook that kind of flowery language and approach in his reasoning and was blunt, coming right to the point. As a result, the Corinthians considered him to have a lack of knowledge. Moreover, they thought he spoke above his authority and questioned his apostleship. But what appeared to be foolishness to them was actually the *wisdom of God*. When someone belittles our background or approach, we want him to bear with us for a moment and to listen further. Accordingly, Paul assumed a position of inferiority but was saying, “Bear with me in this position of supposed inferiority, and listen to what I have to say. I will appeal to your reasoning.”

Paul’s *zeal* was regarded as a mark of inferiority. The Corinthians felt that his emotions should be schooled or governed—that he should not be too abrupt or enthusiastic—and thus manifest to others complete mastery. Considering Paul puerile, they minimized what he had to say because of his mannerisms. Thus, in trying to reach them, he said, “If I seem to be beside myself, it is because I am doing God’s work” (2 Cor. 5:13 paraphrase). The reason for his zeal, exuberance, and bluntness was his jealous care for them (verse 2). He was “beside” himself because he was zealous in doing God’s work.

What does the term “godly jealousy” mean? Why did Paul use that term?

**Comment:** “Jealousy” was proper in this context, for the Corinthian brethren had committed themselves to Christ, and Paul wanted them to retain that relationship.

**Reply:** Jealousy is good if it is godly and put in its proper place. God is a “jealous God” (Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Josh. 24:19). He said, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isa. 42:8). Paul felt a divine jealousy for the Corinthians to remain faithful in their betrothal to Christ. Song 8:6 is usually explained as a negative emotion, whereas it is favorable—exactly the opposite. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” Just as the



grave consumes relentlessly, so should our love be for Christ. Our relationship to him should be one of such close affection that its consuming effect is like the grave. Just as death takes hold of our members and works continually to bring us down to the grave, so this jealousy, or godly love, between Bride and Bridegroom is so consuming that it affects all avenues of life. It operates in, consumes, and energizes the individuals involved in this relationship.

**Q:** Was Paul also implying that the false teachers, who were leading astray, were jealous (in an unfavorable sense) of his influence over some of the brethren?

**A:** Yes, because earlier Paul said, “We dare not ... compare ourselves with some that commend themselves” (2 Cor. 10:12). The false teachers were commending themselves, whereas Paul was seeking the commendation of God. He was concerned for God and Jesus, not for himself. His motive was not selfish; that is, his interest in and concern for the Corinthians was for their spiritual welfare and not for his own exaltation. The others gloried in themselves and compared themselves with one another in a rivalry, saying, “I am of Cephas,” “I am of Christ,” etc. Their attitude should have been, “We are of God in Christ.”

Paul wanted the Corinthians to bear with him in his “folly” (foolishness), for he had a godly jealousy over their spiritual welfare, wanting to ultimately present them to Christ. A Greek custom, especially with the nobility, was that when a man and woman were betrothed, the two families appointed a guardian to make sure they were brought together in the most harmonious fashion. The guardian negotiated back and forth to make sure the two were properly fitted for the marriage. If, in the meantime, any fornication or incident occurred that would degenerate the bliss of the union, the erring party was charged with the responsibility. Paul seemed to be saying that just as a person was appointed to see that the marriage union was consummated on the highest level, so God had appointed Paul to see that the espousal between the Bride class and the Bridegroom was properly consummated, and then his work would be finished. “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy” meant that God had charged him with this responsibility. The purpose of the “godly jealousy” was not to commend or laud self but to see that their relationship to Christ was carried out properly.

“That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” In Greece, and especially in the sin city of Corinth, it was difficult to be a chaste virgin. People of different nations came to Corinth, which was a center of commerce between Rome and Asia Minor. From Corinth, many sailed to Ephesus, so the three cities of Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus were commercially significant. Paul was saying, “Please bear with me. Put aside for a moment what seems to some to be boasting, and even foolishness and an overextension of myself, and listen to a few more words I will say. I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband.” In other words, God had used Paul to introduce the gospel to the Corinthians.

Many people are turned off by a line of credits, but it was important for Paul to remind the Corinthians of his prerequisites, which showed they should pay more attention to him than to the elders in the class. Paul was more important because of his unusual office, and it was essential that the brethren pay attention to his message.

**Comment:** For the end of verse 2, the Revised Standard has, “I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.” Paul hoped that the Corinthians would make their calling and election sure.

**Reply:** Based on his comments in both epistles, he was implying that they had some brushing up to do. “Progress still needs to be made, but my objective is to present as many as possible in this class for betrothal to Christ in the highest and truest sense and as a chaste virgin.” There is a very high standard for the new creature to reach that goal. Elsewhere Paul said, “Follow ... holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). And Peter said, “If the

righteous *scarcely* be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet. 4:18). Too many who name the name of Christ are overly confident of their salvation. Those who truly walk the straight and narrow way and thus make the Little Flock will be given an abundant entrance, whereas the Great Company class will be plucked out of the fire (Jude 23). Here Paul was saying that the objective is the marriage, which only the Little Flock will attain, and being presented to Christ. In the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, only the wise go in to the marriage. Although virgins, the foolish are a later development, that is, after they wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the great Time of Trouble (Rev. 7:14).

“[I] would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.” Paul wanted to get down to the burden of his message. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a *chaste* virgin to Christ.” In many religions, such as with the Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans, and Greeks, several deities were worshipped, the term being “polytheism,” but Paul espoused the Christian to just “one husband.” In other words, the teaching of Jesus was simplicity, and the apostles merely magnified the gospel in harmony with his teaching that there is only the one Savior. People who worship multiple types of gods are misdirected unless God wants them to hear the truth. What a wonderful blessing for us to hear the call and respond and not be passed over! Paul’s desire was to present the church at Corinth as a chaste group to become members of the Bride of Christ.

With regard to the term “chaste virgin,” the brethren at first winked the eye at the individual in the class who had committed fornication (1 Corinthians 5). They thought they were being very loving not to dismiss him from the class, but following that line of reasoning would open the door to loose behavior on the part of other brethren. Some would reason, “If God is so loving and forgives so readily, I can commit sins here and there,” but Paul wanted the Corinthians to be presented to the Lord as a holy group. Thus the term “chaste virgin” pertains to moral lines and being espoused to Christ. Not only was there moral looseness, but individual preferences of the brethren for speakers engendered pride. Paul wanted to present the Corinthians as a *chaste, pure virgin to Christ*, not to apostles or other leaders.

**2 Cor. 11:3** But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Why did Paul bring Eve’s name into his reasoning?

**Comment:** Through suspicions and accusations, the false teachers were trying to draw the Corinthians away from pure devotion to Christ and the wisdom of God.

**Reply:** Yes. Paul had a jealous fear that the Judaizing element might injure them spiritually, and he implied that the “serpent” (the Adversary) was using the false teachers. Although a minority in the class, they were very dangerous. Not only did they think they were true apostles and Paul was a false apostle, but their doctrines were not in harmony with Scripture. They taught from their own human philosophy and reasoning.

What did the serpent do to beguile Eve? Satan cast suspicion on God, and the false teachers likewise cast suspicion on Paul. Through the serpent, Satan asked Eve questions in a negative way, implying that God was withholding information from her. In a subtle way, the serpent directly contradicted God. First, he said, “Yea, hath God said, *Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” (Gen. 3:1). Superficially, there is nothing wrong with that statement, for God had said Adam and Eve were not to eat of a particular type of tree. However, God had phrased the prohibition in a more positive way: “Of *every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ... [except] the [one] tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” (Gen. 2:16,17). Satan’s rephrasing what God had said cast a slightly negative connotation. How subtle, especially since God had

spoken in a positive and favorable way! All of the beautiful trees were good for food, but a limitation was put on just one tree as a test of obedience.

Eve replied, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Gen. 3:2,3). The serpent now cast a deeper suspicion: “Ye shall not *surely* die” (Gen. 3:4). The problem started when Eve listened to the first statement. Had the serpent spoken this way to Jesus, the Master would have firmly resisted and not reasoned with him. When the Adversary was able to infiltrate Eve’s mind a little, he then presented a stronger statement.

Similarly, the false teachers who criticized Paul did not immediately attack his doctrine by saying, “He is teaching you error.” No, they first cast suspicion on him and his motivation by saying he was not an apostle. They faulted him (1) for his bodily appearance including his eyesight, bald head, and short stature; (2) for not seeing Jesus at the First Advent; (3) for contemptible speech instead of flattery and oratory; (4) for his sufferings for Christ, which they considered punishments; (5) for working as a tent maker, for they felt an apostle would demand financial support; and (6) for (supposedly) not knowing his own mind when he did not return to Corinth as stated. In regard to this last point, Paul clearly stated his intentions but had to procrastinate because of legitimate reasons and the Lord’s providence.

The false leaders kept making insinuations against Paul—just as some found fault with Jesus and exaggerated what he did, accusing him of being a “gluttonous man, and a winebibber” (Luke 7:33,34). They criticized him because he ate like a normal person. John the Baptist neither ate meat nor drank wine, yet they found fault with him too, considering him a madman for eating locusts and honey. The point is that if people are critical because they do not sympathize with a person’s thinking, they will find fault *regardless* of what he does. Accordingly, the false teachers misunderstood Paul’s zeal for the class at Corinth. He was writing a letter urging the Corinthians to do certain things because he wanted to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ. He feared the serpent would beguile them as had happened to Eve.

**Comment:** The Judaizing Christians tried to make the gospel more difficult by saying the Christian had to follow the Law as well.

**Reply:** Yes, one way the serpent could beguile the Church was to tie them to the Law and thus lead them away from Christ.

**Comment:** The gospel of Christ was simple, but false apostles used sophistry.

**Reply:** Paul was fearful that the mind of those in the church at Corinth would be beguiled from the “simplicity that is in Christ.” Several principles underlay the subtle beguiling of Eve in the Garden of Eden. The serpent created a doubt in her mind, and Satan makes inroads with Christians in the same way. For example, he gets them to doubt their calling or to feel they are too weak according to the flesh. Another method of beguiling Eve was to have her observe that the serpent was the wisest of all creatures. Then Satan influenced the serpent to purposely eat of the forbidden tree. Perhaps one reason was to find out for himself whether the tree was poisonous, and he saw that the serpent could eat the fruit with no untoward reaction.

Actually the fruit of the forbidden tree was just as good and edible as the fruit of the other trees in the garden; that is, it was not poisonous. All of the fruit-bearing trees were pleasant to look at and were intended to benefit man except the one God excluded. Satan possessed the serpent so that he could use it as an instrument. In the final analysis, however, history will show that the serpent beguiled not only Eve but also Satan himself. Satan did not realize that God had purposely made the serpent wiser than all of the other animals in the Garden of Eden and that the fruit of the forbidden tree had nothing whatsoever to do with its wisdom. In other words,

Satan misconstrued the reason for God to forbid Adam to eat of that tree; namely, it was merely a *test of obedience*. By observing the serpent eat the fruit with impunity, Satan was emboldened to say that Eve (and Adam by implication) would not die by doing likewise. The scenario in the Garden of Eden will be an interesting revelation in the Kingdom Age and in the ages beyond. A lot of attention will no doubt be focused on the start of sin down here on planet Earth. Many insights will be seen of which we have only a fragmentary picture at present. Paul provided much information by putting the blame not on Eve but on Adam.

**Comment:** Paul was concerned that the doctrine of the false teaching element would corrupt the minds of the Corinthians. He implied that Satan was working through that element just as he had worked through the serpent to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden.

**Reply:** Yes. Paul implied that a few individuals in the church at Corinth were false apostles. The serpent beguiled Eve by planting doubts in her mind. Satan's tactic was to sow the seeds of doubt, which made possible other inroads into her faith structure. The analogy is that the false apostles were sowing doubts about Paul's ministry.

There was a "simplicity" in the temptation of Adam and Eve. God said (paraphrased), "You may freely eat of the fruit of all the trees except for one particular kind of tree, for in the day that you eat thereof, you will die." God gave a simple commandment of obedience. The situation in Eden shows that one can have everything, yet the human mind can be deceived by the seeds of doubt. Doubt leads to distrust, and distrust leads to lack of obedience.

**2 Cor. 11:4** For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

**2 Cor. 11:5** For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

**Comment:** Paul seems to have been saying that if a different Jesus, spirit, or gospel was preached to the Corinthians, they wavered too easily and accepted the new thought. Because they were not sufficiently established in doctrine, they were persuaded by one with a strong personality and oratory.

**Reply:** This other party did not deny Christ but preached "another Jesus." Ostensibly, he was teaching the same Christ, but when the doctrine was examined, it was "another Jesus," "another spirit," and "another gospel." What was the danger?

**Comment:** 1 Corinthians 1:22-28 reads: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

**Reply:** Yes, that is an excellent cross-reference to show the danger of worldly wisdom. The Corinthians had to fight against a national characteristic of the Greeks in their love of wisdom and oratory. All who come to Christ have to fight against influences in their background so that they will be re-formed and changed to the divine mind and thinking. What the worldly Greeks admired was not what the Christian should emulate. God chooses the weak of this world and not many wise, mighty, or noble. The false teachers were undermining this

reasoning, changing God's platform and purpose in those He calls by adding false ideas and criteria. Actually, the additions had the effect of subtraction, for they negated what Paul had stated as God's purpose. Paul preached "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" as a fundamental, that is, the *necessity for suffering* (1 Cor. 2:2). Jesus came to die as a vicarious sacrifice, and a cardinal point in the divine purpose in calling the saints is that they are called to suffer with him. This thinking permeated the Apostle Paul's reasoning.

"Ye might well bear with me [the supplied pronoun 'him' should be changed]." If Paul's reasoning seemed correct, the Corinthians should have acted on it. If they could not reason the way he did, then he would not be able to reach them. If they debated the matter, even though clear-cut at first, it would become diffused after a while. The principle was that it is better to act quickly on a matter than to dillydally and become influenced and undercut in character, for years are needed to mend such a wound. Stated another way, when the right in a matter is seen, one should act quickly and not parley over it, or his character will be adversely affected.

**Comment:** An example of this principle is seen with the fornicator in the church at Corinth. Paul told the class they were wrong to not excommunicate him immediately.

**Reply:** Yes, and Eve's problem was that she listened to the serpent's advice and did not reject it promptly and decisively. Because she did not close her mind to the Adversary's suggestion, she succumbed. No one can reason with Satan and win.

"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." The word "suppose" was a proper English rendering of the Greek in 1611. However, in today's vocabulary, the Greek word *logizomai* should be translated "reckon," as in Romans 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Having given considerable thought to the matter, Paul foresaw the value of the crown and the prize compared to whatever he might do in the present life. The reality of things yet future will not be evidenced until they are fulfilled. Nevertheless, *by faith*, the Christian can seize and act on them now, at the present time. Then the things that are unseen have real substance and evidence in the Christian's heart. The point is that verse 5 should read, "For I reckon I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." Paul felt he was not inferior to any of the other apostles; that is, he was not less important.

**Comment:** In verse 4, Paul was saying, "You have heard some in the class preach another Jesus, so you might as well hear what I have to say. Listen to me."

**Reply:** Yes, he was saying, "Bear with me, for I am not in the least inferior to the chiefest of the apostles [Peter, James, and John]." Actually, that was a low-key statement, for Paul was far ahead of the others. Incidentally, Papacy claims that as the first pope, Peter was the leading apostle. The claim is that when Jesus gave Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," he was showing the primacy of that apostle (Matt. 16:19). However, although Jesus favored Peter, James, and John above the other nine apostles, he did not rank one above the other, even though Peter had much favor until Paul came along.

**Comment:** In 1 Corinthians 15:9,10, Paul said he was the least of the apostles because he had persecuted Christians. "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

**Reply:** In other words, God's grace saved Paul. He did not inherit or deserve the important office of apostle based on justice. In fact, according to justice, he did not even deserve to be called—but by grace, God did call him. And Holy Writ supports the statement that he labored

more abundantly than the others. Unto whom much is forgiven, a greater response is usually forthcoming, resulting in more zeal.

**Comment:** Paul's words sound almost like boasting, but he was trying to prove his apostleship.

Paul warned about the danger of one who would preach "another Jesus [another message, doctrine, gospel, or messenger]" than what he had preached. Jesus is the center of the gospel; he is "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession" (Heb. 3:1). There is a chain of command; namely, Jesus is the Apostle of God, and the Twelve are apostles of Jesus Christ.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott*, which reads, "For if he who is coming proclaims another Jesus," seems to intimate that Paul knew the Papacy was coming.

**Reply:** Paul was authorized to think and speak along this line because Jesus had said, "Many shall come in my name" (Matt. 24:5). The Papacy, through the office of the pope, claimed to be the vicegerent, or substitute, of Christ—to be in his stead. People were to listen to the system rather than to go back to Jesus' own words and those of his apostles.

**Comment:** The doctrine of the Trinity also teaches "another Jesus" by saying he is God.

**Reply:** Yes, the Trinity will be a real test in the future. The Trinitarian view that Jesus was half God and half man (a mixture) is one way of getting away from simplicity. To say the doctrine is a great "mystery" makes the subject more complicated, the claim being that Jesus is God Incarnate (in the flesh).

On his first visit to Corinth, Paul established the ecclesia, so he certainly spoke clearly about the doctrine of Christ. The Corinthians thus had a basis of comparison when someone gave the subject a little different twist. Paul was telling the Corinthians to be careful, for Satan works with subtlety.

**Comment:** Paul also said, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6,7).

**Reply:** The situation with the Galatians was somewhat different, but the principle was the same. The Judaizing element felt that the Christian had to obey both the Law and Jesus, that the gospel was of works as well as of faith. One can be turned aside by the addition of error to truth; that is, truth may stay as it originally was, but the additives change it. The Roman Catholic Church has many additives—for example, icons and statues—that assist one out of the truth instead of further into the truth.

**Comment:** Paul continued (Gal. 1:8), "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

**Reply:** He led to the same thought here in chapter 11. By the time he finished the chapter, his intentions were abundantly clear.

The Corinthians were begotten with the Word of truth through the mouth of the Apostle Paul, and he warned them against that which was not in harmony with his teachings. When a person is begotten with the truth as a babe, he should advance in understanding and knowledge, but that knowledge should be built up slowly and carefully in harmony with the principles of truth that have already been learned.

**2 Cor. 11:6** But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been

**thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.**

The church at Corinth should have based their estimation of Paul on the content of his preaching and his zeal and willingness to suffer for Christ. At the same time, he was not lacking in understanding. They should have been able to perceive his level of understanding, but many could not see beyond his stature, eye affliction, and type of speech. The soundness of his teaching was apparent in both his preaching and his writing.

Paul defended himself multiple times in these two letters to the Corinthians, yet the Christian attitude today is to meekly submit to what is said and not to offer a defense. To be like Jesus, we should not defend ourselves if we are on trial before the world and know we are going to die. Jesus was dumb like a sheep before its shearers at that time, but he certainly was not silent before the scribes and Pharisees during his ministry. He preached against them and showed their hypocrisy. Thus there are times when, in defense of our own character, it is necessary to call attention to our dedication to the Lord's cause. That is especially true with teachers.

Paul admitted his speech was "rude," or unskilled, from their standpoint, but he defended his knowledge. He was steadfast where *principle* was involved and did not give in. For example, he withstood Peter for dissembling, and he did not give in over the dispute that John Mark should not go on the second missionary journey. The standard should not be compromised.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to appreciate his depth of knowledge and where he stood in his relationship with God. "We have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things." He made his knowledge plain to them by speaking the whole gospel. No question was too difficult for him. He had a scriptural line of thinking on all circumstances and problems of life.

At this time, the majority of the class had not been swayed by the false teachers, but Paul was fearful they would be. It is almost impossible to combat insinuation, for a definite charge or false statement is not made, just innuendos. The false teachers undercut Paul's authority by insinuating what *they* thought an apostle should be. Without mentioning his name, they cast a reflection upon him. Paul did not say they should be excommunicated like the fornicator, who clearly disobeyed. However, he could have used power such as making them lame, but instead he wanted the Corinthians to *reason* on the matter and then make a decision and *act* on it.

Some teachers (elders) feel they should sterilize the room so that no germ will infect the individuals who are present. But to so control the environment that we never hear another thought or reason does not make a strong Christian. Elders should not forbid brethren to hear another brother speak. We need to hear things and to use our reason in order to *grow*. We have to withstand the vicissitudes of life in order to grow strong.

"But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." The speech of false teachers is usually liquored with honey (flattery) and humor. When the message is analyzed, it is often human philosophy that subtly presents the Lord's Word in storytelling. Stories may be interesting and fluent, but they can have a wrong twist or lesson. Especially if the hearers do not have proper standards of right and wrong, a good story can win them over on a wrong principle. Paul spoke the plain language of the Bible and was to the point. He did not use the oratorical techniques of Grecian philosophers.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* says, "But even if I am a simple person in speech."

**Reply:** Paul was "simple" in the sense that he avoided flowery language and spoke plain truth.

Paul was "thoroughly made manifest" among the Corinthians. When he was with them, they could see his methods and intimate behavior. He was saying, in effect, that he walked the

straight and narrow. “While I was in your midst, I did not just preach the truth, for I lived and exemplified the truth in the little things of life, as you should have observed.”

**2 Cor. 11:7** Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

**2 Cor. 11:8** I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

In verse 7, Paul rubbed in the point: “Have I committed an offence in abasing myself”? He abased himself by working with his own hands. Usually people do not think of a famous person doing ordinary duties. Paul came as a laborer, as a missionary, working with his own hands. Seeing his behavior and humble demeanor, the Corinthians overlooked his greatness and superiority. To use a cliché, they judged the book by its cover. They judged Paul by his appearance rather than by the content of his message and ministry.

“Have I committed an offence ... because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?” Paul did not ask for donations for himself. Today many ministers profit not from their own source of revenue but from what is given to the ministry. They siphon off a certain percentage for their own use.

“I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.” Paul kept rubbing in the point. His blunt manner was a wake-up call. He was trying to awaken the Corinthians from their stupor.

**Comment:** Paul was saying, “I had to rob other churches because of your attitude.”

**Reply:** He confessed that he accepted donations in certain instances. In one case, he was sick for quite a while. In fact, he thought the illness was unto death, and the brethren took care of him. At times he was in want, for even though he came from a wealthy family, he did not always have the goods in hand to pay for his daily bread and living, such as when he was shipwrecked. For much of his ministry, he lived from hand to mouth through his own labors.

With regard to preaching “the gospel of God freely,” Paul asked, “Have I committed an offense in abasing myself?” Some people look down on a person as a teacher if his rank in life is not sufficiently high as, for example, a leader in an organization, a business owner, or a professor. Accordingly, the false teachers did not accept him as an apostle, even though he had founded the class.

**Q:** Didn’t Paul’s previous position and learning carry some weight?

**A:** He did not flaunt his background. He had been one of the privileged few to sit at the feet of Gamaliel, who was the greatest exponent of Hebrew teaching at the time. Paul was being trained to be a member of the Sanhedrin, but he forsook that honor for the gospel. However, he did not mention that training to the Corinthians. Instead he judiciously tried to shake them into using their senses. Every criticism, if properly seen, should have exalted him in their eyes as a true teacher, but they regarded him in an unfavorable light.

**Q:** Was Paul being sarcastic in using the word “robbed”?

**A:** Yes, and his sarcasm should have shamed the Corinthians: “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.” Evidently, the Corinthians were responsive in talk but did not get around to contributing. They were well intentioned but did not follow through on their wonderful professions. Sometimes the humble, quiet people do the most in the Lord’s service.



**2 Cor. 11:9** And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

Brethren from Macedonia, principally those from the city of Philippi, sent financial donations to Paul. Although he was not looking for support, he did not dissuade them because of their appreciation for the truth. He referred to this support in his Epistle to the Philippians: “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account” (Phil. 4:15-17). When Paul was in Thessalonica, the brethren of Philippi sent contributions. (Incidentally, the brethren of Thessalonica and Berea did not assist him financially, even though all three cities were in that area of Macedonia.) Paul received support from the Philippian brethren not only while he was in Thessalonica but also while he was in Corinth.

Paul had a season of want while he was residing at Corinth. The financial help from brethren in Macedonia would have been like a Godsend to tide him over. How embarrassing for Paul to have to write this way over and over!

**Comment:** The Macedonians were habitually generous. “It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26).

Verse 9 is a rather caustic rebuke of the situation in Corinth with regard to supporting Paul financially in his need while he was there. Without financial help from the Philippian brethren in Macedonia, he would have been in dire straits. Although he was a tent maker, he could not immediately set up shop upon arrival in a new place. Several months were required for his capabilities to become known so that he could support himself and the brethren who were with him. Thus there was a precarious period of financial need upon his arrival. The situation was an embarrassing reflection on the church at Corinth. Although some of the Corinthians wanted to support him, he refused to accept contributions because he wanted to stop the mouths of his critics, who implied he was living off the brethren. Actually, those who wanted to support him would have done so out of the abundance of their appreciation, so whatever the others misconstrued was due to evil surmising about him. At any rate, Paul felt it was expedient not to accept the contributions of those who were strongly sympathetic toward him in order that he might gain some who used that critique to diminish his ministry and influence. In the final analysis, a sizable element would have kept him, but he wanted to save as many as possible from Second Death. We will see later how serious the matter was.

**Comment:** The condemnation was almost double because Macedonia and other churches were providing funds for him to visit an ostensibly wealthy church in Corinth. The Corinthians were not even supporting him for coming to their own city.

**2 Cor. 11:10** As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

Paul seems to have been saying, “I am boasting with regard to the zeal for knowledge and the number of brethren in the church at Corinth.” That church was probably the most prosperous from the standpoint of numbers interested in the truth, and they were quite zealous for the truth. However, several of the brethren seemed to be blind with regard to Paul’s necessities. They were enthusiastic and appreciative of his knowledge, but they overlooked the fact that he and others had come from afar and none of them had business ties in the region. Evidently, the Corinthians took for granted that Paul and his companions had the financial means to travel. To the contrary, not only did Paul go out on missionary journeys on faith, but also he was

robbed several times and stripped of his goods. He did not have a cash account when he visited various places but went because of his zeal. However, the brethren misconstrued the situation, concluding that he had means. They did not really appreciate who he was, what he was doing, and the sacrifices he was making on behalf of the brotherhood in the then-known world, that is, north of the Mediterranean Sea.

Faced with this embarrassing situation, he would not change his boasting of the Corinthians but would continue, even though they neglected to support him. The two epistles give us a wonderful insight into Paul's personal matters. Several things are revealed that are not in other epistles to any large extent. In principle, the two letters are something like the Book of Job, which tells a lot about Job personally. Of course the Book of Acts also provides information about Paul, but it was not written until later.

**2 Cor. 11:11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.**

One motive for Paul's working to support himself was that he *loved* the Corinthians.

**2 Cor. 11:12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.**

Verse 12 brings up a paradox. Paul worked with his own hands so that he would not bring a reproach on Christianity, but the false teachers found fault with him for doing that very thing. A similar instance is where Jesus and John the Baptist were both faulted, even though their eating and drinking habits were opposite. The strange thing in human nature is that if someone is prejudiced and wants to find fault, he will do so, no matter what the other person does.

False apostles accepted money in the Corinthian church, whereas Paul continued to refuse financial support in order to make a clearer distinction between true and false apostles. He was not ashamed of this distinction, for those who observed and analyzed the situation from a proper standpoint would give credit for his stand. He worked with his hands to win more souls to Christ and to get their cooperation and enthusiasm to develop as new creatures. Even Jesus, who did nothing but good, had enemies who falsely judged him to have ulterior motives.

“But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion [to find fault with me]; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.” Paul's critics needed to learn some things of which they were not cognizant regarding their own condition of heart. They criticized Paul, but they themselves were in need of criticism. He brought out this fact in a way that must have struck home for some of them—the very ones he wanted to save. He thus delivered them out of a wrong attitude and lack of understanding.

**2 Cor. 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.**

**2 Cor. 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.**

**2 Cor. 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.**

Verses 13-15 are often quoted as a principle with regard to the nominal Church, but by studying the entire chapter, we see them in context. Satan sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light in the *true* Church, in the *ecclesia* itself. And that is what happened in the church at Corinth. A false element, an alien group, came in and were trying to make disciples for themselves.

The King James is a very good translation for its reverential, prayerful tone and language and for its normal reasoning. However, it is a little weak in these three verses, which are stern remarks in the Greek. Some other translations are preferable. The Living Bible reads, “God never sent those men at all; they are ‘phonies’ who have fooled you into thinking they are Christ’s apostles. Yet I am not surprised! Satan can change himself into an angel of light, so it is no wonder his servants can do it too, and seem like godly ministers. In the end they will get every bit of punishment their wicked deeds deserve.” The New English Bible calls them false apostles, “crooked in all their practices, masquerading as apostles of Christ. There is nothing surprising about that; Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is therefore a simple thing for his agents to masquerade as agents of good. But they will meet the end their deeds deserve.” The Phillips translation states, “They are counterfeits of the real thing, dishonest practitioners, ‘God’s messengers’ only by their own appointment. Nor do their tactics surprise me when I consider how Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is only to be expected that his angels shall have the appearance of ministers of righteousness—but they will get their deserts one day.” Notice that this false element is plural, so we know that at least two (and probably more) false teachers were fomenting this problem in the church at Corinth.

**Q:** Was this element the growth of the man of sin?

**A:** Yes, it was the Nicolaitan spirit. To the church of Ephesus, of whom Paul was the messenger, Jesus said, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). In the early Church, when the Apostle Paul was on the scene, the false teaching element was kept down. The seeds of iniquity existed, but they were suppressed and not allowed to sprout to any large degree. As the apostles began to fall asleep, the seed doctrines of error started to develop, so that by the second period of the Church, Smyrna, the Nicolaitan spirit was gaining some inroads. After all of the apostles were off the scene, the Adversary introduced new erroneous doctrines.

Verses 13-15 were strong talk to an ecclesia. Paul was saying false apostles were in their midst. The brethren would have asked questions to determine which individuals were transforming themselves into the apostles of Jesus Christ. They would have zeroed in on them by name. This plain talk was startling but necessary. Someone like the Apostle Paul needed to come along and make strong statements so that the individuals would know they were false apostles.

Satan transformed himself into an angel of light in the Garden of Eden, telling Eve she would become wise by partaking of the forbidden fruit. He took the role of a benefactor. Similarly, he poses as a benefactor to the Christian Church, ostensibly helping them along the way but actually trying to get them to leave the path and follow him and his teachings. “Light” in this context is information not in harmony with God’s Word. Thus Satan used subterfuge.

Paul’s critics, of whom there were at least three or four, were “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” They felt they were as much apostles as he was—and perhaps more so—because they found fault with him personally (his appearance, lack of oratory, etc.). Paul *deliberately* spoke blunt common sense in simple terms. He could have allowed himself the liberty of outshining the others, even in elocution, had he so desired, but he did not want to win over many to the cause of Christ on a wrong basis and through emotion. Converts should be won on simple, sound doctrine—the Crucifixion of Christ and the fact they were blood bought—and not through philosophy, which the Greeks loved.

Verse 13 is helpful in identifying Paul as the messenger to the church at Ephesus, for he exposed false apostles. Notice how Jesus addressed the church at Ephesus: “I know ... how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev. 2:2).

Satan deceives by transforming himself into an “angel of light.” Not only he but also his messengers find that they can be more successful in leading people astray from the truth by posing as messengers of light and “ministers of righteousness.” What is so startling today is that in posing as angels of light, Satan’s emissaries even speak in the name of Jesus Christ. Satan leads them step by step away from the true gospel, which is character building, into areas that reward them with money, health, influence, and numbers. The Adversary uses these techniques to deceive and to beguile the consecrated away from the true gospel, which not only is good news to others but is “the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). Deceived religious leaders make becoming a Christian very simple by claiming that all one has to do is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and he is saved. What a cheap gospel—that one no longer has to worry about any responsibilities or suffering! We can see how the old man would rejoice to hear that message because it appeals to the flesh.

**Comment:** Some think that Satan is casting out Satan, but verse 14 says to think it “no marvel” if we see Satan “transformed into an angel of light.”

**Reply:** Just as God has a divine plan, so Satan, in his high-mindedness, has a master plan. While Satan is presently doing things of a deceptive nature, he has an ulterior motive that he will exploit later. After the world is won over to his cause, then the real Satan will come out. At present, he poses as an “angel of light” because he finds this method to be more successful than outright, open animosity against the teachings of Christ. With his serpent-like character, he is subtle like a snake. He glides along quietly, secretly, and very effectively, but then he strikes. He uses two techniques—the technique of (1) a serpent and (2) a lion, which paralyzes its prey by roaring suddenly. Thus Satan has weapons at his disposal, and to be prepared, the Lord’s people have to put on the whole armor of God so that they can withstand both his subtle assaults and his open, hard attacks on the brotherhood and all who are sympathetic to the Lord’s cause, the nation of Israel, and the brotherhood. With the truly consecrated being Satan’s most dangerous enemy, he wishes to dispose of them first and natural Israel second.

Satan’s “ministers” are his servants. Both Satan and his ministers like to transform themselves into angels of light, but their “end [destiny] shall be according to their works.” Their destiny will be Second Death.

**Comment:** Many of Satan’s earthly ministers, nominal religious leaders, do not knowingly serve him. Ostensibly, they are messengers of light, but they are preaching a wrong gospel.

**Reply:** That is true. However, when one indulges in wrong doctrine long enough, he is changed. For example, the leader of a current popular healing ministry has recently, on two occasions, actually hissed like a snake in performing healing miracles where whole groups of people fell down. It was startling to hear that sound. Usually he tries to touch the person being healed, but he can also just stroke his hand toward the forehead of the individual and thus heal long-distance.

Certainly Satan is going into Second Death because he passed the point of no return when Jesus was crucified. Many fallen angels have similarly passed the point of no return. Those fallen angels who are not in sympathy with Satan cannot do anything to the contrary at present because they are in chains of darkness in *tartaroo*, and he is a superior mighty power. Satan controls many reprobate spirit beings, but the others still recognize his position because they know what will happen if they try to interfere with his great power. The very fact he is recognized as the prince of demons shows that the incorrigible fallen angels respect and admire him. They regard him highly because he rewards them; that is, he shares with them the spoils, or evil effects, that satisfy the wrong desires of their hearts and minds.

**Q:** The term “second death” is used for human beings because the “first death” is Adamic death (Rev. 2:11; 20:6; 21:8). With the incorrigible fallen angels, who were not condemned in Adam, wouldn’t the term just be “total destruction”?

**A:** “Total destruction” is synonymous with “second death,” for one does not have to die twice to go into Second Death. In other words, Second Death does not have to come from Adam.

**Comment:** Lazarus died twice, but he has not gone into Second Death, so the latter is not necessarily a first and second sequence.

**2 Cor. 11:16** I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

**2 Cor. 11:17** That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

**2 Cor. 11:18** Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

Verses 16-21 are stronger in translations other than the King James, for this situation was real, and not hypothetical as the word “if” seems to convey in today’s English. Paul sarcastically assumed the role of a fool, saying, “I am considered a fool by the false teachers, but bear with me. Listen to what this fool has to say. They boast; now hear my boasting.” Paul was making a comparison. The gist of a *Manna* comment is that it is proper occasionally to take the side of an issue that is favorable to self *for the sake of the truth*. There is such an aversion to pride that many would bend over backwards to avoid that appearance, but sometimes people need to be shocked into their senses by the plain truth of a matter. Under that circumstance, when taking a stand on a certain issue seems to glorify self, one should do so.

**Comment:** The Phillips translation precedes verse 16 with the subhead “If you like self-commendations, listen to mine!”

For verse 17, the Amplified reads, “What I say by way of this confident boasting, I say not with the Lord’s authority (by inspiration) but as it were in pure witlessness.” Paul was saying, “I speak with common sense.” He came down to the Corinthians’ level of thinking. One cannot reason higher than his own highest motives. Thus we are incapacitated in some respects except where we take on the mind of God. However, Paul was now speaking down on their level and using plain, common-sense reasoning, which was mighty uncommon in reality. Paul ostensibly reasoned with them like a fool, but his method was not that of a fool.

In verse 18, Paul indicated he would speak confidently in boasting. “Others glorify themselves. Now I will glorify myself.” In other words, he would state his case. “Those who think I am a fool should listen to the fool speak for a minute, and then judge what I have to say.” The technique of meeting an error face to face—stating the case and then giving the explanation—is essential in some instances. Boasting is not the usual method of the Christian, for it is normally related to pride and vainglory. However, Paul’s experience shows that in rare instances in life, it is proper and useful to boast.

**Comment:** The Book of Proverbs treats the subject from two different standpoints: (1) to not reason with a fool and (2) to reason with a fool. “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit” (Prov. 26:4,5).

Verse 16 has two parts: “Let no man think me a fool; [but] if otherwise [that is, with regard to those who do think I am a fool], yet as a fool [even under that circumstance] receive me, that I

may boast myself a little.” Paul was saying, “If, in your estimation, I am a fool, then let me speak like a fool. In your superior wisdom and mode of thinking and your high appreciation of yourselves, just listen to me. Forbear yourselves a minute and hear what I have to say as a fool.” Paul then began to reveal startling things about his ministry that he had revealed only piecemeal to others. He brought together many facts in an attempt to win over a few of those in Corinth who had been deceived into following the false apostles. Incidentally, there is probably little hope for the false apostles themselves because they had progressed too far in their delusions. For the sake of those who were *being* deceived (and not for the ones who were *doing* the deceiving), Paul humiliated himself by going into his credentials. It was shameful that he had to stoop down in his argument and reveal all the sacrificing he had done for God and the Lord Jesus Christ, but he humiliated himself in order to shake up and save a few of the Corinthians from Second Death. Such humiliation showed Paul’s *Godlike love*. The Heavenly Father showed His love time and time again in the Old Testament. In spite of what Israel had done, He gave them opportunities to loose themselves from past wrong deeds. A beautiful hymn states, “Father-like, He gently leads us.” God tried to enlighten some of the Israelites so they might respond and be of the Ancient Worthy class and thus get life on a better plane.

In verse 17, Paul was saying, “Listen to me. That which I am about to say, I do not speak as the Lord Jesus told me to speak but on my own. I am a fool speaking.” In the first epistle, he said that the Word of God does not tell about marital affairs, but he spoke common sense as a man, not as an apostle (1 Cor. 7:6). Here he was doing something similar. He said, “I was not instructed by the Lord to tell you all that I am about to say. I am doing this on my own.” He was trying in every conceivable manner to save some who were deceived by the false apostles.

**Comment:** In usurping the role of a great teacher, these false apostles were bringing added condemnation on themselves.

**Reply:** Paul said elsewhere that those who are qualified and have the zeal can lawfully aspire to be an elder. “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). The Apostle James said, “My brethren, be not many masters [teachers, elders—see RSV], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). A teacher has more responsibility than those who are being taught because he is saying in effect, “Thus saith the LORD.” If faithful, he will get a greater reward, but if unfaithful, he receives greater condemnation. For the false teachers to presume to go to the level of apostleship required a lot of nerve.

**Comment:** The Apostle John encountered the same problem. He said, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (3 John 9).

**Reply:** Yes. Of the four leading apostles, James died first. Peter and Paul died within a year of each other, with Paul dying last. That left only John, who inherited the mixed situation.

**Comment:** The false teachers preferred the praise of men more than the praise of God.

“Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.” Paul postured like an actor who was playing the part of a fool. “Please be patient with me while I speak as a fool in your estimation.” He used a form of sarcasm for his concrete rebuttal to come. If properly used, sarcasm can be effective and profitable in muting the voice of critics. Another technique Paul used was to be a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles. Speaking common sense to the people on Mars Hill, he introduced his remarks with, “I will speak to you about the unknown God. I see that you are overreligious. You have too much religion.” He managed to get a few converts from that sermon. Also, he claimed the right of Roman citizenship when to do so was helpful for serving the Lord. Thus he adopted the best technique for a given situation. The world uses the term “street knowledge,” but there is also a proper spiritual savvy. This savvy on a higher level, called “sanctified common sense,” is sometimes more profitable than

speaking on a high plane of spirituality that goes over the head of the listener.

**2 Cor. 11:19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.**

Paul was saying to the false teachers, “If you are so *wise*, surely you will bear with a fool and tolerate me.” Stated another way, “Bear with me in my foolishness.” Paul was preparing to present a strong case.

The false teachers were wise in their *own* estimation. Paul’s point was, “You look down on people as fools, thinking, ‘Oh, let them go on with their foolish prattle for a little while. Let them have their little say.’ Their words do not mean anything to you because you think you are superior.” Paul was about to give the false teachers a blockbuster when he proceeded to speak “as a fool.” He would list his sufferings and persecutions.

**2 Cor. 11:20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.**

**2 Cor. 11:21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.**

For verses 19-21, the Living Bible is good, as follows: “(You think you are so wise—yet you listen gladly to those fools; you don’t mind at all when they make you their slaves and take everything you have, and take advantage of you, and put on airs, and slap you in the face. I’m ashamed to say that I am not strong and daring like that! But whatever they can boast about—I’m talking like a fool again—I can boast about it, too.)” Starting with verse 16, the New English Bible has a little different slant: “I repeat: let no one take me for a fool; but if you must, then give me the privilege of a fool, and let me have my little boast like the others. I am not speaking here as a Christian, but like a fool, if it comes to bragging. So many people brag of their earthly distinctions that I shall do so too. How gladly you bear with fools, being yourselves so wise! If a man tyrannizes over you, exploits you, gets you in his clutches, puts on airs, and hits you in the face, you put up with it. And we, you say, have been weak! I admit the reproach.” For verses 17-21, Phillips has, “I am not now speaking as the Lord commands me but as a fool in this business of boasting. Since all the others are so proud of themselves, let me do a little boasting as well. From your heights of wisdom, I am sure you can smile tolerantly on a fool. Oh, you’re tolerant all right! You don’t mind, do you, if a man takes away your liberty, spends your money, takes advantage of you, puts on airs, or even smacks your face? I am almost ashamed to say that I never did such brave strong things like that to you. Yet in whatever particular they parade such confidence I (speaking as a fool, remember) can do the same.” These other translations give a better idea of the sarcasm Paul was using.

It is strange that if a person purports to speak in the name of the Lord with sufficient authority, some will obey. They reason, “Because he is speaking boldly and asserting his authority, he must be right.” Similarly, some assume that what is in the newspaper is correct. Instead we should *reason* on whether the action or matter is proper and permissible in God’s sight. Leaders who assume a superior attitude sometimes psychologically gain a great deal of influence over their listeners. Therefore, we must be analytical—and that applies to God’s Word as well. We should not be just readers or listeners but should *think about and chew over* what we read or hear and then calmly and dispassionately make conclusions in harmony with Scripture. Accordingly, Paul was trying to wake up the Corinthians to what they were tolerating and how inappropriate the policy of the others was. If properly viewed, every criticism the false teachers hurled at Paul was really a commendation.

**Q:** When Paul said in verse 20, “*If a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face,*” was he referring to the false

apostles?

**A:** Yes. The nature of some of their remarks will come out even more as we proceed. Paul did not tell exactly what the false apostles were teaching, but by his defense of his apostleship, we can inferentially gather enough information to know what they were teaching.

The false teachers were taking advantage of, or fleecing, the flock. A *deliberate* technique was used by these unnamed individuals in the class at Corinth who assumed the role of apostles. Their method was subtle, for they were very authoritative in using what seemed to be good logic. For instance, some leaders feel that in order to prevent spiritual disease and sickness, they should keep the room sterile. This experience occurred in the early Church when a well-known individual in Asia Minor forbid the brethren under his tutorship to see the *Apostle John*. But this technique does not work, for as soon as brethren go out of that sterile room, they are sitting ducks because they have not developed the antibodies that are necessary in life. Many immunities are developed in fighting minor infections. Thus the immune system is built up in a natural way to combat disease. Therefore, one should not command others where and where not to meet. The choice should be left up to the disposition of the individual to go where he thinks he will be blessed spiritually. One should use his own judgment and not allow a “goat” individual to bring him into bondage by forbidding, devouring, and taking advantage of him.

**Comment:** The Phillips translation, as already quoted, sums up these categories: “You don’t mind, do you, if a man takes away your liberty, spends your money, takes advantage of you, puts on airs, or even smacks your face?”

**Reply:** The “smacking” may even have been literal back there. Some have taken the liberty in the name of Christian religion to administer corporal punishment to adults. Peaceful submission to such punishment is regarded as humility.

For verse 20, Paul was saying, “You are not suffering for Christ. Your flattery and popularity indicate that you are receiving the plaudits, praise, and support of those who are deceived by your show as angels of light and instructors of righteousness.” Not only did the false teachers not suffer, but they seemed to prosper. Paul said, “If someone punched you in the nose, you would think a lot differently.” He was suffering for his teaching, and this type of suffering was more an evidence of God’s approval than the popularity. Many people are influenced by popularity. We ourselves have to be careful, for numbers themselves are not an evidence of spiritual prosperity. Numbers are an evidence of favor *if* they are the result of a proper basis and *if* there is no compromise of principles or character doctrines. The question should be asked, What kind of “gospel” is producing the increase in numbers?

In verse 21, Paul said, “If others are going to offer their credentials, I will offer mine also.” If others were abusive, Paul would show his authority as an apostle. We believe there were sufficient instances of the use of apostolic power by Paul, as well as Peter, that the false apostles did not want to test him to the point of seeing if he had power. Paul was saying, “If necessary, I will call on this superhuman power that Jesus gifted me with as an apostle, and you will see the manifestation of its exercise. Even though I am weak in appearance and plain in speech, I have knowledge. If you want to test me, I am ready and willing.” Paul’s message was *powerful*.

Verses 19-21 are more or less the same. Paul spoke sarcastically: “Bear with me. I speak as a fool, but you are wise. When leaders browbeat, slap, and lord their power over others, you consider them as apostles and me as the weak one.” The false apostles should have felt very small as Paul began to enumerate the things he suffered for the cause of Christ, for they were talkers and not doers.

**2 Cor. 11:22** Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of



Abraham? so am I.

**2 Cor. 11:23** Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

**2 Cor. 11:24** Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

**2 Cor. 11:25** Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

**2 Cor. 11:26** In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

The false apostles were probably boasting of their lineage, so Paul started at a lower level by asking questions. “Are they [the false apostles] Hebrews? Are they Israelites? Are they the seed of Abraham?” His answer to all three questions was, “So am I.” He was equal in these respects. Then Paul began to zero in on his credentials.

“Are they ministers of Christ?” In other words, “Can these individuals, who say they are apostles, claim that Jesus at his First Advent personally took them up into a mountain and gave them new names and specific positions of authority in the Church? I speak as a fool, but was this the case?” Then Paul stopped the role of a fool and very soberly began the list.

Paul gave a catalog of his external experiences because a Christian is called upon to *suffer*. Psychologically, this is another problem, for many think that those who have difficult trials are doing something wrong. They do not view the Christian walk properly, whereas we are called to have suffering experiences. In fact, if we do not suffer as a Christian, we may be illegitimate children in God’s sight. Paul said, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). A true Christian who lives according to God’s Word will have problems and should expect friction. Of course some suffering may be caused by foolishness and unwisdom on our part. However, we should suffer for righteousness’ sake (for principles of right and wrong) and for Christ’s sake (a little higher type of experience). Both types of suffering are especially commendable to the Little Flock class.

Paul had just been charged with being WEAK, and now he listed his MANY dangerous travels, sufferings, and persecutions. Imagine being beaten with stripes (39 lashes) five times! For the cause of Christ, Paul suffered repeatedly. He was imprisoned, shipwrecked, stoned, etc., for Christ’s sake, yet these talkers said, “Paul is a little runt of a man who does not look like an apostle. He is bald and his voice is weak.” Had they and the other Corinthians honestly searched into Paul’s life and reflected on what this “little man” went through for Christ, they would have shut up and hidden out of shame. Like David, who slew Goliath, Paul was a tremendous personality. The Scriptures say, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh,” but in order to know Jesus, we have to study what he did and what he taught while he was in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16). The false apostles suffered *nothing* in comparison to Paul. In fact, they looked upon Paul’s suffering as evidence that he was not an apostle.

Paul’s listing in these verses is informative and more complete than what is stated in the Book of Acts. For example, he was beaten with 39 stripes five times, but only one occasion is recorded in Acts. Likewise, only one shipwreck is mentioned, and three times are stated here (Acts 27). And since Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians before the shipwreck incident described in Acts, he experienced a total of at least four shipwrecks.

“Of the Jews *five times* received I forty stripes save one.” What unbelievable suffering for

Christ! By refraining from the fortieth stripe, the administrators of punishment brought the individual as near to death from physical pain as possible and yet let him survive. And Paul suffered for *right-doing*, not wrongdoing. After each beating and recovery, his back contained more and more scars. Paul said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal. 6:17). Literal marks proved he was a slave of Jesus Christ.

The Law stated that no more than 40 stripes could be given. “Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee” (Deut. 25:3). Beating a person with 40 or more stripes put him on the borderline of life and death. When such punishment was to be inflicted under the Roman Empire, a strong man was chosen to administer the stripes so that the effect of each stripe would be equal throughout the empire. Also, an official type of flagellation instrument was used. Since the endurance of a human being was known, the beating was stopped at 39 stripes in order to “play safe” and not have the person die, for the authorities might want to punish him again in the future. Thus one stripe was subtracted to put the person close to death but not kill him. Paul was close to death many times.

“In journeyings often” refers to Paul’s extensive travels on his missionary journeys. “In perils of waters” could include walking through wadis with the dangers of a flash flood.

**Comment:** “Perils among false brethren” was the very experience Paul was having with the false apostles at Corinth. Today much of our persecution comes from brethren.

**Reply:** That is especially true when one matures.

A *Manna* comment tells how the Lord smiles on us when we first consecrate. Some severe trials may occur prior to consecration to help us make a positive decision, but after consecration, there is usually a period of wonderful refreshing sunshine and calm breezes with fellowship and association. The Christian might as well enjoy this sunshine, for the realities will come soon enough. Man is born for trouble even in the world, let alone in the Church. The Lord favors the Christian in early development with large periods of refreshment and favor, and then comes the chill. As one matures, the balance goes the other way with trials predominating. When the person is stronger, more trials are needed to develop patience, love, faith, etc.

Paul showed his credentials first from a legal standpoint—he was a true Jew and not the product of a mixed marriage, he was an Israelite, and he was of the seed of Abraham. Thus he was what the false teachers claimed to be, but he had for Christ’s sake also suffered many indignities, which should have been a proof to others of his devotion to Christ and his willingness to suffer. When we review this list, it is absolutely appalling.

“In labours more abundant.” What kind of “labours” was Paul referring to? His ministry was not paid, whereas the false apostles did not work but lived off the contributions of the brotherhood. Paul supported himself quietly on the side by making tents. In addition, he wrote letters; he had many emotional prayers, which required energy; he had the care of all the churches; etc. Anxieties are tiring. If someone is slow to grasp a point, explaining for hours is exhausting. Thus Paul expended both mental and physical energy to the point of exhaustion along different lines for the cause of truth.

Paul mentioned “in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft,” but how much did the false apostles suffer? Paul was forcing the Corinthian brethren to differentiate between the false apostles and him. The false apostles were on the receiving end; they were sponges. They were popular and authoritative, whereas Paul’s listing showed the opposite: fealty for Christ and devotion to doing God’s will.

Our senses become almost numbed as we read this categorical list of Paul's sufferings. He was beaten with rods, as well as with a leather strap to which metal pieces were attached.

**Comment:** The list is so long that there must not have been a year of his ministry where he did not suffer severe persecution.

"In deaths oft." Paul was stoned to death as a form of retribution for putting Christians to death prior to his conversion (Acts 14:19,20). Divine justice inflicted stripes on Paul for willful deeds that were not due to Adamic weakness. However, the Lord revived him similar to the way Lazarus was resuscitated. Thus one can die more than once. In this particular incident where he was left for dead, his lifeless corpse was dragged outside the city and dumped. When the brethren came and circled around his body, he got up. Of course the "deaths oft" can be taken figuratively as well, but apparently, he actually died in the stoning. We should appreciate Paul's sufferings. He was not an individual given to flattery and loose talk but a doer. Incidentally, when we consider what Paul suffered, would any of the disciples be jealous if he is recognized as the chief one under Jesus in the Kingdom? Surely not!

**Comment:** When we read of Paul's persecutions and sufferings, we have to ask, "What is the mettle of our own character? How much of a Christian are we compared to him?"

**Reply:** Yes, that should be our reaction. Some of Paul's experiences were permitted as a form of retribution, but many sufferings were the result of his zeal and faithfulness to Christ and God. The Apostle Peter said, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.... If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Pet. 3:14; 4:14). Suffering for Christ lays up treasure in heaven.

**Q:** A provision in the Law stipulated that if anyone was preaching another god, he was to be put to death (Deut. 13:6-11). Paul was probably basing his actions on this command. Therefore, was his sin that he heard the words of Stephen but did not hearken to them?

**A:** Yes. In fact, Stephen's sermon is chapter 7 of the Book of Acts, and in a later chapter, Paul used the same type of reasoning. Thus the stoning of Stephen left an impression on Paul.

**Comment:** Jesus appeared when Paul was on his way to persecute more Christians. Paul was hardened in his course, even though Stephen's reasoning was very persuasive. Therefore, a radical experience was needed to slap him down. What happened to Paul shows that one can hear words but not understand if he has a predetermined course of action firmly in mind.

**Reply:** Yes, one can be willfully blind. A seared conscience is not sensitive to wrong.

**Comment:** Stephen's righteous blood had to be avenged.

**Reply:** Although Paul did not throw a stone, he was an accessory to the crime because he held Stephen's coat.

**2 Cor. 11:27** In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

**Comment:** Even "weariness" was a trial, but Paul persevered faithfully.

**Reply:** Paul could have thrown in the sponge, but he did not. "Weariness and painfulness" were part of his trials.

"In watchings often." Paul was probably referring to "watching" the churches so that "wolves"

would stay away. In regard to “hunger and thirst,” while the Christian’s daily bread is promised, it is not necessarily a hard-and-fast rule that one might not be without food for a couple of days. However, the Christian is promised that he will not die of starvation (Isa. 33:16; Luke 11:3). Paul suffered the deprivation of hunger and thirst, for he missed some meals and was in need of water on his journeys, especially with the exercise of travel. And surely he did not eat or drink while in the sea for a day and a night.

**Comment:** Paul stated, “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace” (1 Cor. 4:11).

**Reply:** In the sea, Paul would have shed his clothes lest they cause such weariness as to threaten his life.

“In fastings often.” When fasting, Paul voluntarily abstained from food. Such instances were probably occasioned by his prayers for wisdom in giving counsel and advice to deal with class problems. In addition, he might have fasted in connection with caring for the sick. “In cold and nakedness” are self-explanatory.

**2 Cor. 11:28** **Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.**

Paul had just cataloged his external sufferings for Christ. Now he introduced another type of experience, namely, his emotional involvement in the sufferings of others in the body. If he knew of a brother who had stumbled or was overcome by some temptation, he had a concern with regard to the deliverance of that individual. However, an even more noble aspect of his concern was the responsibility he felt for the “care of *all* the churches.” He was not just passively concerned and interested but *actively participated* by, for instance, writing letters to the ecclesias (to the Corinthians, the Romans, the Philippians, etc.). And he was concerned not just occasionally but frequently, on a “daily” basis.

**2 Cor. 11:29** **Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?**

“Who is weak, and I am not weak?” Paul taught this philosophy, which is the opposite of human nature. If a person is depressed, the usual philosophy is to try to cheer him up. However, the scriptural advice is to commiserate with those who are depressed. To the weak, we should be weak, and to the strong, we should be strong. Those who are outspoken and bold are to be met with equal candor and boldness. Contrary to human philosophy, we meet strength with strength and weakness with weakness.

**Comment:** Paul expressed this principle in his first letter to the Corinthians. “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). We are to enter into the trials of our brethren.

“Who is offended, and I burn not?” Another translation has the thought that for the unjust treatment of Christians, he was indignant. Paul’s listing of all his sufferings might lead one to think he was a stoic or a fatalist—so controlled in his emotions that he was in a zombie state. But on the opposite side of all his sufferings was his sensitivity. He could endure persecutions, but he was very sensitive about insults, indignities, and the lack of courtesy by one Christian to another Christian. He actually burned with anger. In other words, he was sensitive not only to his own feelings but also to the feelings of others.

We think of Paul as a logician, but he was also sympathetic, tender, and compassionate. The balanced combination is unusual, for we are all born warped in one direction or another and need to be balanced out over our Christian walk, or career. Considering how outstanding Paul

was as an individual and all he went through, we smile when we read his words, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” (Phil. 3:13). He was still humble and meek and of a contrite disposition.

**2 Cor. 11:30** *If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*

First, Paul listed his sufferings and persecutions, then he mentioned his sensitivities, and now he said he would glory in his infirmities. He had trouble with his eyesight and prayed three times, evidently very earnestly, probably reasoning with the Lord that if his eyesight were fully restored, he could serve better. He felt he would be a more capable minister in representing the truth, but the Lord’s reply was, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). In other words, to be a success in his ministry, Paul would have to rely on the strength and help of the Lord. It was needful for this lesson to be impressed upon him. Of course he would not have prayed three times if, at first, he had realized this wisdom, but when the Lord taught him that lesson and he had to live with the poor eyesight, he could see the wisdom of God in keeping him from getting too heady. His poor eyesight kept him humble, and he thanked God that the infirmity had been visited upon him and not removed. A little time was needed—and then he began to glory in his infirmity.

**Comment:** Paul said, “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me” (Gal. 4:13-15).

**Reply:** The fervor and love of the truth can be so intense as to be responsive to this degree. The Galatians were truly willing to pluck out their own eyes for Paul if doing so would be useful because they looked on him as a new creature. The gospel he preached was indeed supernatural. Sadly, however, that intense appreciation can be eroded in time, the principle being, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!” (Lam. 4:1).

Normally, one glories in his strengths and/or achievements, but Paul gloried in the privilege of suffering for Christ, in cross bearing. “Cross bearing” entails not just physical suffering but also time, expense, energy, and concern—all of which drain one’s constitution. The implication is that those in Corinth whom Paul was trying to awaken were glorying in themselves and their achievements.

**2 Cor. 11:31** *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.*

Paul revealed what was in his heart by saying, “It is easy to say we have sensitivity of feeling, but God knows that in what I have said, I am not overstating myself.” He wanted to go on record to affirm what he was stating. When Jesus said, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay,” he did not mean that we can never take an oath but that we should not habitually say, “I swear this” and “I swear that” (Matt. 5:37; compare James 5:12). People who curse and make extreme statements of emphasis are indicating their word is not reliable. However, Paul simply wanted to go on record that his writing about imprisonments and stripes was not idle chatter. He was saying, “God knows I am not lying.” If Paul were lying, he would be *doubly* condemned for having used God’s name to bear witness to his words. In other words, Paul wanted the Corinthians to seriously consider his words. Of those who heard or read his letters, several additional brethren might have been persuaded by his taking this extra step. He wanted to reach as many as possible with his reasoning. By affirmatively stating the matter in this way, he showed his earnestness, which might convince some not otherwise convinced.

Verse 31 is a good verse for rebutting the doctrine of the Trinity. “The *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ” is a separate entity. Throughout his epistles, Paul always observed, almost subconsciously, the chain of command by first giving honor to the Father and then bringing in recognition of Jesus.

Paul was saying in effect, “I am making an oath to confirm what I have been telling you. My experiences sound almost imaginary or exaggerated, but I have weighed my written words carefully. I lie not.” He was trying to justify his apostleship.

**2 Cor. 11:32** In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

**2 Cor. 11:33** And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Why did Paul now, after first mentioning external and then internal sufferings, bring in this incident that had occurred years earlier, shortly after he had gotten the truth? In referring to his being permitted to escape from Damascus in a basket let down over the wall, he showed that he had suffered tribulation from the start of his ministry. Whether from true brethren, false brethren, the world, the Jews, or the Gentiles, he was persecuted by all of them.

Many of the other translations, such as the NIV and Phillips, have a certain value, but generally speaking, they are not as reliable as a base text because they are too pointed. In other words, we get only the slant of the interpreter, which does not give us liberty to reason. The King James is a better base text because it allows more opportunity to reason and analyze. In certain parts of the Bible—for example, the Book of Revelation—we want a literal translation with bare statements because the subject is so highly figurative that any slanting or prejudice greatly colors the interpretation.

We cannot always get the power of Paul’s sarcasm in this epistle because a lot is lost in the translation of the Greek language into English. For verses 32 and 33 and the context, the Living Bible, an extreme translation, is helpful in understanding Paul’s reasoning.

“Again I plead, don’t think that I have lost my wits to talk like this, but even if you do, listen to me anyway—a witless man, a fool—while I also boast a little as they do.

“Such bragging isn’t something the Lord commanded me to do, for I am acting like a brainless fool.

“Yet those other men keep telling you how wonderful they are, so here I go:

“(You think you are so wise—yet you listen gladly to those fools; you don’t mind at all when they make you their slaves and take everything you have, and take advantage of you, and put on airs, and slap you in the face.

“I’m ashamed to say that I am not strong and daring like that! But whatever they can boast about—I’m talking like a fool again—I can boast about it too.)

“They brag that they are Hebrews, do they? Well, so am I. And they say that they are Israelites, God’s chosen people? So am I. And they are descendants of Abraham? Well, I am too.

“They say they serve Christ? But I have served him far more! (Have I gone mad to boast like this?) I have worked harder, been put in jail oftener, been whipped times

without number, and faced death again and again and again.

“Five different times the Jews gave me their terrible thirty-nine lashes.

“Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I was in the open sea all night and the whole next day.

“I have traveled many weary miles and have been often in great danger from flooded rivers, and from robbers, and from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the hands of the Gentiles. I have faced grave dangers from mobs in the cities and from death in the deserts and in the stormy seas and from men who claim to be brothers in Christ but are not.

“I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food; often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

“Then, besides all this, I have the constant worry of how the churches are getting along:

“Who makes a mistake and I do not feel his sadness? Who falls without my longing to help him? Who is spiritually hurt without my fury rising against the one who hurt him?

“But if I must brag, I would rather brag about the things that show how weak I am. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be praised forever and ever, knows I tell the truth.

“For instance, in Damascus the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me;

“but I was let down by a rope and basket from a hole in the city wall, and so I got away! [What popularity!]”

The false teachers considered Paul a runt because of his short stature, and with his baldness and poor eyesight, he was nothing to look at. Because they did not like the way he spoke, they said he was weak. They said that as soon as he went away, he wrote a strong letter, but that in the presence of the Corinthians, he was weak. But Paul had written earlier, “I was weak before and I do write strong letters, but do you want me to come to you in strength the next time? I would rather not, but this time I will be strong to the ones who are critical. First, however, I want to deal with the ecclesia in writing, for I do not want to treat the class in that manner.”

The others were glamorizing themselves and saying they were apostles. Paul was trying to show that the Scriptures teach the opposite—that a true Christian will not be popular. The false teachers thought that all the things which lauded them from a personal standpoint were the earmarks of true apostleship and that Paul’s demeaning himself—working with his hands and not accepting contributions—was evidence he was not living up to the noble bearing of a true apostle, which presumably they were doing. All the way through, Paul used sarcasm, putting himself down as weak, but in this “weakness,” he had unbelievable experiences. To show they were popular and not suffering for Christ, Paul told about the governor under King Aretas in the city of Damascus, who set a cordon about the city gates lest he escape. What lengths the governor went to in an effort to hunt down Paul and silence his preaching of the gospel!

The false apostles were popular from a glamorized standpoint. Paul was notorious for bitter

experiences. The others wanted flattery, praise, and honor, whereas Paul got none of these. Instead insults and persecutions were heaped upon him. He was well known not because of popularity but because of orders that went out to prevent his escape from Damascus, the largest city in that region—something like New York City today. Imagine a police cordon and surveillance being put around New York City to keep one, by name, from escaping! Paul was providentially let down in a basket by a rope, and thus he escaped through a hole in the wall.

Who was King Aretas? With regard to the account of John the Baptist, he was the father of Herod's first wife. Herod divorced her and married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, thus committing adultery, which was forbidden in the Jewish Law. Highly offended, Aretas went to war against and defeated Herod in AD 36. But Aretas died within a year of that battle, so even though he was victorious, he was removed from the scene and Herod continued his reign.

Paul painted the picture of his *unpopularity* as being the true earmark of an apostle. He truly suffered for Christ. Certainly anyone going through his persecutions had a motive other than the prosperity of the flesh! He endured trouble, weariness, cold, and sleeplessness just to preach the gospel. The only logical conclusion was that he *really loved the Lord*.

Paul was reminding the Corinthians that at one time, he had been an enemy of the truth, a persecutor of those who believed in Christ. He was going back to the remarkable change. The very individual who was previously on the opposite side of the pole had gone through all these experiences for Christ, and one of the things that goaded him to keep persevering and not give up was his feeling of the enormity of what he had done before becoming a convert to Christ. These other persecutions became relatively meaningless from one standpoint and very meaningful from another standpoint, for he saw that the scales had to be balanced. He was submissive to this tutelage at the Lord's hands. One of his credentials as an apostle was that he had risked death at the very beginning of his career as a Christian. His conversion on the way to Damascus was the starting gate, and the threat against his life happened quickly thereafter.

Normally, boasting would be distasteful to Paul, but he saw the necessity to list his sufferings for Christ. Thus there are times, depending on circumstance, when one should say something that on another occasion would not be appropriate. We are prone to make hard-and-fast rules, but extenuating circumstances sometimes warrant an exception to the rule. Surely this boasting by Paul received the approval of the Lord Jesus, for it was needed to wake up the Corinthians to see that true brethren suffer for preaching the truth.

**2 Cor. 12:1** It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Chapter 12 continues the same context, but there is a natural division from one standpoint. The previous chapter pertained to external sufferings, internal anxieties, notoriety, and a remarkable escape from Damascus. Paul now continued but from the aspect that he was more advanced spiritually than the others. Not only did he have more experiences, but he had more knowledge than the braggarts.

In verses 1-4, Paul enumerated a wonderful experience that he had had years earlier. His purpose was to help the Corinthians draw the proper conclusion in connection with his ministry—that he was not just an ordinary elder but an apostle. In the previous chapter, he felt it was necessary to humble himself by listing all his different sufferings for Christ as an evidence of his apostleship. The false apostles, who were receiving this world's goods, the admiration of men, and popularity, were having the opposite experience. But those who suffered for Christ would reign with him (2 Tim. 2:12).

Paul had “visions and revelations” (plural) of the Lord. An outstanding vision occurred when



Jesus appeared to Paul as one born before the due time, that is, as though he were in his glory. In another vision, Paul saw a man of Macedonia who said, "Come over and serve us." At the time, Paul was thinking of going eastward to China, the opposite direction, but the Lord wanted him to continue westward in his ministry. Generally speaking, the gospel kept going westward, eventually coming to the United States.

**2 Cor. 12:2** I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

**2 Cor. 12:3** And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

Of the many "visions and revelations of the Lord" Paul received, he would tell of a particular incident that had occurred "above [more than] fourteen years ago" when he was "caught up to the third heaven." Paul died under Nero about the year AD 64 or 66. Since his ministry began in AD 33 or in the spring of AD 34, it lasted about 30 years. The vision he was referring to had occurred about 15 years earlier, so he was now in approximately the middle of his ministry. He had probably received the vision just before he began his missionary tours, at the beginning of his apostolic ministry, when he was in the Temple in Jerusalem. He was giving a witness, and in the witness, he reviewed the past history of what he had done.

Paul tried to neutralize his experience by speaking in a deferential way with expressions like "I knew a man in Christ," "such an one [was] caught up to the third heaven," and "I knew such a man." The vision was so real to Paul that he did not know whether he was "in the body, or out of the body." Today, through the power of the fallen angels, some people have had somewhat comparable experiences called "out-of-body" experiences, in which the individual feels he is looking down at his own body while the doctors are treating him and he dies. In other words, the individual does not know whether he is in or out of his body, but the experience is so dramatic that it becomes seared into his memory.

The term "third heaven" refers to the religious rulership in the world to come, the spiritual control of the Kingdom under Christ. The Scriptures speak of three worlds: the "world that then was [before the Flood]," the "present evil world," and the "world to come" wherein "dwelleth righteousness" (Matt. 12:32; Gal. 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:6,7,13). Therefore, it is more reasonable to see the "third heaven" as the religious rulership of the third world, or dispensation, rather than the third level of going up into heaven, as some in the nominal system believe. Paul was not just caught *upward* and given a marvelous vision but *onward*, forward, way into the *distant future*, to see things as they will happen. He was caught up prophetically and given an advanced preview of things to come, seeing events as though they were actually occurring. The vision was so real that he did not know if he had been literally and miraculously transported in the flesh or just in a vision.

Because the expression "third heaven" is so misunderstood, we will state the matter another way. Many might think the "third heaven" is above us in the heavens. From this vertical standpoint, there is, first, our solar system consisting of the sun, moon, and nine planets. When we look beyond them at the starry host above our solar system, we see another "heaven," the galaxies. Still higher is the "heaven of heavens" (Deut. 10:14). However, Paul was not speaking of vertical heavens but of *horizontal* heavens, as shown on the Chart of the Ages, traveling dispensationally from the world before the Flood, through the world that now is, to the world to come; that is, Paul was speaking about being translated in time down to the Kingdom Age and seeing events taking place there. God sees things future as though they are either the present or the past depending on how He chooses to view them. Time is not what man thinks it is. Isaac Newton's concept of mathematics and astronomy is the most practical way for man

to view things under the present circumstance. However, Einstein brought in another perspective with a deeper view and thus opened up a wealth of information that is like a Pandora's box in that the attention of scientists is taken away from the Lord in trying to fathom the mysteries of the universe. Instead of trying to understand these mysteries, they should be seeking to understand the mysteries of the *Author* of the universe.

Paul was caught up in vision to the "third heaven" and to "paradise" (see verse 4). "Paradise" was lost in the Garden of Eden, and it will be restored in the Kingdom. Paul was given a vision of the third world, or dispensation, so that in explaining different subjects to Christians, he would have a depth of understanding others did not have. He was forbidden to talk directly about what he saw, but the language in his sermons and epistles was affected. Where appropriate, for example, he introduced modifying factors.

**Q:** Is there a distinction between the "third heaven" and "paradise"?

**A:** The Kingdom Age will consist of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). Part of the Lord's Prayer is, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The purpose of the Kingdom Age is to establish God's will and authority and to reveal Him as the God of love. The "third heaven" pertains to the Kingdom, and we do not think the vision went beyond the end of the Kingdom. On the Cross, Jesus said to the thief, "Verily I say unto you today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43 paraphrase and permissible comma change). "Paradise" will occur when the thief is raised from death in the Kingdom.

We know Jesus by the things he said and did—his sermons as well as his miracles. The miracles gave his ministry *power* and provided samples of things to come in the Kingdom Age. Jesus spoke plain truth: "I am the Son of man," "I am the bread of life come down from heaven," etc. Without these statements, which were not prideful, the Word would not be as powerful as it is today. Likewise, Paul humbled himself in elaborating proofs of his apostleship.

"(Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)." The vision was so real that Paul did not know whether he was translated bodily to this experience or taken in another sense; that is, he did not know whether he was having an in-the-body or an out-of-the-body experience. His attention was so riveted on this startling revelation that he overlooked that detail.

**2 Cor. 12:4** How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul "was caught up into paradise"; that is, in vision, he was transferred not only to the heavenly phase of the Kingdom but also to the earthly phase, to "paradise." Stated another way, he was transferred into the Millennium and the Kingdom—into our day and later. Similarly in the Old Testament, Ezekiel was taken in vision from captivity and carried by a lock of his hair to the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:3). There he was given an insight into evils that were being practiced just before the destruction of the Temple. Caught up by his hair into the atmosphere, Ezekiel was transferred and then let down in the Temple complex in Jerusalem.

Paul "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Although he was not allowed to tell what he saw in the vision, the words he used in his epistles to describe events of the future were carefully chosen and thus are very significant. The accuracy of his statements is revealing, especially with regard to the man of sin and the time of the setting up of the Kingdom (2 Thess. 2:3-12). Paul probably saw the transfer of power from the Adversary to Christ and events incidental to the transfer. As a result of the vision, he understood certain Scriptures with a fullness that none of the other apostles had.

**2 Cor. 12:5** Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

**Q:** Did Paul see himself in glory in the Kingdom Age?

**A:** We do not think he had this assurance at the time. The logical questions are, “Why did the Lord translate him in this fashion? What was the purpose?” When Paul was initially converted, he had to be slapped down. He was so convinced that Jesus was a false Messiah that a startling experience was needed to open his eyes, and then he was given the reward of seeing Jesus because he would be the apostle to replace Judas. But one purpose for the vision of being caught up to the third heaven was to show that the Kingdom was not coming right away. The disciples felt there was the possibility that Jesus would return at his Second Advent before they died, so Paul was translated in vision to experience traveling down through centuries into the next age. Another reason was to let him see the hinderer being taken out of the way so that the man of sin would prosper. In this translation, events in motion so attracted Paul’s attention that he did not even know if his body was with him. When he subsequently wrote his epistles, his words were carefully chosen, even though he could not reveal what he had seen. He wrote with *conviction* and *authority* with regard to the future. While he did not write too much on prophecy, he wrote enough to steer us on the correct path in many respects. Still later, the Apostle John was given more detail but in symbolic language.

Thus, although Paul was not permitted to disclose the details, the Lord saw fit to help him. And because of this experience, he was able to suffer persecution beyond what it seems humanly possible to endure and yet get up and go forward. The visions and revelations gave him the inspiration, thrust, and power to speak with authority and not compromise or soften the truth. In other words, one of the main reasons Paul had the visions was to give him the conviction and the power to endure. “Not by [man’s] might, nor by [his] power, but by *my* spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” is the principle (Zech. 4:6). *God’s* power enabled Paul to prevail.

“Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.” Paul was trying to show that a Christian’s badge of honor is suffering for Christ and that it is not receiving the praise and glory of men. He was thankful to have been given the vision, but to dwell on it too long would be inordinate and boastful as a new creature. He did not want to overemphasize the vision as if he were meritorious for having received it, but neither did he want to minimize the experience. He was saying, “You know who I am. You have seen both my works and my frailties.” If he boasted of anything, he would boast of what the old creature did in laying down his life—his sufferings and deprivations. He was trying to make the Corinthians understand that it was he whom God had used to introduce the gospel to them when they were pagans and that it was he who had established the church at Corinth. He was concerned for them, and he prayed for them.

**Comment:** In preceding verses, Paul was careful how he spoke of his being caught up to glory lest the brethren think he was bragging.

**Reply:** Although he would not belittle that exalted experience, he praised the Lord for the privilege of suffering for Christ if such need be the case.

**2 Cor. 12:6** For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

**2 Cor. 12:7** And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

**2 Cor. 12:8** For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

Paul's being given a "thorn in the flesh" was as if the Adversary was continually irritating him. However, God wanted Paul to have that experience, so it was not removed from him, even though he prayed three times about the matter. The "thorn" was probably his poor eyesight caused, on the way to Damascus, by a glimpse of the risen Lord's glory. Although some dispute this identification, other evidences in Scripture support the thought that he had poor eyesight. For instance, Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I bear you record [witness], that, if it had been possible, ye would have [gladly] plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (Gal. 4:15). Some of the brethren in Galatia so appreciated Paul's ministry that they would have been willing to give him one of their good eyes to replace his poor eyes. Following the blindness that occurred at the time of the vision when Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" his vision was only *partially* restored (Acts 9:4). Another evidence of Paul's poor eyesight is that when he occasionally wrote instead of having an amanuensis, he used large letters (Gal. 6:11).

**Comment:** Paul prayed for restored eyesight so that he could serve the Lord better, but God saw that faulty eyesight would keep him humble in view of his great knowledge and would always be a reminder of how he had persecuted Christians prior to his conversion.

The Living Bible expresses well the principle that is enunciated here; namely, Paul's revelations were such tremendous experiences that God permitted the poor eyesight as a way of keeping him from getting overly puffed up. Verses 2-8 read as follows:

"Fourteen years ago I was taken up to heaven for a visit. Don't ask me whether my body was there or just my spirit, for I don't know; only God can answer that. But anyway, there I was in paradise; and heard things so astounding that they are beyond a man's power to describe or put in words (and anyway I am not allowed to tell them to others). That experience is something worth bragging about, but I am not going to do it. I am going to boast only about how weak I am and how great God is to use such weakness for his glory. I have plenty to boast about and would be no fool in doing it, but I don't want anyone to think more highly of me than he should from what he can actually see in my life and my message.

"I will say this: because these experiences I had were so tremendous, God was afraid I might be puffed up by them; so I was given a physical condition which has been a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother me, and prick my pride. Three different times I begged God to make me well again."

"For though I would desire to glory ... I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me [through hearsay]." The Corinthians knew Paul just as we know each other in an ecclesia, especially if meals and fellowship are shared.

**Comment:** The visions were so unusual that one reason Paul did not relate what he had seen was because the Corinthians might think he was bragging or fabricating.

**Reply:** In addition, if he began to describe his experience in any more depth, he might say something he would be sorry for. Consequently, he was forbearing any further discussion.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." The Phillips translation has, "So tremendous, however, were the revelations that God gave me that, in order to prevent my becoming absurdly conceited, I was

given a physical handicap—one of Satan’s angels—to harass me and effectually stop any conceit.” The Revised Standard reads, “And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated.” When Paul went to Ananias, the blindness was cured only to a certain level, so God saw fit not to totally cure Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” but to leave him with impaired eyesight.

Why was this affliction called a “messenger [or angel] of Satan”? The Adversary preys upon our weaknesses. He presses these buttons and then slyly introduces his own comments and advice, as he did with Eve. Pretending to have empathy for our situation, he cleverly slips in damaging suggestions. His tools are discouragement, disappointment, disagreement, discord, dishonesty, distress, discontent, disrespect, disapproval, disobedience, and disruption. He wants to disable and dishearten us as new creatures. All of these words have the prefix “dis,” meaning “a lack of.” He implants doubts. In fact, *discouragement* and *doubt* seem to be twin sisters, leading some to suicide. We should be thoroughly *honest* in judging ourselves. With regard to *respect*, Jesus spoke strongly to the scribes and the Pharisees, the principle being, “To the strong, be strong, and to the weak, be weak.” If Satan *disrupts* us, he throws us into a state of disorder. Incidentally, *Dis* is the Latin name of the god of the underworld, the supposed Hades. Paul’s “thorn” effectually kept him in harness for the Lord’s cause.

**Q:** The *Diaglott* has “angel-adversary” instead of “messenger of Satan.” Is the implication that Paul’s poor eyesight was the result of the glimpse of the risen Christ rather than a direct action by Satan?

**A:** Paul looked back at the experience as being permitted of the Lord. He knew he was not healed because God’s grace was sufficient for his need. Thus he accepted the experience and was saying in effect, “This is the way it has to be.” Of course the Greek word *aggelos* can be translated either “angel” or “messenger.” Of the two terms, the one that seems to best fit the context is used. Here it would seem to be “messenger.”

**2 Cor. 12:9** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul was frail by nature, but his poor eyesight made him dependent upon others for little amenities. This trial kept him humble. After he prayed three times to be cured of the malady, not only was the answer no, but he was told that God’s grace was sufficient and that through his weakness, the strength of Christ would be perfected; that is, it would flow more freely through him. Paul then accepted the providence of poor eyesight.

**Q:** What is the principle of beseeching only three times in prayer, especially when the importunate widow was commended for praying repeatedly (Luke 18:1-5)?

**A:** We should use discretion as to what we are praying for, that is, the nature of the prayer. In addition to Paul’s asking three times with regard to his eyesight, Jesus prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane for the cup to pass from him for what seemed to be a good motive from a human standpoint. He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible [that is, if it is *permissible*], let this cup [of ignominy] pass from me” (Matt. 26:39). He saw the need to die—he was prepared to give his life—but he asked if it was necessary to undergo certain details such as dying naked between two thieves on a cross. (Jesus knew that under the Law, those who died on a tree were cursed of God.) After praying the third time, he saw that it was not God’s will to answer the prayer in the affirmative.

The Living Bible reads, “Each time he said, ‘No. But I am with you; that is all you need. My

power shows up best in weak people.’ Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ’s power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities.” That was the essence of Paul’s reasoning. The false teachers criticized him for being weak, yet he was anything but weak. Each time he was flogged five times with 39 stripes, he was near death. For him to get up from each flogging and go out again to preach the gospel, knowing he would receive more persecution, is remarkable. In addition, he was beaten a number of other times with less than 39 stripes. He went through *many* threshing experiences.

Incidentally, the maximum penalty was 39 stripes lest the victim die and the one administering the flogging be put to death himself under the inflexible Roman law. In other words, if a person was given 40 stripes, 50 percent of the time he would die. Therefore, to administer only 39 stripes was “playing safe,” even though the victim was often unconscious and hanging like a limp rag after 20 or so stripes. People greatly feared the Roman law.

The “Morning Resolve” ends with, “Trusting myself to Divine care and the Providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement. I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providence may permit, because ‘Faith can firmly trust Him, come what may.’” We do not want to become impatient and throw off the yoke of our consecration. Satan would like us to either give up and go back into the world or become popular using *his* message.

In regard to Paul’s praying three times, the Lord answered him audibly. Of course the Lord does not audibly speak to us, but Paul needed something direct because of his leadership qualities. He would have reasoned, “With good eyesight, I can serve the Lord better.” But the Lord felt that for Paul’s eternal welfare, impaired eyesight was necessary to offset all of the revelations. It was proper for Paul to ask for physical healing, but when the answer was no, he rested in the Lord’s providence in *faith and trust*.

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, [so] that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Paul was a remarkable individual. Just as we are *God’s* “workmanship,” so *His* power, through Christ, rested on Paul (Eph. 2:10). First, we allow God’s advice and instructions to come into our life, and then we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling through His promises (Phil. 2:12).

Paul showed submission, saying in effect, “I fully accept the experience, for through it, the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Now, years later, Paul could see that what might be considered an affliction of the Adversary was actually a blessing to him. God’s wisdom in withholding the restoration of full eyesight kept him from being high-minded. A Christian should similarly take inventory from time to time, examining himself to see if he has truly been trying to do the Lord’s will. If he finds he is going offtrack, he can rectify the situation.

**Comment:** Although the apostles had the gift of healing, they did not heal themselves.

**Reply:** Yes, that fact is food for thinking Christians. Accepting the gospel of Christ does not mean that one will get health and wealth. The emphasis should be on expending energy *servicing* Christ rather than on *being served*. Every miracle Jesus performed cost him something, for virtue went out of him, draining him. He suffered the cost of doing his Father’s will.

If we were looking at and listening to Paul, we would notice his short stature and handicapped vision, and we would not hear the voice of a classical orator—but out of his mouth would come wisdom and instruction. Then we would see that God’s power was operating through him. The power of Paul’s speech was most impressive—in fact, even more impressive because it came from a rather weak vessel. People generally like to listen to those who are handsome and

charismatic, but the penetrating and wonderful *substance* of what Paul said was what mattered.

**2 Cor. 12:10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

**2 Cor. 12:11** I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

Verse 10 expresses a paradox: "When I [Paul] am weak, then am I strong." Out of this weak vessel came forth strength of wisdom, reasoning, logic, and power. It was obvious that Paul was speaking through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was using common sense. The statement "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me" can be transposed to more clearly say, "Ye have compelled me to become a fool in glorying." This method of reversal is sometimes helpful in grasping the meaning. In other words, Paul was saying, "I have abased myself. I did not want to boast about my sufferings, but your problems have compelled me to do so."

"I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." If the Corinthians had properly observed Paul's service to them as a church, they would have defended him as a true apostle to the false apostles. He realized that he was nothing in and of himself but that his strength came from the power of God and Christ surging through him. What remarkable zeal he had!

**2 Cor. 12:12** Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

Paul had even performed "*signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*" among the Corinthians, but they failed to understand. The Bible is written low-key, but it contains a lot of drama between the lines. Consider the events of the Exodus. There were ten plagues, of which the last seven were just on the Egyptians. When the Israelites were leaving Egypt following the tenth plague, which caused the death of the firstborn, they saw the Red Sea in front of them, Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen on the hill behind them, and two mountains on either side. Thinking they were trapped because they lacked faith in God's power, the Israelites began to murmur to Moses, "Have you brought us out here to die?" And even after the sea miraculously opened so that they could walk over dry-shod, they continued to murmur and were not converted. In fact, the older generation died with the exception of Joshua, Caleb, and Aaron's two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar.

The Bible does not enumerate all of the miracles and revelations of Paul, for it is low-key. The purpose of the Bible is to attract common, humble people who are hungering for the knowledge of God.

**2 Cor. 12:13** For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

Paul supported himself, providing his own lodging and meals, and did not burden the ecclesia in any sense. "Forgive me this wrong" was strong sarcasm. Earlier he had said, "I am repeating a catalog of my sufferings, whereas you should really be commending me for the sufferings." The brethren from Macedonia financially supported him during a low period in Corinth.

**Comment:** Phillips reads, "What makes you feel so inferior to other churches? Is it because I have not allowed you to support me financially? My humblest apologies for this great wrong!"

Paul was rubbing in the fact that the Corinthians were slow to see their privilege of helping him. This remarkable man, who had the wisdom of God coming out of his mouth and pen (even though others did the writing), was in their presence, yet they did not openly observe that he needed food and an income. Paul had prepared for this type of situation with his previous training as a tent maker so that he could work to support himself. He labored in between his almost full-time preaching of the gospel.

How many of those Jesus healed at his First Advent became disciples? Relatively few responded in this way. Of the ten lepers who were healed, some of whom had missing limbs restored, only one returned to say thanks. Many were attracted because of the loaves and the fishes, that is, by the temporal benefits they received.

**2 Cor. 12:14** Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

“Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you.” Paul had already been to Corinth twice. Many maps of his travels do not show these two visits. In fact, one of his journeys is usually missing. Incidentally, there are a few gaps in the apostle’s itinerary in the Book of Acts, but Luke, who kept the diary, was not always with Paul.

In the beginning of 2 Corinthians, Paul explained why he had not yet come again to Corinth as intended. Because of criticism, he gave justification for having changed his itinerary and not having come direct to them from Ephesus but going instead to Troas, Philippi, etc. Now, for the third time, Paul intended to go to Corinth (see 2 Cor. 13:1). In all, Paul wrote at least three letters to the Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians seems to consist of two or three letters. Instead of having a long introduction, a short letter was tacked onto 2 Corinthians to make just one epistle without unnecessary duplication. Verse 14 is part of this short letter. Evidently, Divine Providence saw fit to have the epistle occur in this fashion.

“I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” This portion of verse 14 is often misunderstood. Those who do not want to support elderly parents like to use this text, but that is not what Paul was saying. It is important to get the proper analogy or perspective. He was saying that parents should take care of *young* children. Confusion occurs because the word “children” is sometimes used for adults, as with the Apostle John in his epistles (1 John 2:1,12,13,18, etc.). Those “little children” were 30, 40, and 50 years old. But here in verse 14, Paul was saying, as rendered in the Living Bible, “I don’t want your money. I want *you!* And anyway, you are my children, and little children don’t pay for their father’s and mother’s food—it’s the other way around; parents supply food for their children.” As God’s servant, Paul had come from a great distance and founded this ecclesia. Having thus been the “parent,” he was anxious for the Corinthians to grow up into maturity. He was assuming this attitude not because he wanted to boss or lord it over them but because he was anxious, like a father, for the welfare and provision of his children. He did not want to become burdensome from a financial standpoint. He properly did not seek their monetary rewards but was seeking their spiritual welfare.

Those who had a suspicious mind might have thought Paul wanted their financial and material support to satisfy his ego and build up his reputation and popularity, but that was not his motive at all, whereas the false teachers did want financial support from the brethren. Moreover, they wanted to have titles and be regarded as the Lord’s “apostles.” They were aggrandizing this power for their own egos and upbuilding and for establishing a following. If the Corinthians had honestly viewed and analyzed Paul’s zeal, they would have seen that his



motive was completely different from that of the false teachers. He was serving them at great cost to *himself*, both physically and emotionally. The Corinthians were not used to Paul's bold type of common-sense reasoning and logic. Flattery, oratory, and flowery speech were characteristic of the Greeks, but these techniques can be dangerous. Paul was trying to get the Corinthians to discriminate between good and evil, between a true messenger and a false messenger.

Paul likened himself to a parent, a father, for he had started the class at Corinth. Today parental love and guidance are a problem in society. The longer we are in this evil day, the more difficult it is for a parent to bring up a child properly, especially in the truth, because the contamination is so rampant. The duty of the parents is to furnish instruction and discipline, but they cannot anesthetize the world. Although a sterile environment seems logical, it does not permit one to develop immunity and backbone. People do not like rebukes, but the rebuke of a wise man is better than the wisdom of seven fools. When rightly received, a rebuke works the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11).

Put simply, Paul was the parent, and the Corinthians were the children. When a parent gets old, the burden of care usually falls on the children, and that was especially true in apostolic times because there were no government social programs. Generally speaking, people lived from hand to mouth, so it was expected that children would take care of their elderly parents.

**Comment:** Consecrated parents should “lay up” for their children in the sense of increasing the children's understanding and appreciation of God's Word.

**Reply:** Yes, they should help their children have a proper focus or direction in life and store up treasures in heaven.

**2 Cor. 12:15** And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

Paul was glad to “spend and be spent” for the Corinthians. Not only did he spend his energy in preaching the gospel, but he supported himself so as not to burden them with any financial or material responsibility in connection with his ministry.

Then he added, “The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.” This statement applied to just a few individuals in the class. At this time, most of the class regarded Paul as an apostle, but some diehards were not responding to his advice. He was actually telling the Corinthians how to reason, but a minority in the class were slow to realize that the person who *served* the truth was to be recognized more than those who *received* the truth.

We can imagine Paul's disappointment. The troublemakers marred the success he was looking for. He wanted to save as many souls as possible, but the implication is that he would lose some. The more love he manifested for them, the less he was loved. Incidentally, some people misjudge love because the flesh wants a leader it can plainly follow.

The national weakness of the Jews was seeking signs and wonders. The national weakness of the Greeks was their pride in learning, intelligence, bearing, and grooming. They put a lot of stock in appearance, elocution, and emotional control. In fact, they regarded Paul's enthusiasm and zeal as improper and immature. This reaction is rather startling when we consider all the sufferings he went through.

Initially, the majority of the brethren responded favorably to Paul's advice in regard to the fornication issue (1 Corinthians 5). He had wanted them to respond of their own volition in his absence rather than to have to make them forcibly obey when he came to them in person—

and to their credit, they did. But, sad to say, while they behaved correctly in this case, they did not act properly in other matters along the same line. Therefore, that which was a majority became a minority. In other words, the proportion is just like the Little Flock. In all gatherings of the Lord's people down through history, only a small proportion are the elect few. The others fall by the wayside to either a lesser reward or destruction.

Evidently, based on clues, the Corinthian church was a large class originally, but it became fragmented subsequently. Because Paul had started the class, the brethren listened to him out of deference, respect, and recognition, but not all necessarily admired him.

**2 Cor. 12:16** But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* includes in brackets the words "it is said." "Be it so then, I did not burden you; but, [it is said,] 'being cunning, I took you by artifice.'"

**Reply:** That is the proper slant, for Paul was being sarcastic. Some people do not analyze their own statements. They make accusations without grounds.

**Q:** Was Paul using sarcasm in repeating the accusation of others? Verses 16 and 17 read as follows in the *Diaglott*: "Be it so then, I did not burden you; but, [it is said,] 'being cunning, I took you by artifice.' Did I defraud you by any of those whom I sent to you?" And the Amplified states, "Granting that I did not burden you with my support, some say I was crafty and I cheated and I got the better of you with my trickery. Did I [then] take advantage of you or make any money out of you through any of those [messengers] whom I sent to you?"

**A:** The *Diaglott* interlinear reads, "Let it be so but; I not did burden you; but being crafty, with guile you I took. Not any one of whom I have sent to you, through him I overreached you?" The words "it is said" are not in the Greek but seem to be the correct thought. Paul was using sarcasm in a question format.

Various translations are helpful. For verses 16-18, the RSV has, "But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by guile. Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?" Some in the class accused Paul of having Titus and another brother, who were collecting funds for the poor brethren in Jerusalem, come to Corinth to take money from them deceitfully. What an awful insinuation!

Incidentally, the word "guile" can be used in either a favorable or an unfavorable sense. "Guile" can be understood as being tactful and using proper diplomacy. However, diplomacy, meaning "two tongues," usually has an unsavory connotation. A Native American saying was that anyone who is deceitful speaks with a forked tongue, but diplomacy can also have good points. Be that as it may, Paul certainly used great wisdom and did not have any ulterior motives to deprive the Corinthians of liberty or money or to teach them any fanciful philosophy. He spoke the plain truth and nothing but Christ.

**Q:** Was Paul referring back to chapter 11? "And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself" (2 Cor. 11:9). He seems to have been saying, "Knowing your minds and how you would twist the situation, I was careful to support myself."

**A:** Certainly that text is related to verse 16. We believe that Paul sized up the situation and was

careful not to give the Corinthians any opportunity to find fault with him.

**2 Cor. 12:17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?**

The false rumor was that Paul was pocketing the money. However, because he had made certain arrangements in advance, this criticism should have been squelched, but the Corinthians did not properly reflect on and analyze the situation. With foresight, Paul had acted to prevent just such an accusation by telling the Corinthians to select a representative for the work, and the individual could even accompany Paul when he took the money to Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3,4).

There are malicious individuals who start destructive rumors, and unfortunately, most people do not search into a matter. The lesson is that rumors *should be investigated*. Although Paul named individuals on other occasions, he avoided names in this case with the Corinthians because he was trying to handle the matter as discreetly as possible.

Paul was saying, “Did I or any of those I sent to you take advantage by expecting a workman to be worthy of his hire? No, they followed my example.” Therefore, we would understand that the “guile” of verse 16 was Paul’s not being chargeable to the Corinthians in any sense.

**2 Cor. 12:18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?**

Paul “desired Titus, and with him ... [another] brother [that is, Luke].” Paul purposely did not mention Luke’s name, just that of Titus, who had a great reputation. In doctrinal matters, Paul wanted the Corinthians to pay attention to Titus, and if he said he was sending Titus and Luke, the two might be thought of as equal representatives in their instructional ability, whereas Luke’s main responsibility was to serve as secretary and treasurer.

This second epistle to the Corinthians is really two letters. Titus could have penned the first part of the epistle, and the latter part was probably written by Luke. Paul especially sent Titus and Luke, but in addition, another individual accompanied them from Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:22).

“Did Titus make a gain of you?” Paul did not receive any remuneration from the Corinthians for his services, and neither did Titus, whereas the false teaching element did. Paul was reminding the brethren that neither he nor those sent to represent him were a burden to the class at Corinth.

**2 Cor. 12:19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.**

“Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you?” In other words, “Again, do you think we will make an apology unto you?” Paul repeated that he was not lying, and God was his witness (2 Cor. 11:31). Everything he did was aboveboard and blameless, not only to God and Jesus but also to the Corinthians. Paul’s motive was to be a blessing to the brethren, to edify them.

**2 Cor. 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:**

Paul feared that when he arrived at Corinth, he might find internal disputes and divisions, which had begun to manifest themselves at the time of his first letter, when he criticized their attitudes of “I am of Paul,” “I am of Cephas,” etc. “For I fear ... lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.” Paul feared “debates” in the sense

that if he came as a visiting speaker, some of the elders in the ecclesia might try to cleverly undercut and contradict everything constructive he would have to say. “Backbitings” and “whisperings” would be the first step. Then others would get involved, causing “swellings,” which would burst forth as “tumults,” or open abrasions that would be publicly manifested. The Corinthians might be stirred up underneath and boiling, but their feelings would erupt in an outward explosion.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* states, “Lest there be strifes, jealousies, angry feuds [in which brethren would take sides], contentions, evil-speakings, secret slanders, proud swellings, disturbances.”

**Reply:** Debates would be between leaders. Feuds would develop as the others responded to the messages being presented and took sides.

Paul was hoping the Corinthians would heed his advice so that when he came to them, the strife and division would be minimized. He was saying, “In my correspondence with you, I have tried to settle some of these differences of opinion.” He did not want to find tumult when he arrived, with the brethren taking sides and dragging him into the fray. Strife would be minimized if they looked away from one another and toward the common goal of how to serve Christ.

Verses 20 and 21 are parallel texts in that Paul intended to visit the church at Corinth a third time, but as far as we know that visit never happened in spite of his intent. Paul intended to go to Spain, stopping in Rome on the way. He never dreamed that his visit to Rome would be under the circumstance of a prisoner under house arrest, and of course he was not able to go to Spain. The general route of the vessels was to stop in Corinth, which had two good ports, and then proceed on to Rome. Thus there were different stations, or stops, on a long-distance itinerary where the ship unloaded cargo. Paul intended to take advantage of those stops.

Paul wanted to find that the Corinthians had complied with the advice in his first epistle (which was really the second epistle). However, he feared that when he arrived, he would “be found unto you such as ye would not”; that is, he would have to reprimand them again for the same reasons. He feared he would find “debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults”—eight serious and disturbing conditions that were not conducive to the development of the Holy Spirit of peace, grace, quietness, joy, etc.

**Comment:** Some of these conditions were going on in Corinth.

**Reply:** Yes. For example, there were divisions according to the leaders who were being followed (Cephas, Apollos, etc.). “Swellings” were happening to those who were puffed up, thinking they were on an equal basis with the Apostle Paul.

**2 Cor. 12:21** And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

How would Paul be humbled? Earlier Paul had “boasted” about the Corinthian ecclesia. If, when he came, he found that the brethren still had not learned the lesson through his advice, he would be embarrassed, and his reputation would be questioned for uttering false statements. The leaven did affect some of the brethren (1 Cor. 5:6).

**Q:** In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul sternly admonished the class with regard to the *one* fornicator, but here he said, “*Many* ... have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” What is the thought?

**A:** The class had reacted favorably by obeying Paul's advice and excommunicating the one fornicator, thus publicly recognizing the wrong, but as time passed, many slipped back into the same wrong attitude, which led, in some cases, to grievous sin. Just as with the Israelites in the wilderness, many of the Corinthian brethren lapsed back into a loose way of living. All of the Israelites could see by the power of Moses' rod that God was leading him, yet many were disobedient—even the very next day after a startling miracle. When the earth swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families and tents, this was something that had never happened before, yet the next day the Israelites gave Moses a tongue-lashing. Evidently, when Paul went back to Corinth the second time, he did some startling signs and wonders in their midst that are not recorded. And doctrinally, he was powerful in his logic, but the Corinthians did not like his manner of executing the logic. In time they forgot, and the situation would be the same today with fallen human nature. As strong as Paul's logic was, the false teachers and those influenced by them had not yielded.

When this second epistle is read as a whole, it seems that the majority of the class had been won over to see the error of their way in being too tolerant and too liberal with regard to the fornication that had existed in their midst (1 Corinthians 5). However, some remained in the sins of "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they [plural] have committed." Paul wanted these individuals to reconsider their problem and take proper steps so that when he came, there would be no embarrassment and no need to exercise his apostolic authority. In other words, "Do you want me to come and show you that I mean business to those who remain as a thorn in the class, or would you rather listen to my letter of advice, which is quite reasonable?"

**Comment:** We see this situation among brethren today. Some gladly change, and others hold on to their views.

**Reply:** It is difficult to change, but if one does not change when shown plain statements in Scripture pertaining to conduct and tries instead to give different applications, a penalty will be inflicted.

**Comment:** Some happenings today are perplexing with brethren going astray.

**Reply:** The Apostle Paul got information from the house of Chloe. Today we hear rumors from different sources. There usually seems to be some credibility, so we wonder why action is not taken in the particular ecclesias that are involved. However, generally speaking, each ecclesia is responsible for what occurs in its own midst, and we are not to be international policemen. In the case of fornication in Corinth, the brethren thought they were doing God a service by being gentle and giving the sinner constant expressions of mercy and sympathy, whereas that type of treatment was the worst thing to do.

Paul would be "humbled" among the Corinthians if they proved him wrong. He hoped that when he arrived, he would not find uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness. If these sins were occurring, he would be humbled by having to answer the false teachers and again remind the brethren of the proper course they were to take. He would be humbled if he was not successful as an apostle sent by Jesus.

**Comment:** Paul would be discouraged if they were still sinning and had not repented. He would think his time had been wasted in giving advice. The majority of brethren had responded to the advice in his first epistle, but he was fearful that many would fall back into the same sins. The second time would be far worse for the new creature, for such brethren would be less liable to correction. Bro. Oscar Magnuson used to quote Lamentations 4:1, "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" In other words, "If the gold that once was a stimulus to making progress in the narrow way became dim because the individual fell back,

what would be used to restimulate him?” Stated another way, “If the salt have [once] lost his [its] savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” (Matt. 5:13). If the salt once caused a person to serve the Lord with zest and the individual subsequently fell back, the salt would not have the same effect when used the second time. When one allows himself to drift backward, it is more difficult to swim upstream the second time.

**Comment:** The same principle is shown when a house is swept clean. If the sin is swept away and the house is not filled with righteousness, the fate of the individual is seven times worse (Matt. 12:44,45).

In regard to the individual who was excommunicated in Corinth for fornication, we do not know if, when he was reinstated after repenting, he ultimately maintained his integrity. The Scriptures are silent. However, we do know of one person who was successful following repentance. On his first missionary journey, Paul was disturbed when John Mark fell away by abandoning Barnabas and him. John Mark was reinstated, and the fact that Holy Writ contains the Gospel of Mark indicates he was faithful. Of course there are different degrees, or levels, of transgression, but the Bible has no record of success after a second grievous falling away.

**2 Cor. 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.**

A scriptural principle is that under normal circumstances, an accusation must be established by two or (preferably) three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16). However, Paul used the principle in a unique way here. He had given the Corinthians a first and a second warning, and he again declared his intention to visit them a third time. If they did not repent, then when he came the third time, he would point out the false teachers by name. Thus Paul was using the principle of “two or three witnesses” from a *progressive or sequential* (instead of a contemporaneous) standpoint. If the false teachers did not acquiesce to the third warning, they would not get another opportunity. Here is a precedent for the Lord’s providence sometimes affording an individual three opportunities to repent and change his way. The implication is that if the false apostles did not repent, then those who were faithful to Paul’s advice would leave the ecclesia and have a class of their own. He hoped that the group would reform and that there would be no divisions, but if the leaders persisted in the wrong, then those who wanted to follow his admonition would have to get out. Reason says that if the false apostles did not repent, their destiny would be Second Death because they were directly and willfully contradicting Paul. However, certain distinctions could be made with regard to deceived brethren who were supporting the false apostles. Some would be held just as accountable as the leaders, whereas an allowance might be made for those who were simply confused and thus not firm enough. The latter element might receive life in the Great Company but not in the Little Flock. Each case would have to be considered separately.

Here Paul was showing that he was a true apostle and the others were false apostles—liars. The general principle is that when an accusation is made, it is necessary to have two or three witnesses to establish whether a charge is legitimate. But in this instance, Paul applied the “two or three witnesses” to two or three opportunities to repent.

If two witnesses say the same thing but one of them is partial, a third witness is needed for confirmation. It is significant that only *two* tables of the Law were put into the Ark of the Covenant, or Ark of the *Testimony*. The two “witness” tables were sufficient, for they were clear, strong, and succinct. Incidentally, under the Law, a false witness suffered the same fate as the one he testified against. For example, if the person on trial got the death sentence, the false witness also got the death sentence.

**2 Cor. 13:2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and**

**being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:**

“I ... foretell you ... that, if I come again [the third time], I will not spare [you].” In other words, Paul would discipline the false leaders with strong words. If there was no repentance, then instead of trying to reason with them further in a compassionate manner, he would forcefully and sternly tell them that they would go into Second Death and perish if they persisted in their wrong course. However, for those who were hardened in their wrong course, Paul’s words would be meaningless. In fact, they would probably say something like, “He does not have the proper spirit.”

**Comment:** The false teachers were like the scribes and Pharisees. If those religious leaders misunderstood one miracle, then if Jesus did 25 miracles, they would still misunderstand.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* reads, “I have said before, and I say beforehand, (as when present the second time, though now absent,) to those who had previously sinned, and to all the others, that if I come again, I will not spare.” And Phillips has, “My previous warning, given on my second visit, still stands and, though absent, I repeat it now as though I were present—my coming will *not* mean leniency for those who had sinned before that visit and those who have sinned since.”

**Reply:** Yes, Paul had given clear advice as to what should be done and then left the problem to the brethren to correct. It is one thing to give advice and another thing for the recipients of that advice to take action. Paul was indicating that the advice was not sufficient for some of the Corinthians, for there was no change. While he had previously exercised a measure of moderation when in their presence and then written a strong letter, not all of the brethren had followed his strong advice. Therefore, when he came again, he would search and straighten out the matter by confronting, face to face, those who appeared to be the problem. If they did not then obey in his presence and under the circumstance of two or three witnesses, he would take the matter into his own hands, and they would see how “weak” he was! He would speak with the authority of Christ and exercise some of his miraculous power, as Peter had done with Ananias and Sapphira (verses 3 and 4).

**2 Cor. 13:3** Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

**2 Cor. 13:4** For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

In other words, Paul’s third visit would result in a cleavage of the ecclesia. Similarly with regard to the incident with the golden calf, Moses asked, “Who is on the LORD’S side?” (Exod. 32:26). The power of God would be given to those who favorably responded, and those who did not respond would be sternly admonished as to what their course would be. No more rationalizing about Paul’s apostleship would be tolerated. His talking would be straight, plain, and strong.

**Comment:** The two sides were crystallized, with one being affirmative and positive, and the other being negative.

Christ was crucified in “weakness” in that he submitted to the contradiction of sinners (Heb. 12:3). They spat on him and afflicted him, but “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,” he opened not his mouth (Isa. 53:7). Accordingly, Paul had assumed a meek, mild attitude toward the Corinthians, but as the risen Christ will no longer tolerate disobedience when he reigns and deals with mankind direct, so Paul would come the third time in power like the resurrected

Lord. Jesus will no longer assume the humble role but will reign in great power and glory. Paul would no longer reason and rationalize with the false teachers but would be stern.

The virtue of the Corinthians' service was when they responded of their own initiative. It was quite permissible to be instructed on what the Lord is looking for in His people, but if they had to be commanded to obey—and the response was based on prudence and compulsion—they would not receive the full blessing. The principle is the same with a cheerful giver. To respond cheerfully and willingly to instruction is far more meritorious than obeying by compulsion.

In verse 4, Paul was making a comparison between, on the one hand, the weakness of Christ and the power of God to aid him and, on the other hand, Paul's own experience of weakness and the power granted to him by God. The various translations give the thought that Jesus died in weakness and was raised by God's great power. Although Paul did not negate that thought, we think more was involved in what he was saying. While Christ allowed himself to be crucified—he submitted to captivity, humiliation, and ultimately death—yet previously, during his ministry, he manifested the power of God. Since Jesus came here to die, he submitted to God's providence and allowed the powers that be to crucify him, but throughout his ministry, he often manifested the power of God in him through performing miracles and preaching doctrine. Paul was comparing his current life with the life of Jesus at the First Advent, in which both great power and weakness were manifested, the latter being when he allowed himself to be persecuted and crucified.

Through (proper) "weakness," Jesus submitted to crucifixion. His purpose was to give his life a ransom for many. If it were not for his personal calling to lay down his life and allow himself to be crucified, the event would not have occurred. In other words, if he had exercised the endowment of spiritual powers that existed and not submitted, who could have laid a finger on him? For instance, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he just looked at his apprehenders, and they all fell backward. However, while submission was true with Jesus, it was not necessarily true with Paul, as he indicated, for he was going to Corinth not to die but to correct the situation.

Some think a Christian should always stand at the back of a food line, for example. It is felt that being a Christian means opening the door gently, softly, and quietly; never raising the voice; and not getting angry. However, Jesus was not like that. One thing we should remember, though, is that we are fallen and he was perfect. The point to remember is that Jesus spoke in strength. To the weak, he was weak, and to the sick, the infirm, and the blind, he exercised mercy. But he did not treat others in that fashion, for false humility would be letting people walk over him (and us) like a rug and wipe their feet.

"Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you." A minority of the Corinthians still were not convinced of Paul's apostleship and thus wanted a further confirmation that Christ was speaking through him. These individuals Paul would not "spare," for they needed a rod of discipline (verse 2). Some realized that Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ and had wholly accepted him as such from the very beginning, and they maintained that belief in spite of all the conditions that developed. The doctrine Paul taught and the life he led were enough to satisfy them. Therefore, it was not necessary for them to have further instruction, but the contentious element needed to see Paul act in a stern fashion.

"For though he [Jesus] was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you [*if necessary*]." Christ was crucified in weakness but raised as a *mighty* Savior. Paul was saying, "I came to you once in weakness, and many of you received me but not all. The next time I will come with the *power* of the *resurrected* Christ."

**Comment:** A cross-reference is 2 Corinthians 12:10, "When I am weak [in myself], then am I



strong [in the Lord].”

**2 Cor. 13:5** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Why did Paul say, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”? Complacency in letting matters rest and not becoming decisive can be harmful. In other words, in the interest of their own development, it was better for the Corinthians to make a decision as quickly as possible and react favorably than to be indifferent. They were to examine their own hearts and make a decision. Many people procrastinate on matters of doctrine or principle, but when they let the matter ride, it is apt to go without a decision to the day of their death. Paul wanted the Corinthians to act on his advice. They were to think on the matter and (hopefully) react favorably to his exhortation. It is not good to go through life indecisively.

**Comment:** The false apostles wanted Paul to prove himself, but he was saying to them, “Look at yourselves, and prove yourselves first.”

**Reply:** Paul knew the false leadership denied his apostleship, but he urged them to examine *themselves*. He hoped they would change, for greater was their responsibility (James 3:1).

In verses 3-5, Paul was saying, “I am going to keep the standard as high as possible in this matter, so that when I come into your midst, this problem will be straightened out. It is true that Jesus humbled himself and became obedient, even to death on the Cross, and that, therefore, God highly exalted him, so he now has resurrection power. You will see me exercise this resurrection power, which Jesus granted me as his apostle. This time when I come, I will mean business, so you had better be prepared. If you make some of these changes prior to my visit, I will be happy because then it will not be necessary for me to do what I dislike doing.”

In verse 5, Paul was saying, “By examining your real heart intent and through prayer, you will know deep within yourselves whether or not you are in Jesus Christ.” Especially when we have problems, self-examination is helpful because it leads to strength. We can determine if we are drifting away. The hope of all Christians is to be more Christlike. By the time we die, the determination has been made as to what degree of success was achieved, and if we have God’s approval, we will hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21).

How does one examine himself? If he is honest, his conscience has a lot to do with indicating what is right and what is wrong. The lifestyle of certain brethren was such that anyone with some conscience left did not need a philosopher to come to explain the difference between good and evil. Based on the Scriptures, they should have exercised common sense. Paul was saying sarcastically that if they did not do so, he would come and assist them in that direction.

**2 Cor. 13:6** But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

In other words, if Paul came to the Corinthians with a rod and manifested his power, any proper-thinking consecrated individual would plainly see that it was needful righteous indignation. He trusted the Corinthians would know that he and his helpers (Titus, Timothy, Luke, etc.) were not reprobates. Notice that Paul did not use specific names in his rebuttal. His earlier insinuations were also nebulous. He was saying, “We will not tolerate this situation but will deal with it.”

**2 Cor. 13:7** Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

Why did Paul say, “I pray to God that ye do no evil”? He hoped the majority would not side

with the false teaching element. In addition, he was saying that his motivation was to edify and correct them and *not to exalt himself*. He was not seeking personal satisfaction, for in justifying himself, he wanted their eyes to be opened. He desired *their* benefit and edification and did not care whether or not he personally had their approval. However, if they would examine his remarks honestly and dispassionately, they would know that his words and actions were proper. Paul added, “Though we [appear to] be as reprobates”; that is, “Though we appear to have done wrong in the eyes of the false teachers, who are making false insinuations.”

**Comment:** Paul kept telling the Corinthians in different ways that he only had their best interest in mind, so they should purify themselves.

**2 Cor. 13:8** For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

All down the Gospel Age, if the majority in any issue or experience of life was wrong, it appeared to the sincere minority that error was triumphing, but in reality, that was not true. With the history of the Church, the popularity of wrong thinking has seemed to be in the supremacy. However, even though Paul’s ministry and the ministries of God’s people down through the age have appeared to be in disfavor, actually they were not. Those who fight the truth or try to negate it will not prosper in the long run, even though they seem to prosper for the present. Ultimately truth and righteousness will prevail. The only privilege God’s people have in the present life is to side with truth. If they side against truth, they are powerless, but if they side with truth, they will gain the reward, even if they suffer for it. *Christians* represent and follow Christ—that is their privilege and favor. Thus we can do something for the truth.

**Comment:** Satan thought he succeeded when he had Jesus crucified, but the Crucifixion actually furthered God’s plan.

**Reply:** Yes, Romans 8:28 states the principle: “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

“We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” Verse 8 is a well-known quotation, showing that in the long term, nothing can really be done “against the truth.” This statement is encouraging, for the Lord allows us, as Christians, the privilege of defending the truth. Thus we can help the truth, but we cannot fight or oppose it *in the final analysis*. In the present life, we may not think we are helping the truth very much, but the future life is another matter. The rewards of both punishment and honor are long-term.

**2 Cor. 13:9** For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection.

“For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong.” Paul would be satisfied if the majority of the Corinthians were strong in espousing his thinking, even if it meant that he would become less popular. He was willing to be expended—he was glad to suffer for them—if by doing so, they would derive more strength of character and prosper in the sight of God.

**Comment:** Again Paul’s noble desire and motive are apparent.

The Scriptures tell us to recognize the good in others. Even though we can see incongruities in the walk of individual Christians, we can often find good points that, when compared with our own character, are better. However, when we are told to consider others better than ourselves, it does not mean in the overall sense, for some Christians are obviously walking in error and are loose in their conduct, but we are to notice their good points. After all, who are we but a little bit of oxygen, blood, etc. Therefore, we should consider others as part of the family and note their strong areas. If a Christian is growing at all, not only can we usually observe a trait

we wish we had, but also we can perhaps see why God called the individual in the first place.

**Comment:** The end of verse 9 is good in the Phillips translation: “Our ambition for you is true Christian maturity.”

**Reply:** Yes, “perfection” usually means “maturity.”

**Comment:** For “weak,” the Amplified has “unapproved.”

**Reply:** Yes, the thought is “weak in the sight of others” because in seeing Paul, the Corinthians looked on the natural man, not the new creature. In reading about the life and character of the Ancient Worthies, we tend to form a mental picture of what they looked like, but we would not be surprised if many of the great ones were not impressive in appearance because God looks on the *inner* man—an individual’s strength, goodness, and obedience to Him.

**2 Cor. 13:10** Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

In his absence, Paul wrote more sharply than he had spoken when present with them, but if the class persisted in their wrong, then, contrary to his preference, he would have to use power and speak and act sharply in person on his third visit. He was giving advice beforehand in order to minimize the sharpness with which he would have to deal with some in person.

Paul said earlier that he had already made up his mind to speak sharply to the *leaders*, but now he was addressing the class in general. The less he had to speak strongly when he came to Corinth, the better. He hoped the majority would properly respond to his exhortation so that sharpness in person would not be needed for them.

Thus far all of chapter 13 is in the same vein. Paul wanted to come to the Corinthians in a peaceful mode, but that depended on their obedience to his present advice.

**2 Cor. 13:11** Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

“Finally, brethren, farewell” should be “Finally, brethren, *fare well* [two words].” Another translation has, “Be happy; be of good cheer.” The *Diaglott* has, “Finally, brethren, rejoice!” Paul endured much suffering and persecution, yet he rejoiced because he saw that his experiences were for the development of the new creature.

“Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace.” The RSV has, “Mend your ways [that is, grow and improve], heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace.” Paul had written about the different factions in the ecclesia. Unfortunately, many Christians use his advice to “be of one mind” to try to cover up differences as if they do not exist, but Paul was not saying to put peace ahead of truth by neglecting inspection, analysis, and action. In other words, the Corinthians were not to be inactive and to overlook differences. Rather, they were to *strive and struggle* for unity. Their divisive attitude was improper, so Paul tried to show that the proper attitude was, “We are of God in Christ,” and they were to give great heed and diligence to the principles enunciated in the Word. Unity was to be desired and sought, but not at the expense or compromise of doctrine.

**Comment:** The principle was to be “first pure, then peaceable” (James 3:17). Hopefully, the class would have proper unity.

**Reply:** Yes. If everyone saw this principle, the result would be family unity in truth and righteousness.

Paul's letter was mostly criticism, for he was trying to straighten out problems. The message was not soothing, but he was saying, "React favorably to my letter, and do not get discouraged. These trials are needed for your development. Even though the problems are serious, if you react properly, they will work out a good reward for you. Therefore, be of good cheer. Do not let my stern admonitions depress you, for they are meant for your good. Be rightly exercised." Paul wanted the brethren to will to do that which was proper and to "be perfect [mature]," putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11).

**Q:** What is the thought of "be of one mind"?

**A:** If we look at the standard, the principles of God's Word, and try to conform our lives accordingly, then to that extent, we will be "of one mind" and have fellowship, spiritually speaking. One is supple in the formative period as a babe in Christ, but as the babe grows and develops muscles and bones, it becomes a little harder to change. However, if under the Lord's instruction, we are obedient as new creatures, we are changed. We grow in grace and knowledge, although others may not appreciate or see the growth.

**Comment:** The *Diaglott* says, "Mind the same thing."

**Reply:** Yes, we are to mind the same *standard*, the same *instruction*.

**2 Cor. 13:12** Greet one another with an holy kiss.

The "holy kiss," a method of greeting one another, was comparable to our handshake. It was a cheek-to-cheek "kiss" with one of the same sex, that is, sister with sister and brother with brother. This affectionate regard was to be one of well-wishing and without hypocrisy. There were many differences and problems in the class at Corinth, but in greeting one another, the brethren were to desire the perfection (maturity and development) and thus the salvation of not only self but also of the others. Paul knew that the problems would come to a head and that there would be a cleavage in the class after his decease, but he did not want to discourage the Corinthians by disclosing this information. A minority in Paul's day would benefit from the advice in this epistle and thus make their calling and election sure.

When we sit down together after having greeted one another heartily with a "holy kiss," we are more apt to be amenable to each other and more considerate. A "holy kiss" was appropriate for those who had been in communion for a long time, especially during times of persecution. To see that the brethren were still alive when a meeting was held evoked this affection. The coals of fire kept one another zealous in the truth by their sincere, simple, pure, intimate soul relationship of serving Christ. The picture in Ezekiel chapter 1 of a wheel within a wheel and the four living creatures tells that the wings of those beings touched ("kissed" in the Hebrew) one another; that is, the stretched-out wing of one cherub *tenderly* touched the stretched-out wing of another cherub.

**Comment:** The Apostle Peter said, "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity" (1 Pet. 5:14).

**Reply:** Yes, that would be a holy kiss, which is devoid of unholy passion, for it is man to man and woman to woman.

**2 Cor. 13:13** All the saints salute you.

Paul took the liberty of saying, "All the saints salute you." What "saints" was he referring to?

The brethren of Thrace, Macedonia, and the various regions who knew about the church at Corinth, of which Paul had been bragging, sent their greetings, even though they did not know the Corinthians personally.

**2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.**

The order here is a little different: Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. Paul wished that the “communion” of the Holy Spirit, the “common union,” the *joint participation*, would be with them all.